

ATEL Committee Meeting

Public Utilities Commission

June 13, 2013

9:00 AM

Attendees:

Denise Corson, James Litvack,, Ellen Lenox Smith , Laurie Duffy, Jeanne Panarace, Pam Kling, Ken McCarthy, Nancy Shuster, Melissa Rosenberg and CART Reporter.

1. Minutes were reviewed and with two modifications (Melissa Rosenberg's name needs to be added to the attendee list and the bill referred to in Open Discussion is the Emergency Access Bill).

Minutes were then accepted.

2. ATEL Committee update- Senator Gallo, on the recommendation of Ellen, accepted the position on the board as long as everybody knows that she is a SLP in a school system and her schedule does not allow for me to attend the meetings. However, she would be happy to review the minutes and do whatever is necessary. We are just waiting for the official nomination letter form the President of the Senate.

3. Project Endeavor/Sprint CradlePoint Extension- Project Endeavor is a program of CSD, funded by a two year contract with the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). This program focuses on providing deaf and hard of hearing Americans with

access to broadband or high speed internet through discounted internet service plans and internet devices. The program was set to expire on March 7, 2013 but has been extended to June 30, 2013. Denise stated that the program has been very successful for CapTel customers with no internet, especially if they are a Verizon FIOS customer. However, Denise has a recent customer from Coventry that CapTel phone only worked intermittently. The CradlePoint uses high speed broadband connection through Sprint; this service utilizes Sprint cell towers, and the coverage in this area is only Fair, so not strong enough to maintain a consistent signal. Denise is in the process of working with Project Endeavor to see if there is a solution for this issue. This is not an issue with Cox's program that sends an internet signal directly from the Gateway Modem/Router, since it has a direct connection to the cable box. Since some companies are getting away from copper wires, and in the event of emergencies that cell phones can go down, there should be a back up system for cell towers.

4. IP (840i) CapTel now being sold by First Street - Per a recent FCC ruling resulting from the sky rocking minutes for IP-CapTel, all new users of IP-based captioned telephone services need to be registered to ensure that the captioning service is used by people who truly need the service; however, the process had many glitches, causing many IP-CapTel phones to lock up, and not work until they were able to download and sign/acknowledge an agreement that states:

1. I have a hearing loss and need IP CTS to communicate in a manner that is functionally equivalent to telephone service experienced by

individuals without hearing disabilities.

„« I understand that the captioning service is provided by a live captioning assistant.

„« I understand that the cost of the Hamilton CapTel calls is funded by the TRS Fund.

Also, there is an interim default-off rule that affects ALL IP-based users; all users must push the caption button on each time they make a phone call. This change occurred in March, and has been proven to be quite disruptive to many IP-based users; many family members of elderly customers that might suffer from some cognitive disabilities find it very difficult to remember to turn on the Captions button, and therefore make the technology inaccessible. Also, the CaptionCall telephone requires you to go into the menu to switch captions off, so even more difficult for individuals. To further complicate matters, First Street, Cosco.com and HomeControl.com also sell IP iVCaptels.

A representative from one of the other State Programs contacted a representative of First Street, after seeing an ad in her Sunday paper.

They are selling it for \$99 plus shipping. They quote a retail price of \$200-\$300, and this \$99 i§is for a limited time.i” When the first street representative asked who pays for the service- the response was i§The federal government probably pays for it.i” When asked why someone should use a captioned phone over an amplified phone iV the response was i§No one should EVER use just a regular amplified phone now that this captioned phone is available! Theyi’re flying off our shelves at this price!i” When asked if there was a learning curve to it at all- the response was i§Iti’s as easy to use as a regular

phone!" Since representatives are not educated on the Captel phone, this is going to create even more IP-Captel users that might not need the captions, but do perfectly well with a high level amplified phone. Since this phone is advertised as a "Miracle Phone" and the high level amplified phones that could be a better option, are priced higher than the Captel phones, this is another reason people might purchase a Captel phone even though they do not need this technology.

5. Cox advertising/ ATEL and RI Relay - Courtenay requested that we add to the agenda, that Jim Lanni had mentioned a while back that we should see if we can do some advertisements with Cox , ATEL and Hamilton Relay; however, Courtenay and Joe Pereira were unable to attend this meeting. Melissa said she would mention to her husband Damien, who also works for Cox.

6. Open Discussion:

1. Denise mentioned that effective this week the ATEL Program has new telephone #, 462-7857. All other numbers and information is the same; the entire ORS office has a new phone system that eliminated the use of extensions.

2. Ken mentioned that he would look into Analog to Digital Converters that use to be easily found at Radio Shack; this would help with the issues ATEL has with the non-internet Captel, the 840. Denise mentioned that Cox has been going out to customers and making adjustments to their signals and we have had great success with connection the Captel 840; however, Verizon has been very difficult to connect with about finding a solution for the Captel 840. Ken stated

he has some contacts at Verizon and will look into.

3. Now that there is hearing screening at birth, hearing loss in children is being detected and treated early, versus years ago it might not have been caught for many years, thereby allowing children to get hearing aids and cochlear implants at very young ages. Also more parents, including Deaf parents, are willing to have CI surgery for their children. Children no longer need to go to a Deaf School but can be successful in mainstream schools. Jeanne Panarace mentioned that there is a school located at Orchard Farms Elementary School in Cranston (THE AUDITORY-ORAL PROGRAM (AOP)), that is a specialized program for children who are deaf or have a profound hearing loss. The children attending this school either wear hearing aids or cochlear implants. The school prepares children to join their hearing peers in mainstream early education or elementary classroom settings in their home districts but the AOP continue to provide outreach services. Health Insurance varies on how much is paid for CI or the coverage for two, but there was a window in James's health plan that allowed him to get two covered. In Puerto Rico they give babies CI as early as 6 weeks, because the government assumes it will save them money in the long run. Some children have 2 language obstacles that need to be contended with, hearing loss and foreign language.

7. The time and date of next year's quarterly meetings: they are scheduled at 9AM- 11AM at the PUC: September 12th and December 12th.