1	THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
2	OF THE STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA
3	=======================================
4	IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF
5	NATIVE AMERICAN TELECOM, LLC FOR A CERTIFICATE OF AUTHORITY TO PROVIDE TC11-087
6	INTEREXCHANGE TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES AND LOCAL EXCHANGE SERVICES IN SOUTH DAKOTA
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8	Transcript of Proceedings
9	October 9, 2013 1:30 p.m.
10	1.50 p.m.
11	
12	BEFORE THE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION, GARY HANSON, CHAIRMAN
13	CHRIS NELSON, VICE CHAIRMAN KRISTIE FIEGEN, COMMISSIONER
14	COMMISSION STAFF
15	Rolayne Ailts Wiest John Smith
16	Kristen Edwards Greg Rislov
17	Brian Rounds Patrick Steffensen
18	Robin Meyerink Eric Paulson
19	Deb Gregg Sherry Dickerson
20	APPEARANCES
21	Scott Swier, Native American Telecom Phillip Schenkenberg, Sprint
22	Bill Van Camp, AT&T Meredith Moore, Midstate
23	Jason Topp, Centurylink
24	Reported By Cheri McComsey Wittler, RPR, CRR
25	

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS, held in the above-entitled matter, at the South Dakota State Capitol Building, 500 East Capitol Avenue, Pierre, South Dakota, on the 9th day of October 2013, commencing at 1:30 p.m. 

CHAIRMAN HANSON: TC11-087, In the Matter of the Application of Native American Telecom, LLC For a Certificate of Authority to Provide Interexchange Telecommunications Services and Local Exchange Services in South Dakota.

The questions before the Commission are today shall the Commission grant NAT's Motion to Take

Deposition of Sprint's Expert, Randy G. Farrar. And, secondly, shall the Commission grant NAT's Motion For Grant of Temporary Authority? Or in the alternative expedited decision?

We will take these one question at a time, not in their entirety, to the extent that we can discuss them without going over to the others. But the first question before us is shall the Commission grant NAT's Motion to Take Deposition of Sprint's Expert Randy Farrar.

So we'll start with NAT, and then we'll certainly entertain Sprint's concerns.

NAT.

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MR. SWIER: This is Mr. Swier. Mr. Chair, before we start, we may be getting into some confidential business information regarding these two motions. And I'm wondering if it would be appropriate at this time if the Commission would consider taking these two matters up in a confidential session?

CHAIRMAN HANSON: We will take them up in confidential to the extent that we discuss confidential items. However, we will not place the entire discussion as confidential.

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So if any of the parties believe they are going to address confidential items, they will have to inform us before they make any confidential statements. Then we will go off the web, and we will make certain that only parties in the room are a part of the -- only persons in the room are parties to the docket.

MR. SWIER: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Chair regarding the Motion to Take the Deposition of Mr. Farrar, under SDCL 15-6-26(b)(4) this is what the motion is made under. As the Commission is aware, Sprint's in-house expert witness, Randy Farrar, has filed sworn written testimony under oath in this case on two occasions. His first written testimony was filed on March 26 of 2012. His second written testimony was filed on August 13 of 2013.

And Mr. Farrar's written testimony in both of those submissions opines on a number of topics regarding NAT's application for a Certificate of Authority.

Number one is, of course, that Mr. Farrar has claimed that NAT is some type of sham entity. Mr. Farrar has also opined on NAT's financial stability. He's

indicated that he believes NAT has been established for traffic pumping purposes. He's also opined that it's not in the public interest to grant NAT's Certificate of Authority. He's also opined that NAT is not providing any benefit to the Crow Creek Sioux Tribe, and he's also opined regarding NAT's future profitability.

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We think in this case that a deposition of Sprint's in-house expert is not only -- not only should be granted but is necessary to be granted in this case. I think as Mr. Shultz said the last time we brought this up, in his 30 years of practice he's never had to go through this process before. The attorneys simply agreed to take the depositions of their respective experts. But we have gone through the process now.

So we are asking the Commission, again, you have a very broad scope of topics that Mr. Farrar has provided written testimony on.

NAT is also, pursuant to the statute, willing to pay Mr. Farrar a reasonable and appropriate fee.

