



**Iowa Telecommunications & Technology Commission
Grimes State Office Building, 1st Floor
400 E. 14th Street, Des Moines, IA 50319**

**FINAL
OPEN SESSIONS
September 18, 2018**

● **Roll Call:**

○ **Commissioners Present:**

Richard Bruner, Chair (on-site)
Kelly Dolan Lange, Member (on-site)
Bob Holz, Member (on-site)
Timothy Lapointe, Member (on-site)
Mary Mosiman, Ex-Officio Member (Phone)
Robert von Wolfradt, Ex-Officio Member (on-site)

○ **Iowa Communications Network Staff Present:**

Phil Groner, Executive Director Candidate
Mark Johnson, Carrier Services Division Administrator, Chief Operating Officer (COO)
(Recorder)
Jontell Harris, Executive Officer 2

○ **Guest Attendees:**

Alan Nagel, Attorney General's Office
Kristy McDermott, Executive Director Candidate
Ray Warner, Aureon

● **Call to Order:**

- Chair Bruner called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM. It was noted that a quorum of members were present for the meeting.

● **New Business:**

○ **ICN Executive Director Interviews**

- Commissioner Bruner reviewed process followed to get to the final 2 candidates for the Executive Director position that would be interviewed by the full Commission. He indicated that the Personnel Committee (comprised of Commissioner Lapointe and himself) had reviewed and scored 37 applications and identified 5 semifinalists for initial interviews. One of the 5

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semifinalists withdrew at that point and the Personnel Committee interviewed the 4 semifinalists to get to the final 2 candidates.

- Commissioner Bruner introduced Alan Nagel, Assistant Attorney General (AAG) assigned to the Commission/ICN, for a review of the process to be followed. Mr. Nagel indicated that the overall process would include the following sessions:
 - Closed – Philip Groner interview pursuant to Iowa Code section 21.5, subsection 1, paragraph i, as requested by the candidate.
 - Open – Kristy McDermott interview.
 - Open – Discussion of Ms. McDermott's candidacy.
 - Closed – Discussion of Philip Groner candidacy and any comparison of the 2 candidates.
 - Open – Potential to make a conditional offer based upon interviews and discussion.
- Commissioner Lapointe moved to go into closed session pursuant to Iowa Code section 21.5, subsection 1, paragraph i, for the purpose of interviewing a candidate for the Executive Director position as requested by the candidate. Second by Commissioner Lange. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Holz – Yes

Commissioner Lange – Yes

Commissioner Lapointe – Yes

Commissioner Bruner – Yes

- Mr. Nagel then announced that the Commission would be going into closed session and requested that all members of the public please leave the room. Those remaining in the room included the Commission members, Mr. Groner (the interviewee), Mr. Nagel, and the recorder. The Commission convened in closed session at 10:07.

- **Philip Groner – CLOSED SESSION**

- Closed session minutes separate.

- **Return to Open Session**

- The Commission reconvened at 10:48 a.m. in open session for the interview of Kristy McDermott.
- Mr. Nagel once again offered Ms. McDermott the opportunity for a closed session interview, which she declined.

- **Kristy McDermott**

- Ms. McDermott provided an opening statement to the Commission providing information related to her more than 25-year background in telecommunications. She indicated that her first job out of college was with the State Auditor's Office to prepare the first statewide financial statement, which was a two year project.
- Her telecommunications background also includes:
 - Breda Telephone controller responsible for drafting business plans for new services that she then presented to the Board of Directors.
 - Long Lines – worked on the forefront of Competitive Local Exchange Carriers. Worked with cities, and state and federal regulators.
 - INS/Aureon – Headed business expansion/business diversification efforts. She indicated her involvement in creating Lines Connect (CLEC).
 - Acquired Lightedge's voice customers.
 - Acquired Alliance Technologies, an IT provider.

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- Involved in acquisitions of telecom/IT and unrelated business (e.g. Merit Resources).
- Responsible for improving financial performance of services or eliminating them.
 - Created Product Operating Plans for each product that aligned with strategic plan for the company.
- Closed with statement that her past experiences and skill set make her uniquely qualified to be a leader for the ICN and carry out the mission of the ITTC to its users.
- **Commissioner Questions**
 - Commissioner Holz asked about the differences and similarities of the ICN and private sector.
 - Ms. McDermott indicated that the limited customer base of the ICN was similar to the limited shareholders for INS. She noted that the goal of the ICN should be to ensure that customers are happy with ICN products and services; and sell the ICN as “Iowans serving Iowans”.
 - Commissioner Holz indicated that the focus on her resume appeared to be sales and marketing.
 - Ms. McDermott indicated that the last couple years she was President of the INS Contact Center that involved sales, but that sales/marketing was not the core focus. She indicated that she was more involved with strategic planning. She also highlighted her work in product development at INS, that again involved working closely with sales staff, but that sales/marketing was not the focus of her work. She indicated that the Contact Center involved 250 employees providing technical and service support for customers across the United States.
 - Commissioner Lange asked Ms. McDermott about her vision and the future of the ICN.
 - Ms. McDermott related back to the sale/lease process that resulted in INS bids that were not close to the investment that had been made by the State in the network. She stated that the network is a tremendous asset and that a sale of the network would not generate a bid equal to the network’s value. She also noted that the ICN is a valuable asset in providing education services to smaller communities. She noted that distance learning is invaluable to rural communities.
 - Commissioner Lapointe inquired about Ms. McDermott’s management style, and what has been successful for her.
 - Ms. McDermott indicated it is important to over-communicate to staff. She noted the importance of making sure staff understands organizational goals. This involves frequent meetings to insure goals are met. Responsible staff must be given a clear understanding of goals. She noted that expectations and timeframes would be set, but she would not micromanage. She employs an open door policy to assist and provide guidance.
 - Commissioner Lapointe followed up regarding her use of skills to provide solutions to education.
 - Ms. McDermott noted the necessity of working with the Department of Education to insure they have the tools they need. She noted that she had extensive

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experience working with local schools given their importance to those communities.

