

TRANSPARENCY BOARD MEETING MINUTES
June 3, 2008

Board Attendance:

Senator Wayne Niederhauser

John Nixon- Governors Office of Planning and Budget

Representative Ken Sumsion

Stephen Fletcher- DTS

Judicial Council- Myron March

John Reidhead- Director of Finance

Fiscal Analyst- Jonathon Ball

Myron March was nominated by the Judicial council

Jonathon Ball was nominated by himself

Ken Sumsion was nominated by speaker Curtis

Senator Niederhauser was nominated by President Valentine

All were approved by the Governor

Other board members are by Statute

1. Welcome: John Reidhead welcomed everyone to the first Advisory Board meeting, and had the board introduced themselves.

2. Comments: John Nixon, stated that the State was recognized for this bill. Representative Sumsion, likes the idea of having technology available to the state's citizens. Judicial Council Myron March, said the courts are supporting of the Bill. Senator Niederhauser, said "The wave is starting to roll with websites." States such as Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma, already have websites for citizens. The state was fortunate to pass this bill. Utah has a reputation of doing things right. He is excited about the website.

3. Election of Chair and Vice Chair: Jonathon Ball was elected chair. John Nixon was elected Vice Chair.

John Nixon-The way the Board is set up, we have Legislative representatives, as well as judicial representatives on it. John wasn't sure if it mattered if we have a chair from the executive branch, or the judicial branch, or the legislative branch. He wasn't sure if there were precedents or discussions on this matter, or if anyone knows. Normally there are not Legislative people or judicial people on executive boards. He wasn't sure if it mattered.

John Reidhead does not want this to become a political issue, wants a common goal.

Duties of Chair: The Transparency Board is an Advisory Board to the Division of Finance to implement a website that is free to the public that creates views and searches where the citizens can view the States finances. Three considerations to look at are, security issues, what are the cost benefits of providing the information, and the value of providing it to the public. We need to provide a meaningful resource to the public and other branches of government and auditors and legislators and so forth.

4. Introduction of Key Planning Decisions: Some of Finance staff has looked at other sites to prepare for today's meeting. Brenda Lee, Asst. Director of Finance, Estela Saucedo, staff member of Finance, Julia Holmes, data warehouse manager, have been looking at what they could do with what resources they have. They have had two meetings with Utah Interactive.

The four questions that are listed under section four on the agenda are the question that they felt had to be answered. If we are doing a scope document these are the building blocks of that scope. There are still a lot of questions that have to be answered.

Representative Sumsion-\$125,000.00 is the budget we've been allocated, he wanted to know if there would be any other resources available from other departments, and will some be willing to commit time to this project.

Stephen Fletcher-We want to provide the frame work. This is the type of information we want to get, then we'll say here's the core, this is what we want to work on with the budget we've been allocated. And then we'll progress from there.

John Reidhead-Division of Finance may have some additional funds. There may be some subsidies available from Utah Interactive. If the agencies have to have a lot of work involved, there hasn't been funding set aside to help them. So we will have to address funding in those situations. Hopefully, we won't have to ask for a lot resources from these other groups. We have \$125,000.00 to get this accomplished.

Senator Niederhauser-Wanted to change the wording from, what data do we want to share? To what data don't we want to share?

John Reidhead-What data do we want out there for the public? What will the public want to view? We can't put everything out there. How frequent will we want to update the site. These are important questions that we are going to have to address.

Jonathon Ball-We have to determine the scope, where we are going to start. He would like to see what's out there at the state level, in our financial system. And then get some information from our legal teams to determine what privacy standards we have to meet.

Senator Niederhauser-Would like a format for Counties, Cities, and special districts to use. And keep in mind when we create the website, that there are lots of possibilities out there where other political subdivisions might interact with the website.

Stephen Fletcher- Stated, if you have to collect information it will exceed budget. He said we want to provide a site that will be useful for the citizens. If it is used by our citizens, that will make it a successful site.

John Reidhead-The bill that was passed, does say what will be within the scope. There are no local Government or School Districts, but there will be institutions, that being higher education.

