

MINUTES
of the
SECOND MEETING
of the
SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

September 2, 2020
Video Conference Meeting

The second meeting of the Science, Technology and Telecommunications Committee was called to order by Senator Michael Padilla, chair, on September 2, 2020 at 9:05 a.m. by video and audio conference via an online platform.

Present

Sen. Michael Padilla, Chair
Rep. Debra M. Sariñana, Vice Chair
Sen. William F. Burt
Rep. Kelly K. Fajardo
Rep. Tara L. Lujan
Sen. Bill B. O'Neill
Sen. William P. Soules
Rep. Melanie A. Stansbury

Absent

Rep. Christine Chandler
Rep. Jason C. Harper
Sen. Mark Moores

Advisory Members

Rep. Abbas Akhil
Sen. Ron Griggs
Sen. Roberto "Bobby" J. Gonzales
Sen. Richard C. Martinez
Sen. Mary Kay Papen
Sen. Nancy Rodriguez

Sen. Craig W. Brandt
Sen. Jacob R. Candelaria
Rep. Daymon Ely
Sen. William H. Payne
Rep. Joseph L. Sanchez
Sen. Bill Tallman
Sen. Peter Wirth

Guest Legislators

Rep. Joy Garratt
Rep. Willie D. Madrid

Staff

Mark Edwards, Bill Drafter, Legislative Council Service (LCS)
Ralph Vincent, Systems Consultant, LCS
Joanne Vandestreek, Senior Legislative Librarian, LCS

Handouts

Handouts and other written testimony are in the meeting file and posted on the legislature's website.

Wednesday, September 2

Welcome and Introductions (9:06 a.m.)

Senator Padilla welcomed the committee. Members of the committee and staff introduced themselves.

New Mexico Bioscience Authority Update and Request (9:11 a.m.)

Richard S. Larson, executive vice chancellor, University of New Mexico (UNM) Health Sciences Center, discussed the roles and activities of the New Mexico Bioscience Authority. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/STTC%20090220%20Item%201%20--%20Bioscience%20Authority%20Status%20Update.pdf>

Comments from committee members included the following:

- investing in bioscience industries is a way to diversify the New Mexico economy;
- funds invested would be termed as risk capital and could be lost;
- the criteria for investment companies the state would work with include having demonstrated experience and oversight capabilities and availability of capital; and
- the outlook for job development in bioscience industries is promising; an increase of \$400 million in new business revenue would translate into about 4,000 new jobs.

Status Update on Spaceport America and Opportunities for Space Technology Industries in New Mexico (9:47 a.m.)

Casey DeRaad, chief executive officer, New Space New Mexico, described New Space New Mexico as a 501(c)(3) organization that fosters an entrepreneurial, business-focused commercial space ecosystem in New Mexico. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/STTC%20090220%20Item%202%20Update%20on%20Marketing%20and%20Recruitment%20of%20Space%20Industries.pdf>

Scott McLaughlin, interim executive director and director of business development, Spaceport America, presented an overview of the activities at Spaceport America. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/STTC%20090220%20Item%202%20Spaceport%20Update%202020-09-02v1.pdf>

Comments from committee members included the following:

- interest was expressed in the legislative aerospace caucus and the ongoing education offered to legislators;
- the informed consent exclusion for space flight activities in statute will soon expire and should be extended; many other states have this exclusion for space activities;

- there is anticipation for the first Virgin Galactic launch to fly passengers into space; the current time line includes meeting Federal Aviation Administration requirements and conducting several more flight tests before passengers will be allowed to fly, hopefully by early 2021;
- sending passengers into space is the spaceport's high-profile activity, but other activities at the spaceport have grown immensely;
- there is outreach that New Space New Mexico can coordinate;
- UNM, New Mexico State University (NMSU) and the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology have aerospace programs, and UNM and NMSU have participated in the Spaceport America Cup competition;
- Spaceport America will be evaluating the use of renewable energy for the area; and
- regarding when New Mexico can anticipate a return on the investment made in Spaceport America, there are currently 30 staff members, and that number will grow as more tenants sign leases at the facility; the payback includes direct and indirect contributions to the economy through jobs created and ancillary expenditures from tenants.

New Mexico's Potential Within the National Market for Data Centers (11:23 a.m.)

Steve Chavez, managing director, Mesa del Sol, and James W. Grice, partner, Bryan Cave Leighton Paisner LLP, described the growth of the data center industry. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/STTC%20090220%20Item%203%20--%20Data%20Centers%20 Opportunities%20Needs%20and%20Impacts.pdf>.

Comments from committee members included the following:

- primary factors in the location of a data center are the proximity to high-capacity fiber connectivity and the ability to meet power requirements;
- Mesa del Sol was not designed for businesses with high power consumption requirements;
- power transmission capabilities in New Mexico are limited;
- data center facilities may choose to build their own power substations;
- for the state to develop infrastructure, funds could be allocated to establish power hubs where enough power could be provided for a facility;
- committee members questioned the need for the state to build additional infrastructure in advance and suggested that the power capacity should be built out after a facility is planned; and
- the secondary and tertiary businesses that grow as a result of a data center are those that provide services to the facility, such as backup power generation services and information technology jobs.

Broadcast Internet as a Solution to the Digital Divide (12:10 p.m.)

Franz Joachim, general manager and chief executive officer, New Mexico Public Broadcasting Service, described broadcast internet, also known as datacasting. The presentation can be found here:

<https://www.nmlegis.gov/handouts/STTC%20090220%20Item%204%20Broadcast%20Internet%20for%20Education%20and%20Public%20Safety.pdf>.

Comments from committee members included the following:

- KNME-TV, KRWG-TV and KENW-TV provide services across the state and, combined, reach 99% of New Mexicans;
- any data that can be transmitted to the television station could be broadcast out, including public safety events;
- with the current pandemic, remote learning has become a much more important topic, and datacasting can reach remote areas where broadband access may be limited;
- datacasting is a great opportunity to provide distance learning options for the state;
- the costs for full-scale datacasting are projected at \$7 million to provide every student access to a receiver, along with \$1 million for the public broadcast station; additional costs would be associated with the development of content; and
- datacasting is only a one-way service and does not currently allow direct participation from those receiving the content.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 12:54 p.m.