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Transcript

FirstNet Board of Directors Webcast, San Diego, CA, June 2-3, 2015

Part 2 - Governance Committee

SUSAN SWENSON: Everybody. I hope you're enjoying San Diego. I don't know how many know, but this is actually my hometown sort of. I've lived here more than I've lived anywhere else. So I think it's a lovely city and I hope it's treating you well. I know some of you went to the baseball game last night, but I think it was a seven-zip result. But, anyway, it's a beautiful ballpark. Would you like me to get closer? Yes, thank you. Beautiful ballpark and a lovely city. So I really appreciate -- when Dereck Orr called me last year and he said, "You know, we're thinking about having PSCR in San Diego, what do you think," it took about two seconds, right? And so it's a great location.

So thank you for joining us today. We're going to start with the governance and personnel committee meeting this morning, obviously followed by the technology committee, the finance committee, and the outreach. And tomorrow we'll have the board meeting. I'd like to make a few general comments about the next couple of days before we get started. And I think you will see that we're keeping our commitment to keep our meetings open. I think the majority of these meetings today and tomorrow will be open session. So we won't, like we did last time, have to go in and out. So I think that's really important and I think that's been helpful to all of you to have us in open session.

[Inaudible] this morning that we're going to start off with a discussion regarding any potential conflicts. So I'll ask our board secretary Uzoma to provide a conflicts notification and explain to everybody how the couple of days will unfold. So, Uzoma, could you take care of the conflicts, please?

UZOMA ONYEIJE: Absolutely. And for those of you that are familiar with FirstNet, this is something that we do at start of each board meeting now as it relates to potential conflicts. So in advance of FirstNet's June 2015 committee and board meetings, the management team has provide the board with an agenda outlining each of the items that are going to be discussed today.

The members were also provided with a conflict of interest assessment which was jointly produced by the Office of General Council, Department of Commerce, as well as the Office of Chief Counsel within FirstNet. Providing these documents in advance to the board members allows them to identify potential conflicts of interest and to recuse themselves from participation if required.

We will, prior to each committee and full board meeting, remind all board members of their obligations relating to conflicts of interest and ask them to identify whether any recusals are necessary from the deliberations and voting as necessary. With that said, if there's any board members that believe they must now recuse themselves from this meeting please so state for the record. Hearing none, we are ready to proceed.

SUSAN SWENSON: Great. Thanks, Uzoma. And speaking of the ethics topic, as you know, as a result of our issuance of the special notice and the draft RFP documents we're entering really into a new era. Lots of obviously ethics and procurement issues from a government perspective that probably you in the audience are probably more familiar with than I am. I'm learning as we go. And to that end, we had quite an extensive session this morning in closed session going over the Procurement Integrity Act to make sure that -- and some training from the Department of Commerce legal staff because obviously the protection of procurement information is critically important to make this procurement a success. So we spent quite a bit of time on that.

We also discussed the process for vetting and onboarding potential new board members. Uzoma will talk later in the meeting today about the process that we go through every year in terms of consideration of new board members, and we think in light of where we are relative to FirstNet that vetting those potential board members early in the process about any potential conflicts is really important because it'd be a [inaudible] from participating in important deliberations.

So that process, we talked about how that's going to be a little bit different this year. And we've had obviously the show of interest for those board members closed, I believe, on May the 15th. And those potential folks who have indicated an interest will be contacted shortly to provide some information that will be reviewed by the Department of Commerce lawyers to make sure that we don't have that issue going forward. So for those of you who have indicated a show of interest, you'll be contacted shortly to provide us that information.

We also reviewed potential individual conflict issues that may occur as we get more involved in the RFP process. As you know, this is an iterative process. We've taken kind of the first step. But obviously along the way as we get the responses back and we enter into the final RFP, those issues become increasingly challenging from a conflicts issue and we have to pay particular attention to those things to make sure we don't do anything that would jeopardize the RFP.

And lastly, if that wasn't enough, we discussed guidelines for contacting former employees or former board members, because there are some specific rules about what can be discussed with those folks who may have worked for FirstNet or been on the FirstNet board and those topics that can be discussed. It was actually a very, I think, interactive and productive session, and I think obviously we take this topic very seriously because the last thing we want to do is jeopardize two-and-a-half years of hard work because of some misstep.

