

MINUTES

HOUSE ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, February 02, 2022

TIME: 1:30 P.M.

PLACE: Room EW41

MEMBERS: Chairman Ehardt, Vice Chairman Wisniewski, Representatives Vander Woude, Horman, Scott, Amador, Armstrong, Furniss, Hartgen, Lickley, Young, Adams, Yamamoto, Chew, Necochea, Nash

**ABSENT/
EXCUSED:** Representatives Vander Woude, Adams

GUESTS: The sign-in sheet will be retained in the committee secretary's office; following the end of the session the sign-in sheet will be filed with the minutes in the Legislative Library.

Chairman Ehardt called the meeting to order at 1:31 p.m.

MOTION: **Rep. Yamamoto** made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 26, 2022 meeting. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

MOTION: **Rep. Nash** made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2022 meeting. **Motion carried by voice vote.**

Alex Adams, Budget and Regulatory Chief for the Governor, presented the Governor's ARPA Recommendation. He explained to the committee the biggest variable driver of federal funding was unemployment rates, which is why Idaho's funds are lower than other states. The ARPA funds came in three ways, direct support to businesses and individuals, direct funds to state agencies, and discretionary funds to state and local governments. His presentation covered the discretionary funds to the state government, which was broken down into the State Fiscal Recovery Fund and the Capital Projects Fund.

Mr. Adams stated that Idaho has been slow to use the State Fiscal Recovery Fund wanting to see what strings were attached to the money, and to make best use of the funds. The Governor recommends the money be spent on local drinking and wastewater projects, and water quality remediation projects. One of the largest issues in using the money is being able to complete projects by the deadline of December 2026. Mr. Adams reported that demand is in excess of the funding available.

Mr. Adams also discussed the ARPA Capital Projects Fund which will cover Broadband and Community Telehealth, the bulk of the money going to Broadband. He recognized the Broadband Advisory board, made up of legislators, who are working to decide how funds are spent on Broadband.

In answer to committee questions, **Mr. Adams** explained the PPP loans businesses took from the federal government required those entities must now comply with OSHA for the duration of the loan. But he further explained that discretionary funds the state was using only required the state to acknowledge two executive orders encouraging people to not text and drive and to wear seatbelts. He also clarified for the committee that he believed the telehealth funds would be enough to cover up to twenty-three libraries adding telehealth to their services. Mr. Adams explained that locations would be chosen on an application basis and would be competitive.

Mr. Adams, as requested by the committee, explained the complications with how the funds are allocated over multiple years. He reported that the goal was to be as transparent as possible while working within the parameters of the ARPA guidelines and the states methods of appropriation.

Jess Byrne, Director of the Department of Environmental Quality, explained DEQ's role in working to help disburse the State Fiscal Recovery Fund. When asked by committee members about the history of DEQ's role in Idaho, he explained that the state has found an overall benefit to those they regulate and to the environment over all when state employees oversee state issues rather than federal agencies.

Eric Forsch, the Broadband Development Manager, discussed advantages of the formation of the Broadband Task Force. He explained that many improvements have already been made in rural areas of Idaho, where they are now getting better access to broadband. He reported that 24% of Idaho's citizens are without access to high speed broadband.

In answer to committee questions, **Mr. Forsch** explained how rural areas were prioritized based on their lack of high speed internet access, but he would have to get back to the committee if any other factors were included in the prioritizing of funds.

ADJOURN: There being no further business to come before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 2:08 p.m.

Representative Ehardt
Chair

Maggie Price
Secretary