It was asked where to start. John R. said, "We will show a few states with similarities, and differences." We are going to give you a sense of what we think is a reasonable for basic expenditures, possibly using Utah Interactive, or our own data warehouse people, and how we suggest to proceed.

5. Demonstrations of Other State's Websites: Estela Saucedo and Brenda Lee.

Estela Saucedo-Alaska's web page is a good start; it is simple for citizens to use. Their web page is Check Book Online. The State of Alaska provides information on any payments over \$1,000.00. It's updated every month; the information is available on the detail level and the summary level. They offer information by organization, by vendor, and by account.

One reason John R. wanted to show Alaska, was because they did this very quickly, and for very little money.

John Nixon-Is concerned about showing some of the incidental expenditures. We want to avoid having finance directors on the phone all day, walking people through expenditures.

It was asked if citizens would be able to call in with questions. How did they deal with answering questions supporting it and so forth.

Stephen Fletcher explained that there was a limited budget, and we need to ask other states how they deal with answering questions.

Senator Niederhauser-He would like to see descriptive information on the site. We need to be careful with secure information.

John R.- thinks it is pretty descriptive when you list who got paid and what was paid for, without putting out personal information.

Brenda Lee - Explained that whatever is on the accounting line on a check could show private information on a website. In the states FINET system the accounting line description shows up on the check stub. It can be very descriptive, showing the account number, social security numbers; sometimes we have to have that information to get the payment applied correctly. If we showed that on our web page it would show private data.

John Nixon-Believes we are going to need to have a way to explain expenditures to the public. We need to think of ways to deal with these things.

John R- has talked to Missouri and they don't get a lot of calls, but the webpage has an email address to direct questions to.

Estela- reiterated the Alaska site was simple for citizens to use.

Ken Sumsion- asked if payroll information was included on Alaska's site. Alaska does not put payroll information on it.

John Reidhead - We have Utah's Right Website; we could build a better site.

Presentation of Texas website: Their site requires users to know what they are looking for. Texas offers eight years of information. Finance staff pointed out that we might lose the public if they have to do a query like the Texas site requires.

Presentation of Missouri website: This website is more user friendly. It offers the same information, but easier to use. They offer all their confidential information under "protected."

John R. reiterated that we need to get going quickly to be done by May 15, 2009

6. Discussion of Possible Search Criteria: Brenda Lee presented an example of expenditure data element website that could be easily used for the State's website. She looked for data that we have right now in our data warehouse that we could drill down, that would make sense to a user, and that they could find the information they wanted. The one she saw most often on other states websites was a drill down by department. Brenda explained that first you would need to put down the fiscal year, and then you get a list of all the departments and their total expenditures for the fiscal year. Then you pick the department you want. Brenda's example started with the Department, then Line Item Description, Expenditure Category Description, Expenditure Object Description, Payee Name, Posting Date and Amount

John Reidhead- Stated that you would get your department, and then you would have a menu within the department of the line item. It would give all areas within the department that you could search. The idea is to not have an overwhelming number of options for the public to select as they do a drill down.

Jonathon Ball- You would need to take it to the next step, because the Dept. of Work Force Services is all one line item.

Brenda Lee- We did discuss if we were to put in the appropriation unit. That is a possibility, the information is all there. If you think that is the level you want to go to.

Jonathon Ball- Questioned about going to the low org. level (which is the same as the unit level).

Brenda Lee- Said that would be huge. You would have to do a lot a drill downs. That is a possibility, that data is all there.

John Reidhead- It is an important discussion item. Do you want the public in the living room, or knocking on the door? What level do you want.

Jonathon Ball- thinks we need to go to the program level, if not beyond the program level, to the appropriation unit level. Because of the Departments that are all rolled into one line item.

Brenda Lee- We could go the appropriation unit, that would add a whole other level, if that is what you want. What level of expenditure detail do you want? There are three levels that we could show. They are in your book right after the appropriation codes.

Senator Niederhauser-Asked if someone wanted the detailed information, then provide it, but if you didn't want all the detail, could jump to the information you wanted?

Brenda Lee-We would have to have separate queries to do that. If there is another jump you want to do, we could try and build that in. We would have to talk to our technical people about that.