So, obviously very important discussion, and I want to thank the support that we're getting from a Department of Commerce. This is a complex issue. It's multifaceted. We are complex individuals with our history and our affiliations, and so it's a complex issue, and I appreciate the support that we're getting from the Department of Commerce and obviously our own general counsel, Jason Karp. It's a topic that we [inaudible] we are entering a new era. And I think it's important [inaudible] questions about it. But this definitely is a new era. It's good news because we're actually moving forward. So it's all good.

A couple things we want to talk about this morning in governance are a couple of administrative issues and updates, and so our acting executive director, T.J., is going to bring us up to date on a couple of issues around the organization. So, T.J., the floor is yours.

TJ KENNEDY: Thank you. Appreciate it. This morning what we want to do is cover a couple of key elements related to FirstNet staffing, specifically we're going to talk about recruiting and some of the staffing and classification that we've been working on. The team, the management team, all of the supervisors have been focused on interviewing and really seeking out the best candidates to fill out our key staff in this fiscal year as well as planning for next fiscal year and any key positions needed to work through either consultation or the RFP. We're also going to talk a little bit about onboarding and retention as we start to grow into a larger organization and making sure that we're building the culture and the organization that we think will make FirstNet successful.

A couple things that we've done in the past year is we've worked over the last few months specifically with the Department of Commerce and the NTIA to streamline hiring actions. As we all know, in the federal government there's a lot of steps that go into hiring key government employees that are part of programs and projects and departments, like the Department of Commerce. And we did a lot of work over the last months to look at what steps and streamlining could be done because of our structure as an independent authority inside of NTIA, inside of the Department of Commerce. We had a number of steps and we all worked together very well to take out a few steps that were duplicative and would speed up some of the hiring that needed to be done without losing any of the official steps that are required. So a number of good things have happened over the last few months to improve that process.

We also are really trying to make sure that we're tapping the best talent that we can our hands on, and folks that have a background in telecommunications and wireless technology, and also in public safety, and make sure that we fill those roles with these that are best destined to help us get to our end goal which is to deploy a public safety network that will really help police officers, firefighters, and [inaudible] across the country.

As you know, Sue, it's been very important to you and to the entire board, and the management team knows this across the entire organization, is building the right culture at FirstNet is a huge part of what we're working on. And this comes in to our responsiveness to our constituents, whether that's at night, whether that's on weekends, whether that's in just following up to requests that come in, and making sure that everyone on the team from the first person who meets you at the door all the way through every person on the management team that they're responsive and that they treat public safety and all of our constituents with the customer service that they deserve. So we'll talk a little bit about some of the steps that we're doing on that today as well. But it's a constant effort to create what's the culture of FirstNet versus just the culture of working for government or working on a big project.

One of the challenges we have [inaudible] the RFP, as everyone knows, we're working towards an RFP release by the end of this year. And we're also working to finish off the first round of consultations and getting into the next step of validating data collection and consultations, which we'll talk about later today in the Outreach and Consultation Committee. But all of those have a number of key roles that need to be filled. Just for a current status update, right now we have about 26 positions that are in the final phases of hiring. And these will be coming onboard over the next four to six weeks.

We currently have 15 positions that are advertised in a number of different stages in the advertisement, but really out and posted and being worked by our human resources team to get through that vetting process that needs to occur. And we have 20 more positions that are still being worked by the HR team to get posted and officially recruited. All of these positions are ones we're trying to get onboard before the end of September, the end of the fiscal year. So those last 20, as an example, are really at risk. I believe the first two groups are highly likely to come onboard before the end of September, but quite honestly the last 20 are definitely at risk and a lot of work will have to be done by Frank and the entire team to make those a reality. And they're dedicated to do that, but there's certainly challenges to make that happen in that timeframe.

As you and I have talked about in the past in some of these meetings we know the timeframe is long. I will say we're starting to shorten that timeline. One of the things that we've done is we've really put a number of dedicated resources that track every single step of the HR process. And there's a lot of places for documents to get slowed down or the process to get clogged up so to speak. And I think the team and Frank's really taken a great effort at trying to focus on every step of the process and making them as short as possible so that it can move through and we can get people hired.