However, the Commission should take into consideration who we're deposing here is an in-house expert who's an employee of Sprint. He's an employee of Sprint. It's not the typical expert witness situation where you have an outside expert. This is actually an employee of Sprint.

So what we have asked is Mr. Schenkenberg has proposed that we pay Mr. Farrar \$100 an hour for his time at both the deposition and in preparation. And what I've asked Mr. Schenkenberg is how Sprint has come up with \$100 an hour for Mr. Farrar's testimony. I have just found out in the last day or two that apparently Sprint has an internal analysis of what it believes Mr. Farrar's fee should be.

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I've asked for that information, and it hasn't been provided to me. I don't think either NAT or the Commission can determine what a reasonable fee is for Mr. Farrar without some type of numbers from Sprint.

And, again, we've requested it. We're simply asking that we be allowed to pay the same fee for Mr. Farrar that Sprint's paying him as an employee. And neither the Commission nor NAT can determine what's reasonable or appropriate without Sprint providing us with its analysis of the fee request.

The other issue with regard to this deposition is the length of the deposition. The parties have been trying to negotiate the length of Mr. Farrar's deposition.

Sprint originally said they'll make Farrar available only for three hours. And we, of course, said that that's not acceptable. Under 15-6-30(b)(2)

South Dakota Law provides that a deposition is limited to one day of seven hours. And additional time can be allowed for a fair examination if the deponent or his attorney impedes or delays the deposition. So what we're asking for in length of deposition is what the rules provide.

We want one day, seven hours of deposition time subject to coming back before the Commission if Sprint attempts to impede or delay during those seven hours.

And, finally, the scope of the deposition. Once again, under 15-6-26, that's the standard for deposition discovery. If it's relevant to the subject matter and reasonably calculated to lead to the discovery of admissible evidence.

As Sprint has pointed out throughout these proceedings, it's a very broad standard. We have approximately 70 to 80 pages of prefiled testimony provided by Mr. Farrar. Now we're confident that we can get this done in seven hours as long as things go smoothly. So, again, what we're asking is the Commission allow us to take the deposition and the deposition be taken in a way that's consistent with the rules of procedure.

Thank you.

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1 CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Swier.

Mr. Schenkenberg.

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MR. SCHENKENBERG: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission. We appreciate the opportunity to address you on this issue.

We believe that CCT or NAT -- I think we used CCT, Crow Creek Telecom, in our Pleadings because Mr. Swier had switched to that acronym. I see that he's now using NAT. I hope if I use those two interchangeably, it won't be too confusing.

We do believe that NAT's request to depose

Mr. Swier [sic] is not in accordance with the rules. We

were here a month ago before you on our Motion to Quash,

and you decided that the rules mean what they say and

should be followed and that NAT hadn't followed the rules

because they hadn't filed a motion for a deposition of a

expert witness.

And here we are again a month later. And when you look at the rules, the rules say that the default is no expert depositions, unless there's a special reason to do it. And when there's a special reason to do it, that is extraordinary, it is done with appropriate scope limitations and appropriate fee shifting.

Commissioner Nelson asked a month ago -- I think he was curious as to whether and why Sprint really

opposed this kind of deposition. And there are a few reasons. Practically this is going to create uncompensated costs, even if Mr. Farrar's -- even if the cost of Mr. Farrar's time is compensated for. There is in-house lawyers spending time on this. My travel costs, my fees, will not be paid for by NAT. There's court reporter costs. And it costs the organization to take an employee away from his or her normal duties to be deposed.

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Beyond that, as you know, Sprint and NAT are in disputes bigger than what we have before you in this docket. And the issue of NAT through its counsel spending time digging into areas that have nothing to do with this case is very much concerning to Sprint.

You've already decided that this case is about NAT's qualifications, not on Sprint's qualifications. And allowing a deposition without appropriate scope or a deposition at all is going to assent Mr. Swier or NAT to use this deposition for the purposes other than to getting to the truth about what this case is about.

As I said, the default under South Dakota Law, and regardless of what practice might be at times between -- between parties in the past or what someone's experience is, the rules that are in place and have been in place provide that there is no need in a normal case

to do depositions of experts.

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As long as you understand what the opinion is, as long as you've been told what the facts are that the expert relies on, you just go to trial and you cross-examine your witness there.