They did not see any websites that let you jump around, there was a logical progression, possibly to make it easier to use.

John Nixon-There is a structure and it can't be free form. You could define it anyway you want, you could do it in a different search mechanism. How you normally would like it.

Brenda Lee-We came up with three standard searches that we thought would be basic. Ones that we could start right away, you would start by dept, line item, appropriation unit, various object codes, down to the detail of the transaction, and the date for the payee. Then you could start with the payee and do the same thing for the whole state, or dept.

Rep. Ken Sumsion-Do we already have the structure of this Data Base?

Jonathon Ball-The presumption is would we be using the Chart of Accounts. That is a place to start, but that doesn't need to be the answer.

Stephen Fletcher-There will be an original Data store at the U of U, at the State or anywhere. We will then create a data warehouse where you will pull information and you can use it however you want.

Jonathon Ball-We need to decide what we have in the various parts of State Government that are listed in the bill. Then we can start to think about the common elements. We also need to define at what level we are going to collect the data.

John Reidhead-We could go forward with what we wanted to do for the state, and then use it as a model for other participants.

John Nixon-From a DTS point of view do we focus on what we have in FINET and then link other Data as it comes in to fit those same searches? Once it's

mapped, can we download the information, and then it's already there so it automatically does it for you?

Stephen Fletcher-That is correct it is fairly straight forward. It requires some work to create the interface so it's mapped correctly, after that it is straight forward. Once it is mapped it will be straight forward.

Brenda-We talked about payee drill down, you could drill all the way down to detail transaction.

John Nixon-Have we looked at links to purchasing contracts?

Brenda Lee-We think it could be possible.

John Reidhead-We could do it for the state wide contracts in the first phase, but not beyond that to other agency contracts with the time and money available.

Brenda Lee-We wanted to show what we did have. We have object codes, three levels of object hierarchy, line item, appropriation unit, and dept. That is what we have. Which do you like? What would you like to see on the drill down? Or would you like to see something totally different?

Jonathon Ball-Does not think we can answer that right now. We need to find out what everyone else has, like Higher Ed. and Utah Housing Finance.

Brenda Lee-They all should have a similar hierarchy in all accounting systems.

Ken Sumsion-I'm not prepared yet to say this is what I like. I need to get more comfortable with the details.

John Reidhead-This is similar to what other States are doing with their sites.

7. Line Item, Expenditure Category, Expenditure Object, Payee Name, Posting Date, Amount.

Julia Holmes-There has been a state-wide data warehouse for the financial systems for fourteen years. Right now the data warehouse is behind the DTS's, UMD. Only state employees can get the information, because there is private data in the website. All the FINET reports are developed in Cognos, and are available to state employees.

It would not be easy for the public to access these, because they wouldn't have any knowledge of our system.

The only way to fine tune this is to know what you are looking for. It requires knowledge of the Chart of Accounts.

This is not necessarily intuitive for someone in the public to run. They would need to know the coding blocks, but we could put prompts within Cognos that would give them some of the drop downs. All the three branches of the State Government use the financial system. At least all of that information would be in one place.

Jonathon Ball-Asked if any employee can have access to the Data Warehouse.

They can see all the information. There are some tables that are private. Like bank accounts and vendors.

John Ball-You can get to the warrant level through Data Warehouse.

There is a check register. You can look up warrants by various levels. They can be looked up by vendor. Warrant look ups provide bank clear dates.

Senator Niederhauser-Wanted to know if some side accounting systems were trying to avoid transparency.

John Reidhead-No, there is no intentional avoidance of transparency. There are the MMIS that runs Medicaid and the Pacmis system for the Welfare programs. They feed into this general ledger system, but they have their own system. We only see summarized data.

Any Check that is run through the FINET system is captured.

With the payroll system we could provide the payroll data.

John Ball-Is there is a list of other state entities that do not use the FINET system that would be covered under the definition of the bill?

Jonathon Ball and John Nixon would like to sit down with The Division of Finance and the Board of Regents to discuss issues for the next meeting. Jonathon Ball is interested in the structure of the data. He would like to present

the data structure at the next meeting; he feels with the data structure we will have the answer to the levels of search.