For us in FirstNet there's a number of key steps that go from the initial recruitment all the way through to onboarding, and these steps in the federal government in general take between 80 and 90 days. There's a number of other things that can slow that down. A big part upfront is also the recruitment that needs to occur because of the high quality individuals we're looking for. And many times they have more opportunities in the private sector than they might in government. And so trying to make sure that we

write the right position descriptions and that we get really the right skill sets posted out there, and that we do a great job of interviewing and selecting of candidates.

And one of the things that the chief administrative officer's role has really taken on over the last month or two is really working with the teams to put in key hiring panels and kind of a process to make sure that we're always getting the best candidates that come out through that process through a large amount of work that goes into the hands-on process of interviewing. And so the teams worked on key questions. The team has worked on interview panels and really trying to make sure that we're vetting those to get the best possible candidates.

One area where we still need a fair amount of work is onboarding. I think the basic onboarding that happens with the Department of Commerce and FirstNet to get people ID badges and get them in the building is pretty good. The part that we need to work on as we're growing now is really getting people up on everything that's gone on at FirstNet and everything that we're doing between consultation and the RFP, and how do we do that when most of the managers and teams are outdoing that work? And so this is really working with the human resource team to put together both videos and documents and materials that makes that onboarding process a lot more streamlines and also more effective.

We're starting to hire more folks across the country and regions. We have folks that are placed in different time zones. And one of the things that Jim Gwinn in our CIO's office is working on is all the right technology to make sure that it's easy to access all the documents, there's a lot more video teleconference, and we can do this both remotely and in person at the FirstNet headquarters. So, more work to be done, but it's definitely improving and what we need to do.

Retention is also an issue that we're looking at, and this comes into what can we do to make sure we keep the great employees that we bring onboard. Because of the efforts of FirstNet and the hard work that we demand to get this job done, and the urgency that we go with, we certainly have had some turnover. In the last fiscal year -- calendar year actually, of 2014, we had about 14.7% turnover. The reality is we need to make sure that we have the right things in place from training and retention and the right incentives that those folks that we want to make sure stay onboard do stay onboard.

SUSAN SWENSON: Yeah, just in addition to, I think, incentives, I think it's the right environment and the right leadership. You know, as I think you're going to talk about a little bit later, and I think we've all been in organizations where it's, you know, you get the information that you need, you feel part of what's important, that you're involved in the things that make a difference. And I know that when we're all in a hurry to get to the finish line sometimes we don't do that. So I think it's going to be really important for the FirstNet leadership team to really pay attention to that because it's just something that I think gets overlooked when you're in a hurry. And I think you pay the price for it long term.

TJ KENNEDY: I agree. And I think that the engagement and the empowerment is a key part of that. And one of the things that we've really worked on is improving that communication and making sure that all of the information is getting to all of the team. And I think you need to do that as you're moving quickly because things change and it changes often, and you need to make sure that they have the information they need to be empowered to do your job, and that will help retention as well.

SUSAN SWENSON: You know, one of the things that I've seen, and I'm sure Tim and Barry and Jeff and probably all of you in the audience have seen this, is that it seems like it takes time upfront to involve people, but bringing people together with a different perspective actually saves you time in the entire process. I mean, I guess it's Deming's quality perspective. It's just like you think it doesn't, but at the end it takes you longer because you have to go back and redo it, and plus you have a disengaged workforce that, you know, that we can't afford. I mean, we have so few people we have to have every single one of them giving 110% every day. So I appreciate the fact that the leadership will spend some time on that.

TJ KENNEDY: We agree. One of the things that Frank and the team have been working on is our space at FirstNet headquarters. And we have moved into the USGS building and campus last year, but we also have building out our permanent space. So we're in swing space currently in that building right next door

to our permanent space, but the permanent space is coming along very nicely. It's a very open space. It's being improved as we speak. And really by mid-July that space will be all built out, and then it's just a matter of furniture installation and some of the key IT network and other things that need to go into place. But right now we're on track that in August we will be moving into the new space, which will also help as we grow.

SUSAN SWENSON: How did the space get designed? I mean, was it by a small committee? Were employees involved in this? Can you talk about that a little bit?