And that's what the law is in South Dakota. It's what it is in Minnesota. We provided a case to you out of Massachusetts in which a judge said you've really got to find special circumstances in order to change the default result. And if a court simply decided that a party's willingness to pay the fee of the expert was enough, you'd be disregarding the rule.

There really isn't anything in this case that sets this case apart. Mr. Farrar's testimony has been provided, the facts on which he relies have been provided. NAT has every opportunity to prepare for trial using that information, and can and should do so.

This is just a garden variety situation in which an expert is providing opinions and the other side wants to create costs by doing a deposition, and the drafters of the rule says that isn't necessary.

With respect to scope, if you do decide there is a need to do the deposition, there are two important scope restrictions that we're asking to issue an order on. And I would remind the Commission that the rules do

say with appropriate limitations on scope.

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And the first is the topic matter. As Mr. Swier indicates, there's testimony that's been filed. The 2012 testimony is not relevant. Mr. Farrar has said he's not offering that at trial. He's replaced it with the August 2013 testimony. That ought to be the focus of the question.

If this deposition is necessary for NAT to prepare for hearing and to understand Mr. Farrar's testimony, then that ought to be the scope of the deposition. And the fact that Mr. Swier does not want to agree to any scope on the deposition tells me that he want to use this as a way to get into many other topics that aren't relevant. And that's not appropriate.

It's also inconsistent with the rule. Which again the rule's focused not on the broad discovery standard, but it's focused on the need to depose an expert about the basis for his opinion.

With respect to time, it is true that the default under the rules is seven hours, a full day. We think a half day's appropriate. The Commissioners may not have any personal experience in this area, but three hours is a long time to ask questions and certainly if we're obstructing the process, you ought to take us to task. We will not do that.

I did depositions in our case of Northern Valley of four conference call company representatives. None of them went a half a day. A half day is plenty of time to depose somebody. A skilled lawyer can get the work done in a half day. And we think that's consistent and appropriate in these circumstances.

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Finally, on compensation we have been back and forth on compensation. I understood Mr. Swier's position to be that he would pay no compensation. I now understand his position to be something different. I do have an analysis. I was not able to send down that before the hearing, but I do have it here.

And I guess what I would suggest -- and it is an analysis that looks at the cost of the company of Mr. Farrar's time based on what his compensation is and benefits, et cetera. This is not an outside expert witness fee, which would certainly be twice or three times plus \$100 an hour.

So what I would suggest is this, that the Commission not make a decision on the dollars -- the \$100 per hour request but direct the parties to continue to negotiate on that. I'll provide the analysis to Mr. Swier, and perhaps you can ask Ms. Wiest, if necessary, to mediate any disputes that the parties have just so we don't have to come back to you with

this problem. But I suspect we'll be able to get
there.

That's all I have, members of the Commission.
In summary, we don't think it's appropriate to do the

In summary, we don't think it's appropriate to do the deposition. If you decide otherwise, we do ask for appropriate limitations on scope and have addressed the compensation issue with Mr. Swier already.

Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you.

Ms. Wiest, did you have any comments on this?

Any questions about the Commissioners?

I have one of Mr. Schenkenberg. Obviously, you will have Farrar available at hearing; correct?

MR. SCHENKENBERG: That's correct. If he does not come to the hearing, his testimony would not be admitted, and it wouldn't be in the record. He will certainly be at the hearing, yes.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: And, Mr. Swier, the word extraordinary was used. And I haven't looked at the law on that. Recently, at least.

Do you know of nonconfidential reasons that you can tell us what special reason you would have that you would have to go through a deposition process rather than having the witness available at hearing?

MR. SWIER: Yes. Mr. Commissioner, that's a

misnomer of the law. Nowhere in SDCL 15-6-26(b) does it say anything about that it has to be extraordinary or special circumstances to take an expert deposition. And perhaps the Commission could ask Mr. Schenkenberg where he got that language. But it's clearly not in the statute.

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So it's not an extraordinary or special circumstances standard here. It's says the court may order further discovery. And then we can also talk about fees and expenses that the court may deem appropriate. It says nothing in there about extraordinary or special circumstances.

And in a case like this, Mr. Schenkenberg says that everybody's going through a bunch of expense. NAT surely doesn't want to have to go to the expense of this entire proceeding that's gone on for three years now. Sprint decided to intervene. They put themselves out there.