John Reidhead-We are not to the point of deciding on the developer. The name has not been decided.

We have talked about the limitations and the data, but we haven't talked about linking to other websites, such as auditors for reports and GOPB for budget summaries, or Purchasing for contracts.

Public Comments:

Derek Monson-Representing the Sutherland Institute. He is encouraged by the direction the board is moving. He would like the board to put as much information as possible out there for the public to view.

Brian Foisy-Represents The Utah College of Applied Technology. As the Committee designs this system he would like to encourage as much flexibility as they can allow in the system. And to keep in mind that Higher Ed. uses systems from People Soft, all the way down to what might be used in a home based business. There will be some sensitivity issues in Higher Ed. concerning donor funds. Some donors like to be kept confidential. And they also like to keep confidential how these funds are used. They are public funds, but are not taxpayer funds. We are supportive of the effort, and want to support this initiative.

Werner Haidenthaller-Represents the Attorney General's Office. The Attorney General is very much in favor of openness in Government. But, within the AG's office there are several units that prosecute criminals with internet crimes, identity theft, and other crimes. As you consider what data to include, we need to protect the individuals that receive payment from the state for various reasons. We need to be careful of the sensitivity of the data. And how it may be misinterpreted.

Jonathon Ball-We will ask people from the Attorney Generals office, Office of the Office of the Legislative General Council, Courts, and the Judicial Branch for guidance as to what we need to protect.

We need to first define our foundation, our data structure, based on what is already there. We've seen FINET, and the data structure of FINET, maybe we could have someone from Higher Ed. present what they have. Then find a common level at which to collect the data, and then some common roll up level to report the data. Then we need to know what data structure we want. And then

decide what data we want in the structure, or what data we do not want in the structure. When we get to that point we have the foundation.

8. Next Meeting: What needs to be discussed?

Talk about the FINET Data Structure. Define what is an appropriation unit, what is a low org, and what is an expenditure. And then see how Higher Ed. will parallel that. And then come up with a proposed Data Structure that builds on those two things.

What is available under GRAMA (Government Records Access Management Act)? What is not available under GRAMA? What things are protected, what are private records, what are public records? Have someone come and talk about some public records that have privacy concerns associated with them.

This is Jonathon Ball's proposal for the next meeting.

John Reidhead- Stated that we need to get moving. It will take at least six months to build the site, and at least a month or two just to get the scope document drafted up and brought back to the committee for review and approval. We have slightly under a year to get this accomplished.

John Nixon-Keep in mind that we are an advisory board to your office, we are here to support you. That is the role of this board. As we go forward and think through these issues, maybe you could send us some information and say we need this answered, kind of help us drive the agenda of saying this is what's clear. Because at the end of the day, we are all responsible, but it is your Division that needs to get it all implemented, and we are here to support you.

Senator Niederhauser-I know it is important to be expeditious, but can we be doing some dual tracking so we're moving ahead with the draft of this scope document, and then be able to plug in some of these important items later on. And then we're taking a managed approach to it. We want to do it in a way to be truly transparent.

John Reidhead-We can grow the site, it doesn't have to be perfect from day one. We need to decide what the public wants. We can get a site out there in place, if we don't get caught up in theory too much, and then grow and change and modify in time.

Stephen Fletcher-You need to give the ability to John and his group to make some assumptions first. Kind of put a potential strategy going forward, and then we can

look at what Jonathon Ball has required in terms of a data structure. We can run these two in parallel. But, you need to give them some leeway in order to make some assumptions. If you do that we can kind of streamline this.

Jonathon Ball-Division of Finance and DTS will continue working toward an ultimate contract.

John Reidhead -We may need another meeting before we can scope it, because the four questions at the start, are what Utah Interactive needs before they will even start. They need a very definite scope document with structure in it. And that's what they build the plans of the house with. We didn't get to the pros and cons on who develops it, but Utah Interactive needs a definite scope, but if we (the Division of Finance) build it we can be more flexible.

John doesn't think we could actually draft a scope at this point.

Next Meeting:

June 24, 2008
11:00 a.m.
Room C-415

Adjourned: 11:15