TJ KENNEDY: Sure. I'm going to have Frank just jump in. He actually worked on this and he can give some details on the employee groups.

FRANK: Yes. So when we first started off we wanted to make sure that our employees at the lowest level were involved in designing this office space. So what we did at the leadership level is we came up with what we call "designing principles" for, like, overarching strategies that we thought would be effective in designing our office layout. Then we developed a committee. My chief of facilities, Derrick Saint [ph], established a committee that was comprised of employees from all throughout the organization. And then they discussed how would we implement these broad strategies that the leadership team has brought down on them. And so we've had a lot of suggestions out of that. And then we made the changes to design accordingly, based on some of the feelings that our employees had inputted to us. I mean, we were limited to some of the physical space that we had and things like that, but a lot of things like team collaboration rooms, quiet rooms, you know, open concept, a lot of those things were brought into the design based on inputs that we got from our employees.

SUSAN SWENSON: Great.

JEFFREY JOHNSON: And when we get this new space are we taking our same furniture over or is this new office furniture that comes in?

FRANK: It's new office furniture because the furniture we're currently in is being borrowed from our good friends at USGS who have really done a great job of partnering us so that we can have interim space.

SUSAN SWENSON: It looks like we have maybe some nice lighting, because when you go into the USGS space today, I almost feel like I need a flashlight walking down some of the hallways.

FRANK: We made improvements to lighting. And one of the concepts that we concentrated on was really maximizing the natural light that comes from the outside wall. By lowering the cubicles and allowing that light to filter all throughout the facility, we'll have a much more natural feel of light than in most of the areas in that building. And, in fact, the USGS leadership of facilities want to use our area as a showcase that once we're done they can show their leadership "This is how we can make our rooms look within the rest of the building," and so they want to kind of use us as a showcase.

SUSAN SWENSON: So, mid-August, you're being about --

FRANK: Yes, ma'am.

SUSAN SWENSON: Great. Only took a year-and-a-half.

TJ KENNEDY: Training is another element that the administrative team is focused on. There's a lot of government-required training that has to happen each year. One of the big changes for this year is the Commerce Learning Center where a lot of our training elements has been updated. They've created a special FirstNet page. This has allowed us to put other training and will allow us to put onboarding material internally on the intranet site and allow us to track all the training and make sure we're in compliance with all of the requirements.

SUSAN SWENSON: You know, can I ask you a question about the training, because we're required to do training? In fact, I got a note from the Commerce Learning Center last night, two of them as a matter of fact. I must be delinquent on something. But is it well done, because I got some IT training about a year-and-a-half ago and it took me about an hour and 20 minutes to go through it. And it just seemed lengthy. So are things getting in terms of the quality of the training? And you can say, I mean, if there's opportunities for improvement.

FRANK: So the -- yeah, there's definitely opportunity for improvement. But some of the training, you know, is mandated to us by the Department of Commerce, so we just take the products that they create and then we have to distribute to our --. But one thing that we have done that we see that was much more effective and we got a lot of good inputs from our employees, we created the option. Yes, you can go do the computer-based training at the Department of Commerce or we can get a live instructor to come in. And we did that for our IT and we got a lot of rave reviews from the employees of being able to have that option, not just sitting down at a computer doing that IT training, but actually having a live instructor that you can interact with. So where we can do options like that to improve our training, we are.

And then, of course, the training that we mandate, I mean, we're going to use a variety of methods to dispense that training where we're in control of it. But, you know, there are some limitations of what we can do with the federally-mandated training that comes down from Commerce. But we've looked at and explored a lot of different options to make that better.

SUSAN SWENSON: What's the number of hours that people are required -- what's the -- I mean, there's probably a syllabus of training that's probably required, and I'm just curious on an annual basis what --

FRANK: Yeah, I really don't have that exact number right now. I'll have to get that to you.

SUSAN SWENSON: Okay. Okay. Thanks.

TJ KENNEDY: One of the things that we conducted this past year, and we discussed this with the governance committee, is doing an employee survey. And this was our first employee survey outside of the government-wide surveys that are done by the Office of Personnel Management and also the NTIA are Commerce-wide surveys that are traditionally done each year. Specifically, we try to come up with some ways to focus on creating that culture at FirstNet that we talked about that is so important and also trying to find opportunities to improve. We know as a new organization all of the right processes and procedures aren't necessarily there to get us the exact outcome we want. So we wanted to make sure that were being very open with staff and trying to look at areas where we can improve communication and really get their feedback early so that we can make adjustments now before we get too far into creating the organization.