All we want is like every other case that's done in South Dakota. We want to be able to take a prehearing deposition of what will be a very important witness. And we shouldn't be forced to just have Farrar appear and wing it on cross-examination.

So, again, extraordinary or special circumstances, not required under the rule.

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CHAIRMAN HANSON:
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                                Thank you. I wish to mention
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     I recognize that there are a number of Interveners in
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     this docket besides Sprint.
                                  And I -- I guess I am
 4
     intentionally ignoring you.
                                  I'm looking at it from the
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    standpoint of the second question, assuming that you're
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    on the line to participate in that.
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              However, are there any other Interveners, anyone
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     else associated with this docket, who feel compelled to
     speak to this issue?
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              Sort of a marriage deal. Speak now or forever
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    hold your peace.
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              MR. TOPP: This is Jason Topp. We do not take a
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    position on this issue.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you.
                                            If there is
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     anyone, please speak up. Otherwise, I'll look for other
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     questions from Commissioners.
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              Commissioner Nelson.
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON: Just one for
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    Mr. Schenkenberg.
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              You've talked about this analysis of
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    Mr. Farrar's time value. What's the dollar figure?
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              MR. SCHENKENBERG: The dollar figure for the
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    average in his pay grade is just below our $100 number we
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    proposed. And he's an above average in his pay grade.
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     think I said that correctly.
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1 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Understand. Thank you. 2 CHAIRMAN HANSON: Commissioner Fiegen. 3 COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: Just to comment on 4 analyzing the cost of an employee, just to remember that 5 it's more than the wages. It is also opportunity cost 6 and the people that support them and their office and all of that. 7 8 So a lot of times when you look at an employee it's more than their wages that it costs a company to 10 have that employee. So when you negotiate, make sure you 11 look at all of those type of things. 12 CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you. 13 Any further questions? 14 If not, I'd entertain a motion. And what I 15 would like to do, rather than incorporating the 16 limitations, the three limitations that have been 17 discussed, first decide whether or not we actually want 18 to grant the Motion To Take Deposition. 19 If we do not, then there wouldn't be any need to 20 address the limitations. If we do, then we can take the 21 limitations one at a time. 22 Is that fair? 2.3 COMMISSIONER NELSON: With that understanding, 24 because I definitely want to address those limitation

questions, I would move that we grant NAT's Motion For

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     Leave To Take Sprint's Expert Randy G. Farrar.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON:
                                Discussion on that motion?
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              Hearing none, Commissioner Fiegen.
                                     Fiegen votes aye.
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              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN:
              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Commissioner Nelson.
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON:
                                     Aye.
              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Hanson votes aye.
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              The motion carries.
              The next item is the limitation on the request
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     from Sprint of $100 an hour. And I would mention that
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     I've been involved in a court case where a deposition was
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     just taken -- I think it was a week and a half ago -- and
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     I paid $175 an hour to an expert witness. So maybe I got
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     bamboozled a little bit.
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              But I recognize that person was a different
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     expert and on a different topic. However, I've paid $100
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     on a number of occasions for expert witnesses, at least
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     in my experience.
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              Other discussion?
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              Ms. Wiest.
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              MS. AILTS WIEST:
                                 I was just going to say for
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     that one I would recommend that the Commission take
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     Mr. Schenkenberg's request and have the parties try to
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     come to some sort of agreement on their own.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: And you will take it under the
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     further suggestion of Mr. Schenkenberg that you would be
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     the arbiter in that?
              MS. AILTS WIEST:
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                                Sure.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: All right.
              Commissioner Nelson.
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON: Typically would I take
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     Rolayne's advice, but in this case I would like to settle
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     this today. Because I do not want this little issue
     hanging out there and one more excuse for a delay in this
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     deposition.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: I'm glad to hear you say
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     that.
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON: And with that, I would
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     make a motion that Mr. Farrar's time be compensated for
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     $100 per hour for the time spent in the deposition
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     only.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Discussion on the motion?
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              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: So the prep time is not
     included?
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON: I would not include prep
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     time because that, again, is another nebulous number, and
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     I don't want anybody fighting over nebulous numbers. I
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     think we're past that.
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              And these are all issues that he's adequately
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     prepared for as he put together his testimony. So it
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should be things that he's very familiar with and, again,

I don't want to leave anymore nebulous numbers out there

for the two parties to fight over.

COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: I value Commissioner

Nelson's opinion of trying to move this forward, but I'm

going to vote no on this motion because I think the

parties should be able to agree. Rolayne should be able

to mediate, and they should be able to do it by the end

of the week. So it's Wednesday today. By Friday they

should be able to do that.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you, Commissioner Fiegen.

My only comment would be that as soon as I heard that -- well, they've had an opportunity to discuss this. They've had an opportunity to reach a conclusion on it and have not.

And the very first thing I thought of when it was suggested that they get back together again or talk about it is that this docket -- the NAT dockets have taken an extraordinary period of time, and we just need to expedite it and make certain that it gets taken care of.

If I thought \$100 was outlandish, then I would say, okay, let's discuss this, or I would come up with a different number. But I really think that \$100 an hour

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is reasonable for the expert witness, and from my
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     experience, even as -- testifying as an expert witness, I
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     think that $100 is reasonable. So I'm going to support
     the motion.
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              Any further discussion?
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              If not, Commissioner Fiegen.
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              COMMISSIONER FIEGEN:
                                     Fiegen votes no.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Commissioner Nelson.
              COMMISSIONER NELSON:
                                     Ave.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON:
                                 Hanson votes aye.
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              The motion carries.
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              That brings us to the second proposed
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     limitation, which is to restrict the scope to Farrar's
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     August 30 testimony.
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              And my immediate thought on that is that if
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     you're going to have an expert witness before you, you
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     should be allowed to pursue whatever that expert witness
     knows and the nook and crannies and whatever questions
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     you need to ask.
              Further discussion on that item?
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              Hearing none, is there a motion?
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON: I move that there be no
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     restrictions placed on the scope of the deposition.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Discussion on that motion?
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              Commissioner Fiegen.
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1 COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: Fiegen votes aye. 2 CHAIRMAN HANSON: Commissioner Nelson. 3 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Aye. CHAIRMAN HANSON: Hanson votes aye. 4 5 The motion carries. 6 The third item -- the third proposed limitation 7 is to limit it to 3.5 hours. We're looking at a 8 discussion between either limit it to 3.5 or 7 hours so --10 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I move that there be no 11 additional limitation beyond the seven-hour limitation 12 provided in statute. 13 CHAIRMAN HANSON: Discussion on that motion? 14 COMMISSIONER NELSON: The statute provides for 15 seven hours. You know, I don't know that we sitting here 16 today can adequately determine how long this is actually 17 going to take. And I think if that's the limitation 18 that statute has, that we ought to give that full 19 opportunity. 20 CHAIRMAN HANSON: Further discussion? 21 Commissioner Fiegen. 22 COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: Fiegen votes aye. 2.3 CHAIRMAN HANSON: Commissioner Nelson. 2.4 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Aye. 25 CHAIRMAN HANSON: Hanson votes aye.

The motion carries.

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The next question before the Commission on this docket is shall the Commission grant NAT's Motion For Grant Of Temporary Authority Or In The Alternative Expedited Decision.

NAT?

MR. SWIER: Thank you, Mr. Commissioner. This is Mr. Swier again.

To Commissioner and fellow Commissioners, we brought this motion based upon the fact that when this docket was started back in 2011 we never envisioned that we'd still be here in October of 2013.

And when I argue in favor of this motion I'd like the Commission to keep this in mind: What is the harm in granting this motion?

NAT is providing services that have never been provided before to tribal members on the reservation.

NAT's been providing local telecommunications services on the reservation since 2009. They've been operating under the Tribal Utility Authority's approval to provide local telecommunications services within the reservation's boundaries.

