

Rural Communications— Earth Sta. Program

How much will long distance calls over the satellite cost? How will the emergency medical satellite system work? Who will decide where the telephone will be put in a village?

These questions, and more, greeted two representatives from the Office of Telecommunications who recently traveled to Nome, Kotzebue, Bethel and Barrow.

Ted McIntire, technical manager, and Lino Barril, community liaison manager, met with regional and health corporation representatives, local telephone cooperatives and villagers interested and involved in communications to find out how the state's planned earth station network could best fit in with local needs.

"We found people very active in putting together their own communications systems," said McIntire, "with some impressive plans. The OTZ Telephone Cooperative in Kotzebue is planning to extend its service to nearby villages.

Silak-Kuagvik Communications, Inc. now has a construction permit for an educational AM radio station in Barrow.

The North Slope Borough has started work to set up a communications network with Eskimos in Alaska, Canada, Iceland and Siberia, a system that will have international impact."

In response to questions in all four communities during the week-long tour, McIntire explained that the state, working with RCA, plans to have 100 earth stations operating in the state by the end of 1977.

They will provide long-distance telephone and emergency medical service initially.

Installation work by RCA has begun at 16 of the first 20 earth station sites, in villages with no existing communications services, that were selected from RCA and IHS priority lists.

The first 20 will be completely installed by March 1976, with the remaining 80 to be finished by the end of 1977. The operation and use of a satellite with the earth stations is currently being negotiated between the state and RCA, awaiting a decision by the Federal Communications Commission, McIntire said.

The emergency medical channel through the earth stations will be a push-to-talk system similar to the ATS-1 satellite network now in use, McIntire explained. Health aides will be able to talk to doctors at regional hospitals on a large party-line.

The system, to be operated and planned by the Public Health Service, can be increased to two channels, each with five different frequencies (or lines) if it is needed.

The long distance channel can be connected to local telephone exchanges. Up to five more telephone channels can easily be added to each station as they are needed.

McIntire expressed the state's belief that with the system operating 24 hours a day, the location of the long distance telephone becomes very important. RCA has made contact with village chiefs and councils to find the best place in each village for the equipment.

"The ideal solution, to give everyone 24-hour access to the long distance lines, is a local village telephone exchange," McIntire said. "The earth station could then tie in the long distance circuit with every telephone in the village. Any village organization is welcome to

contact our office for help or advice in setting up their own local telephone system" he added.

How much will long distance calls cost on this system? Rates will be determined on the same mileage basis they are now, but exact tariff rates will have to be approved by the Alaska Public Utilities Commission, McIntire said.

Lino Barril explained that the earth stations will have the capability of providing other services, too.

"Research is now being done on the equipment and costs of adding television reception to the stations," he said. "The problems are not strictly technical, but social: if one channel of television is transmitted, who decides on the programming to be used? Who pays? And who should make these decisions?"

At the communications meeting in Barrow, Barril stressed that "the Office of Telecommunications feels strongly that decisions on the use of the earth station network must be made by the people who will be using it."

To encourage regional decisions on these questions, all regional corporations were invited to a telecommunications briefing in Juneau last month.

The outcome of the meeting, he said, as that a Native telecommunications planning board, with members selected by the non-profit corporations, should be actively involved in establishing criteria for selecting the next 80 earth station sites, and in planning how the earth stations will be used and what services the people want them to provide.

The AFN convention in Anchorage in late October supported this plan by passing a resolution calling for the corporations to select members for a committee to assist in state telecommunications planning. The state will coordinate the meetings of the committee, once all the members have been selected.

As Barril stated at the Barrow meeting, the state's concern for involving consumers in communications planning is well summed up by Governor Hammond's comments during the briefing held for corporation representatives.

"I want to tell you how much I appreciate your involvement in what I think is a most crucial issue," the governor said. "Without the rural areas having adequate input in this whole matter we're going to do it wrong—you can count on it.

"I think involving the areas and corporations of various regions in the state will go a long way in determining what the best means of providing communications can be within the monies available. I'm very heartened with what has transpired to date and think we're embarked on a very interesting voyage which should prove beneficial to us all."

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On Village Tour— Justice Boochever

Chief Justice Robert Boochever of the Alaska Supreme Court during a three-day tour last week, Nov. 21-23, visited villages in the Lower Yukon-Lower Kuskokwim area. It was his first visit to the area in an official capacity since becoming chief justice in September.

This was also the first of several trips he says he intends to make around the state to become better acquainted with the problems of providing judicial systems in the rural areas of the state, and to become better acquainted with court programs and court personnel.

During the three days he and Susan Miller, magistrate system coordinator for the Alaska Court System, visited Bethel, Napakiak, Kasigluk, Aniak, Emmonak and St. Mary's. Weather prevented a planned visit to Hooper Bay.

The chief justice also met the people involved in two programs sponsored by the Alaska Court System in the area; the court interpreter training program at the Eskimo Language Workshop at Kuskokwim Community College, and the village conciliation boards being established at Napakiak and Emmonak.

Both programs were established by the court system with the aid of grants from the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration. The court interpreter program has a two-fold purpose, the training of court interpreters skilled in the English and Yupik languages, and the development of a curriculum for the training of court interpreters in other languages spoken in the state.

The village conciliation boards are being established as a pilot project to determine if such boards can resolve village problems without recourse to the courts or other criminal

justice agencies.

In addition to meeting court personnel in Bethel, Justice Boochever also visited with Magistrate Yako Brink in Kasigluk and with Magistrate L. Arlene Clay in Aniak. At St. Mary's he interviewed the applicants for the magistrate position in that village. He also met with the village councils in each of the villages visited.

Calista Holds Stockholders Meeting

The second annual shareholder's meeting of Calista Corporation was held Nov. 15 at the National Guard Armory in Bethel. The purpose of the meeting was to elect members to four of the nine positions on the Calista Board of Directors. Here are the results:

In administrative Unit 2, Moses Paukan, mayor of St. Mary's and an incumbent board member, defeated Alex Nick of Russian Mission. In Unit 5, Edward Hoffman, Sr., mayor of Bethel and another incumbent, ran unopposed.

The race in Unit 6 was won by Herman Neck. Neck hails from Nunapitchuk, where he is a retail store operator, hunter and fisherman. His opponent David Hare is from Atmautluak.

The at-large board position will be filled by George Morgan, Jr., of Upper Kalskag, who prevailed over a field of nine candidates. Morgan has served Calista before as management counselor. He will replace Gladys Jung, who did not run for re-election.

All four-board positions are for three-year terms starting immediately.

Coast Guard Wants Input

The Coast Guard is looking for public input to operating guidelines being drafted to govern the operation of their Prince William Sound Vessel Traffic System.

The system will monitor and control marine traffic in Port Valdez, Prince William Sound, and the approaches to these Alaskan waters.

Once drafted, the Coast Guard will conduct informal hearings with interested persons to work out a final version of the proposed regulations. These hearings are tentatively set for next February.

Organizations or individuals wanting to provide input are requested to contact the VTS Valdez project coordinator at Coast Guard headquarters in Juneau. His address is Commander (mps), U.S. Coast Guard, Juneau, Alaska, 99802.

Five-for-One

FAIRBANKS — Alaska National Bank of the North has authorized a five-for-one stock split, it is announced by Frank H. Murkowski, president.

The board of directors approved the split of common stock in a meeting on Nov. 18.

Prior to the split, basic prices for the 100,000 shares then authorized were \$60 bid and \$65 asked.

Shares of the new stock are currently listed at \$13.

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