And so we created a very short, ten-question survey that could be completed in a short period of time, and that survey was sent out to all of the employees. And we received about a 75% response rate. So from that we then took a look at what the responses were and where we could improve. A number of the survey questions we felt that we had a solid response to and that, in general, eight of the ten survey questions had a 77% or more favorable rating that we were doing those things that we said we were going to do. There were two of them that definitely required some improvement. And we know that we have to work on those as we move forward.

And just to highlight what those are, first off, one is related to communication from supervisors and having enough information that flows throughout the organization. And for anybody who's run an organization, you know this is often where there are problems within different layers in the organization where this is not as good as it should be. And so I think this is important for us to address it right away. And this is where we receive the 64% and 67% favorable ratings.

The second piece was on the entrepreneurial culture and having the 24/7 commitment and making sure that people are available for our stakeholders. And part of this, I would say, was a communication issue probably more than anything. I think everybody believes greatly in our public safety customer and how

we need to be responsive to them. But there was a little bit of a question on does that mean they are individually responsible 24/7, 365 days a year, versus the organization? And so Frank has actually worked on a way to go sit down with each of the groups and work through this. And I want Frank just to comment on that follow-up.

FRANK: So after we had the talk we sat down with our different leadership and then we created a schedule where we were going to mix and match where the leader would take the staff meeting of a different group that you're not their current leader for and then have kind of, like, a bottom up discussion with that group on what do they think the reasons for the question not getting the favorable response and what are their suggestions of ways we can improve that.

And so we've conducted all but one focus group. We just have one remaining. The information that we see that we got from the focus group so far was pretty predictable of why what we thought it would be. Not very many comments on what we could do to improve the first question. But for the second question, T.J. was right, it was just they didn't understand the definition of what we meant by 24/365, and so clearing that up, they suggested if we just clear that up for them that that probably would have got a higher response. So we still have the one group today and then we're going to meet back in a more general setting with the whole employees and say, "This is the information we got from you. These are some of the suggestions that you said that would improve the process, and then here's our action plan of how we're going to actually implement some of the suggestions that you made to improve the process." So that's the next step that we'll be doing over the next few weeks.

TJ KENNEDY: And also I think it's really important that there's actionable plans for us to address and to circle back with all the employees. And then we will plan to resurvey this in the future. One place where we also think we need to improve is we did not have areas for open comments, and we will make sure that in our future surveys that's there for every one of them because we think it's really important to be able to receive comments on individual questions as well as just overall so that we can be alerted to other areas where we need to improve as well.

TIM BRYAN: I think you're already doing the most important thing with surveys is given the feedback to all the employees, not just subsets of them, and then the next most important thing is six months from now, if you actually do a few of the things that you say you're going to do, you'd be amazed at how quickly people your 75% will go to 100% if you do a few things. And if you just sort of say, "Yeah, okay, we surveyed them, here are the results," and you don't do anything, your 75 will go to 50. It will turn that quickly. So I think you guys are doing the right thing around these sorts of things.

SUSAN SWENSON: Yeah, let me just ask about -- it really kind of goes back to training. With an organization growing as fast as we are, we're probably putting people into new leadership positions that are new to them. So, being a leader of a group of people is different than being an individual contributor. Do we have development programs so that we can help people be more effective in those roles that we're putting them in?

FRANK: Actually, we do. We've partnered with the Department of Commerce, and on a monthly basis they come over and gave us what we call developmental training. It's on a variety of subjects like how to manage conflict, you know, how to deal with a bad employee, you know, things that new supervisors who are not used to supervising people for a long time, issues that they could come across that they might not be familiar with.

And so we've been providing that kind of developmental training for our new supervisors, and old supervisors who just want a refreshers in how things work in the Department of Commerce, because they come from different agencies, how can they utilize that training and get more smart on some of those subjects. So we've doing that on a monthly basis. And so we've gotten some good participation from a lot of the new supervisors. So we think that's going very well.