- Commissioner Mosiman asked Ms. McDermott what “tone at the top” means to her.
 - Ms. McDermott stated that it means that the leader sets the tone for the organization. She indicated that includes setting clear expectations, let staff know where the organization is going (excite them), and share the vision for the organization – using a positive tone.
- Commissioner von Wolffrad asked how she would rebuild relationships with legislators.
 - Ms. McDermott related how she had attempted to work with the City of Hawarden when she was with Long Lines. She indicated she had to work extensively with legislators to get a law changed with regard to municipal telecommunications utilities. In working with legislators and others, she indicated that you need to understand the motivations of those you are working with. With regard to rebuilding relationships, she noted she would work toward creating a clean slate in moving the relationships forward, identifying positives to be communicated that would assist in moving forward.
- Commissioner von Wolffrad asked what Ms. McDermott believed to be her biggest weakness and how does she overcome.
 - Ms. McDermott indicated her propensity to continue to proofread her own work. She noted she needs to key the message – don’t hit send – and then review or have someone else review it to insure the message is clear.
- Commissioner Lange asked Ms. McDermott how she handles mistakes.
 - Ms. McDermott indicated that you need to learn from mistakes and improve. She related an experience when working with the Contact Center when they were looking for the next big account. She noted that they made it to the final 2, but were not successful even though they were the low bidder. She noted the potential account was looking for a partner who would help them lower costs in customer service, and while they focused on price they needed to “tell their story” to win the business.
- Commissioner Bruner asked about how technology changes will affect the ICN and private sector providers.
 - Ms. McDermott indicated that self-service will be more demanded by customers, indicating that they don’t want to talk to someone, but handle their requests on their own. She noted that staff will need to be retrained as the work environment changes and moves toward more “auto-provisioning” of services.
- Ms. McDermott asked the Commission about the ICN’s strategic plan. Is it revisited every year.
 - Chairperson Bruner indicated that the strategic plan is being redeveloped. Commissioner Lapointe indicated that it is reviewed and updated periodically.
- **Commission Recess**
 - The Commission recessed briefly at 11:19 a.m. and reconvened at 11:26. Mr. Nagel indicated that the Commission could deliberate openly regarding the candidacy of Ms. McDermott only during this time as Mr. Groner had requested deliberation in closed session.



- Commissioner Lapointe commented that it was apparent why Ms. McDermott was selected as one of the two finalists given the quality of her interview. Commissioner Bruner noted that she had good background for the position.
- Commissioner Lapointe moved to go into closed session pursuant to Iowa Code section 21.5, subsection 1, paragraph i, for the purpose of evaluation of candidates for the Executive Director position as requested by a candidate. Second by Commissioner Lange. The motion passed unanimously.
 - Commissioner Holz – Yes
 - Commissioner Lange – Yes
 - Commissioner Lapointe – Yes
 - Commissioner Bruner – Yes
- The Commission convened in closed session at 11:32.
- **Candidate Deliberation – Closed Session**
 - Closed session minutes separate.
- **Return to Open Session**
 - The Commission reconvened at 11:48 a.m. in open session.
 - Commissioner Bruner requested the following motion:
 - I move that the Commission offer the ITTC Executive Director position to Phil Groner on this date, September 18, 2018. This offer is conditional upon the completion of a background check, and if accepted is subject to confirmation by the Iowa Senate during the next regular legislative session beginning on January 14, 2019. Upon approval, the Commission further directs Mark Johnson to draft an official offer letter to be signed by ITTC Chairperson Bruner and sent to Phil Groner to indicate his acceptance of this offer of employment.
 - Motion made by Commissioner Lapointe and second from Commissioner Holz.
 - The motion passed unanimously.
 - Commissioner Holz – Yes
 - Commissioner Lange – Yes
 - Commissioner Lapointe – Yes
 - Commissioner Bruner – Yes
 - Jontell Harris was directed by Chairperson Bruner to contact Ms. McDermott to inform her of the Commission's decision.

- **Public Comment:**

NONE.

- **Adjournment:**

Commissioner Lange moved that the meeting be adjourned. The ITTC meeting adjourned at 11:50 a.m.

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Grimes State Office Building, 400 E. 14th Street, Des Moines, IA 50319 Phone: 515-725-4692 Fax: 515-725-4727 www.icn.iowa.gov

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IOWA TELECOMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY COMMISSION

Richard L. Bruner
CHAIR

Timothy L. Lapointe
Kelly Dolan Lange

Robert F. Holz
Robert von Wolffradt

Mary Mosiman

Philip Groner, Acting Executive Director

Governor Kim Reynolds

Lt. Governor Adam Gregg

ATTESTED TO:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard L. Bruner". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Richard Bruner - Chair, Iowa Telecommunications and Technology Commission

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