Minutes of the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee
March 20, 2008
East Conference Room, JR Williams Building
Boise, Idaho

Co-chair Margaret Henbest called the meeting to order at 8:10 a.m. Attending the meeting were Senators Shawn Keough, Elliot Werk, and Dick Sagness (substituting for Edgar Malepeai during session), and Representatives Maxine Bell, Clifford Bayer, and Donna Boe. Also present were Rakesh Mohan, Director, Margaret Campbell, Administrative Coordinator, and all other staff.

Co-chair Henbest welcomed those in attendance, including:
Office of the Governor: Joyce McRoberts
Office of the State Controller: Donna Jones, State Controller
Division of Financial Management: David Hahn
Department of Administration: Mike Gwartney
Military Division: General Larry Lafrenz
Department of Health and Welfare: Michele Carreras
Idaho Transportation Department: Dave Tolman
Idaho Tax Commission: Steve Wilson
Bureau of Homeland Security: Colonel William Shawver

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Senator Werk moved to accept the minutes of the meeting on January 16, 2008. Representative Bell seconded the motion, and it unanimously passed by voice vote.

REPORT RELEASE: GOVERNANCE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS

Representative Boe moved to receive the report on governance of information technology and public safety communications. Representative Bayer seconded the motion, and it unanimously passed by voice vote.

Mr. Mohan thanked key stakeholders who provided information for the report, particularly the Governor, the Office of the State Controller, the Department of Administration, the Department of Health and Welfare, Idaho State Police, Idaho Transportation Department, the Bureau of Homeland Security, the Emergency Communications Committee (ECC), and the Statewide Interoperability Executive Council (SIEC). Ms. Liz DuBois, consultant, summarized findings for technology information. She provided the following responses to committee questions:

- The director of the Department of Administration has been the de-facto chief information officer for the state until last year when staff from the Information Technology Resource Management Council (ITRMC) and Administration were merged into the Office of the Chief Information Officer.

- Leading practices do not identify any one preferred model of IT governance. Most of Idaho's neighboring states have some combination of a chief information officer and a technology board or council.

- ITRMC has authority to oversee large-scale projects, but does not have staff capacity. If a project management office is established, that office would need additional resources, staff skills, and experience in formal project management than is currently available.

- Generally, a well-managed and fully supported consolidated IT hardware system provides more security than many single agency systems.

- Consolidation of IT management is a policy decision. The model of operations can be somewhere between two variations: shift all resources (hardware, software, and staff) to a complete centralization or provide central leadership coordination to staff in agencies.

Representative Bell said she was offended and disturbed over the appearance of willy-nilly IT spending. With an Office of the Chief Information Officer in place, she hoped oversight and implementation of recommendations would put the state in the right direction. Ms. DuBois said the state needed to formalize an IT governance structure and define the roles of the CIO and ITRMC for a single voice of clear policy leadership.

Senator Sagness said the model appeared to be reactionary to requests. He asked how a model would be designed for planning and anticipating future needs.

Co-chair Henbest called on Mike Gwartney, Director, Department of Administration, to address the report. Mr. Gwartney commended OPE for the report and said it mirrored the Governor's plan. He said his role was to breakdown kingdoms that had built up over the years and stop the willy-nilly spending of money. He told the committee that one of the kingdoms belonged to the Legislature, its e-mail system, and asked for lawmakers' help.

He said his office was looking to consolidate computer purchasing by contracting with one or two sources, saving over $1 million a year. He was also looking to consolidate cell phones; the use of cell phones was growing at 25 percent per year. ITRMC had recently developed a mission statement and had reviewed two major projects in Health and Welfare. He said the state was well on its way to implementing OPE's recommendations.

Co-chair Henbest called on Ms. Jennifer Hill (Performance Evaluator) and Mr. Mike Huddleston (consultant) to summarize findings of public safety communications. After their summary, Co-chair Henbest said she was struck by the lack of interrelationship and gaps of the ECC, SIEC, and the Idaho Public Safety Communications Governance Council (PSCGC). How much do they talk to each other? Are these three entities going to different meetings?

Ms. Hill, Mr. Huddleston, and Ms. DuBois provided the following responses to committee questions:

- The recommendation to ensure accurate 911 fee collection provided two options: state level collection of fees or an audit of county fee collection. Many counties may resist a state centralized approach, but the ECC should evaluate and implement the option that provides for the most accountability.

- Fee structures in other states provide additional funds to rural counties that may not have enough funding from their share of fee collections. Urban counties may be collecting fees

in excess of their need because they have already achieved Phase II 911 capability. However, with the current decentralized funding structure, Idaho does not know to what extent this is occurring.

- OPE's survey of local governments indicated counties use some 911 funding for public safety radio equipment. This is not the expressed intent of the 911 funds. However, a gray area may exist in funding restrictions for the equipment that dispatchers use to receive 911 calls and the radio equipment they use to dispatch first responders.

- A centralized fee collection process falls within the scope of the ECC and would provide the state with more accountability and transparency. The amount of fee distribution to the counties would not change.

Co-chair Henbest called on Colonel William Shawver, who thanked OPE for doing a phenomenal job on the report. He provided the following responses to committee questions:

- The Bureau of Homeland Security is required to annually audit county radio equipment. The auditor must scan the bar code of the equipment. With one minor exception, all counties have passed the audit requirements.

- Despite a cumulative $17–$18 million in state and federal grant funding spent over the past several years, local governments still experience a significant shortfall in funding to replace radio communications equipment as required by FCC and US Homeland Security rules.

Senator Sagness complimented OPE at incorporating emerging technology into governance processes. Co-chair Henbest said the study was a phenomenal effort and timely in looking at costs and communication in our state.

Senator Keough moved to have OPE conduct a follow-up review of efforts in IT and public safety communications in a year. Senator Werk seconded the motion.

Senator Werk said he would like to have local governments represented at the follow-up meeting for a robust discussion. Co-chair Henbest requested OPE to forward reports and cover letters to local governments. Representative Boe said she would like correctional agencies also involved in next year's discussion.

The motion to conduct a follow-up review in one year passed unanimously by voice vote.[1]

The committee adjourned at 9:35 a.m.

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[1]   At its meeting March 21, 2008, the committee requested by unanimous consent for an update to the report in six months.