TJ KENNEDY: In addition to that, though, one of the things that the supervisors are currently in the process of doing is creating individual development plans and really looking at individuals who have high

potential to promote into new positions and also looking at both public and private training, not just department training, but training outside, that's very specialized to what that particular role may need. And we currently have paid for that training and put people into key training classes where we thought that would be very helpful to the organization and to the individual.

SUSAN SWENSON: Good, and you know I think -- I mean, some of those things are kind of tactical that you need to understand, and I also think -- I mean, our organization, it's about collaboration, right? I mean, you've got to have groups coming together. So I think if you haven't looked at ways to help people understand that that is a helpful approach, it may be different than what they've thought about. So, I mean, it's something that you might just want to look at in addition to kind of the tactical stuff is just how to effectively lead across an organization and how to engage people because sometimes I don't think it's just second nature.

TJ KENNEDY: Well, one terrific example of this, Sue, was Vice Chair Johnson actually came and after our last board meeting spent an afternoon with the entire FirstNet organization at our headquarters in Reston as well as the team on the line from Boulder, and gave a couple hour session on customer service and just the expectations of customer service and really engaged the team in an amazing way.

And, as anybody who knows Chief Johnson, he's passionate about this and has done a great job of leading that within the fire department as well as other organizations. And it's that kind of also, you know, key training for the entire organization that focuses on communications, that focuses on customer service, focuses on having that open collaboration that you think is so important, I think is so important and the entire management team respects. And we're very lucky to have board members that are also willing to share their time to make that happen. And I think that was extremely well-received and just want to thank Chief Johnson for being willing to do that.

SUSAN SWENSON: Did we video it?

TJ KENNEDY: We did not, and we probably should have. We'll have to work on that for the next round.

JEFFREY JOHNSON: I'm not sure I would have released the rights.

TJ KENNEDY: It's actually probably quite valuable.

BARRY BONIFACE: It would be expensive.

TJ KENNEDY: Yeah. He may not have been totally as candid. I don't know. But he did a great job. And what I think is so important, too, is he gave a great perspective for our key customer base, public safety, and what they deal with day in and day out as part of that and the expectations and the importance of being very, very responsive. And I think that's important for all of FirstNet.

SUSAN SWENSON: Thank you.

TJ KENNEDY: We didn't include all of the survey questions in here, but I wanted to give you a feel for the kinds of -- some of the questions that we asked as well as some of the typical ratings that you would get back. We had the usual strongly agree, somewhat agree, and somewhat disagree, strongly disagree kinds of rankings. And in some cases they were fairly clear like this and in others, as we talked about, we had more areas for improvement. Any one of these is still an area for improvement, though, and we think it's important.

I, of course, like this question because I think it's absolutely critical that everyone, regardless of where you work at FirstNet, is dedicated to our nation's first responders and having this FirstNet mission that we do that's so important. And I think it does show that the majority of people who come to work at FirstNet, this is exactly why they're here and being a part of this organization. So, with that, that concludes my presentation to the board. We do have Uzoma who's got the next phase to talk about, recruitment of board members.

SUSAN SWENSON: And since I skipped my administrative duties before I had you speak, I'm going to have Uzoma take the roll and then we'll approve the minutes. So, Uzoma, would you do me a favor and take the roll, please?

UZOMA ONYEIJE: Absolutely. Sue Swenson.

SUSAN SWENSON: Here.

UZOMA ONYEIJE: Barry Boniface.

BARRY BONIFACE: Here.

UZOMA ONYEIJE: Tim Bryan.

TIM BRYAN: Here.

UZOMA ONYEIJE: Jeff Johnson.

JEFFREY JOHNSON: Here.

UZOMA ONYEIJE: Teri Takai.

TERI TAKAI: Here.

UZOMA ONYEIJE: We have a quorum.

SUSAN SWENSON: Thank you. I apologize for not doing that earlier. I was so anxious to hear T.J.'s report. We also have some minutes before you that I think are pretty straightforward, but are there any comments or would there move to approve them?

TIM BRIAN: I'll make a motion to approve them, Sue.

SUSAN SWENSON: Thank you.

BARRY BONIFACE: Second.

SUSAN SWENSON: Thank you, Barry. All those in favor?

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Aye.

SUSAN SWENSON: All those opposed? Any objections? Minutes approved. Thank you. Uzoma, I think you're going to bring us up to date. I mentioned it in my opening remarks about we're in the process of bringing on potential new board members, so I think it's going to be helpful to talk about the process we're going through and that's it kind of an annual event for us.

UZOMA ONYEIJE: Absolutely. Yeah, FirstNet is a unique organization. The mission of FirstNet is really to serve public safety in a way that combines elements of the commercial world and the government

world, and it's something unique to government. And so I think we wanted to take an opportunity to explain this sort of yearly cycle we are on as it relates to board members. You know, this slide just shows our current list of board members and, as everyone knows, FirstNet board got started in 2012, and really the way the organization works is there are 12 members that come that are appointed by the Secretary of Commerce, and then we have an additional three members that are permanent members of the board that come from the government sector. And I just thought that, you know, with basketball season now and everyone's thinking about the big game --

UNIDENTIFIED: Hockey.

UZOMA ONYEIJE: Maybe hockey as well. But I thought it was interesting that we do have a team of 12 that's appointed to this board and was in 2012 it got started. 20 years prior there was also a team of 12 that was appointed, and that team was referred to as the "Dream Team" if you remember the 1992 Olympic men's basketball team. And it's a similar concept for FirstNet where we are trying to pull talent from everywhere we possibly can to help the mission and make it successful. And so that's what you see with the FirstNet board is we have people that come from all walks of life, different experience, but the goal is ultimately to make this team great. And maybe we'll blow out our opponents as well.

BARRY BONIFACE: Hey, Uzoma. It was very nice of Frank to include his high school yearbook picture for the board.

SUSAN SWENSON: You're asking for it.

[Inaudible]

UZOMA ONYEIJE: So I think it's always important to just to refocus people understand that there are some statutory requirements related to service on the FirstNet board. So if you look at this slide, you'll see that there's many things that the statute requires FirstNet to take into consideration. So there has to be at least three public service public safety professionals on the board. We have four. Folks have to have geographic and regional representation represented as well. There should be at least three people that represent the collective interest of the states, the territories, the tribes, as well as taking into consider a rule in urban representation.

Now, when we start to look at individual board members, there's additional criteria that each board member must have. So each board member must either have public safety experience, technical, network, or financial experience. So it's sort of a bit of a jigsaw puzzle where we are trying to make sure we have someone that meets all of these criteria, and there's multiple -- several layers of criteria that we look at in terms of getting people to serve on the board.

I think the important thing to keep in mind is that our board is a staggered board, and by that I mean when the legislation was first passed there was four board members of the appointed board members that had one-year terms and there was four that had two-year terms and there's four that had three-year terms. As we move forward, each board member has a three-year term, but because of that staggering at the beginning, each and every year we're going to be engaged in this process of looking for new board members, bringing new board members in, bringing new talent in, and more people to help us with the challenge this board faces with trying to serve public safety. To-date the FirstNet board has been around for about three years now, and of the 12 appointed members, six have transitioned back out to the public sector. We've had six new members that have come on in.

So let me give you just a sense of what the process is. I think this is something you touched on a little bit as well. So the way we get started is with a public notice seeking applications, and anyone who's familiar knows that NTIA puts this public notice out each year. If you can think back in history, in 2012 there was no FirstNet board, so NTIA was taking the lead and putting out this notice to get people who were interested in the board and get the process started. We've continued that process.

So that notice went out in April, late April. And folks were given approximately three weeks or so to respond. So we now have a list of applicants that have been interested. And we talked a little bit about this. We touched a little bit on it, but I think the key thing is we want to try to have a process where we are evaluating the folks who are interested, narrowing it down to initial selections.

But you can see on this chart how I talk about the formal conflicts checks sort of being afterwards. But we really want to make sure that we can get as much of that done early in the process as possible so the folks who ultimately can be selected by the board, we have a real clear sense that they're able to serve on the board, they're able to make a real contribution, and that they will move forward with the mission.

So, ultimately, the goal is to complete this process by August 20th, the anniversary date of the board being formed. And for our September meeting, if we have new members, we will be working in that interim process to get those folks ready for our September meeting, which will be taking place in Reston. But that gives you a general sense of what's going on. And we wanted the public to understand that this is, again, it's a very -- it's a process we're going to be doing every single year and layering the board in this manner and staggering the board in this manner isn't really any different than what you see in the U.S. Senate where you don't want everyone coming up for election in the exact same year. We don't want our board turning over. While we want new talent, we don't want a complete turnover.

So that concludes what's going on, and hopefully once we get back in September we'll have another report about how this process was completed and what we have as a result.

SUSAN SWENSON: Thank you, Uzoma. You know, I serve on several boards, FirstNet being one, and I think onboarding, much like you talk about employees, I think we have to think about an effective way to onboard new board members. We've had, you know, the last group come on and I think it would be probably useful for us to probably get some feedback, you know, from some of our newer board members, to say what could you have used to get up to speed, because we're at a point where it's a little more complex than it was when we started. I mean, we kind of were in a startup mode and kind of created things, but now we're moving full speed ahead. And, you know, I don't know, maybe there's a video we can get probably the public safety, you know, and different folks in the organization to probably educate a little bit, because I think there's a lot to absorb to really be able to contribute right away.

TJ KENNEDY: That's a great point, Sue. And last year we put together one day, but it was just a start and there's so much to do now that I think we really need to look at this for this September. So I'll make sure we take that on and come back with some good ideas.

SUSAN SWENSON: Yeah, because it's more than getting your ID card and your picture taken.

TJ KENNEDY: Absolutely.

SUSAN SWENSON: Tim?

TIM BRYAN: Yeah, I think, you know, spending the day at FirstNet as part of an orientation session is great. Going to the different departments, understanding that, and then spending some time with Commerce and NTIA and the legal group, just having one day where you can get a full orientation is the way we do it on the private side and it's great, and people can hit the ground running.

SUSAN SWENSON: Well, good. Any other comments about that now that you -- Barry, you've been around for a couple years, I mean, you've had experience with onboarding. What was your experience like? Would you care to share it with us?

BARRY BONIFACE: Yeah, it was baptism by fire. No, yeah, I guess I've been a couple years. I think it was -- I had some sense, but there was still a lot being molded and formed. We didn't have a committee structure at the time I joined the board, and that was all sort of evolving. So I had less of a formal introduction. It sounds like we've at least gone a step further than that this time forward. I do think that additional insights and some of the history of sort of how we got to where we got to is helpful for folks.

And actually how the place works as it relates to this sort of federal oversight associated with the project and what the implications and things around that I think would be useful for folks.

I will say that if there were an opportunity, you know, I was fortunate enough to have spent time with Chief Johnson's old group out in Oregon and went through the fire academy out there, and that was a great way to get some perspective on what it's like to be out in the field. And I think as a board member it was insightful. So if there's a way to incorporate any of that into the process, I think it would be good for board members to go through that.

SUSAN SWENSON: Thank you. I think this concludes our agenda today, unless there's any other business. I would just like to make a comment. Just noticing Steve Fletcher over there, T.J., I think maybe you want to introduce Steve because people know him as working at NTIA, and he's recently joined the FirstNet team. So maybe it would be nice to explain Steve's role in the organization.

TJ KENNEDY: Sure. We've worked with NTIA to detail Steve over to the organization. And Steve is now my deputy for administration. And Steve is specifically looking into and managing the CIO organization, the CAO organization, and the CFO organization. And so if you think of the administrative internal functions versus more of the external functions like CTO and user advocacy, Steve is really helping me on the internal function. It's been terrific not having a deputy for the last year. It's great to have him onboard and really knows the interworkings of commerce and some of the key agencies we work with on a daily basis.

SUSAN SWENSON: I obviously worked with Steve a lot when he was at NTIA. So, Steve, thanks for being willing to come over and put your fire retardant uniform on and deal with some of the issues because, I mean, there are a lot of process improvements that I know everybody's working on, and I think your knowledge of how things work is quite useful. So thanks for being willing to take that on. Appreciate it.

Any other business for the good of the cause here? None? Hearing none, I would suggest we adjourn and move to adjourn. Second?

Second.

All those in favor.

Aye.

Aye.

Great. Meeting adjourned. We'll reconvene the technology committee meeting at 11:00, correct?

Yep.

Okay, thank you.