The benefits that NAT is providing is, number one, affordable local telephone service. That's important because Verizon is no longer an ETC providing

- 1 | affordable lifeline service on the reservation.
- 2 Therefore, NAT's service is an essential service to
- 3 tribal members. Verizon's no longer an ETC out there
- 4 providing affordable lifeline service.
- 5 NAT is also providing affordable broadband.
- 6 Again nontribal broadband offerings, not affordable. And
- 7 | they're used by very few, if any, of those tribal
- 8 members. NAT's broadband services are essential, again,
- 9 for those tribal members.
- And, again, the question is what is the harm in
- 11 granting this temporary authority?
- 12 NAT has -- I mean, the filings in this case are
- 13 a mess. It's clear that NAT has the financial and
- 14 | technical capabilities to provide telecommunications
- 15 | services. NAT right now because it's entered into
- 16 agreements with other IXCs is now operating in the black.
- 17 Now the specific financials have been provided, and I'm
- 18 | not going to comment on those now because the Commission
- 19 is aware.
- 20 Sprint's decision to not pay is based on their
- 21 | national agenda to litigate other than to comply with
- 22 | federal law regarding access stimulation. Sprint's made
- 23 | a big deal out of NAT's financial capability.
- As of June of 2013 Sprint owes NAT almost
- 25 \$1.4 million. They just refuse to pay. If Sprint were

making the payments it's supposed to make, then NAT would not only be debt free but it would have approximately \$1 million in the bank.

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So it's an incredibly circular argument for Sprint to say NAT doesn't have the financial wherewithal when they're withholding over a million dollars in payments. That's simply a circular straw man argument.

Also NAT's application in this docket is limited to providing intrastate interexchange telephone service.

NAT is already providing services within the reservation to tribal members. NAT is also providing interstate services pursuant to a lawful tariff that's been in effect with the FCC for years.

NAT's application in this docket only asks the Commission to provide intrastate interexchange service for traffic that either originates or terminates off of the reservation within the State of South Dakota. That's what it's asking for.

And right now because we have given the utmost deference to the Commission, we are not providing those intrastate services that terminate off the reservation within South Dakota.

So who is being harmed here? It's the tribal members who cannot make these intrastate calls within the State of South Dakota. There's been no harm that's been

shown since 2009.

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We think that in this case we're asking for the temporary authority because we believe that until this case finally comes to a hearing, no one is being hurt here but the tribal members.

We are not charging Sprint or AT&T or

Centurylink for any of those interstate services. All

the information provided by the Interveners in opposition
to this was bold information. It also included
interstate numbers.

So what we're dealing with here is a company that's been operating since 2009 that's trying to avoid tribal members, that's probably operating under an interstate tariff, that is legally operating on the reservation within the reservation boundaries. All we're asking is that at least until this comes to hearing for a temporary period of time we let those subscribers on the reservation go ahead and be able to make calls off of the reservation within South Dakota.

Again, I don't know what the harm would be in providing those services. Because it's clear those services have not been provided by anyone else.

And with that, I'll ask if the Commission has any questions. But, again, as a very practical matter, what is the harm of providing of the citizens of

South Dakota with this little slip of telecommunication service that we're asking for?

Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you. Are there any Interveners who would like to comment on this item?

6 MR. SCHENKENBERG: This is Phil Schenkenberg.
7 May I proceed for Sprint?

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Please, go ahead. We have some people in the audience here as well who will be chatting with us.

Please, go ahead.

MR. SCHENKENBERG: Thank you. Sprint requests that you deny the Motion For Temporary Authority. The right place to start in a question like this is to find out what the standard is and then to apply the standard, and that's where you run into a roadblock.

There isn't a standard for the Commission to apply to grant this kind of relief because this kind of relief is not allowed under the rules or the statutes.

And the Commission being a creature of statutes needs to follow the rules.

There is a process to obtain a certificate, provision of service before that process has been completed. It is not allowed. In fact, it's designated as a misdemeanor, and there isn't a way to bend the rules

to allow the request that NAT is asking for.

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If there were a standard -- in some states you have a standard like this. You have a provisional authority. If there were a standard, it would be like a summary judgment standard or a preliminary injunction standard where NAT would have to demonstrate that it was abundantly clear that they were going to win or it was undisputed that they were going to prove all facts necessary for the relief requested.

And you already denied your Summary Judgment

Motion once in this case, and you decided that there were
issues raised that had to be taken up at hearing and
that you should follow the process set forth in the
rules.

There are disputed facts. We have submitted testimony that questions NAT's fitness, managerial fitness, and qualifications and its financial viability.

The statement made by Mr. Swier about Sprint withholding and suggesting that if Sprint didn't withhold that this would be a company that was viable and in the black is dealt with by Mr. Farrar in his testimony. He concludes that that's not the case.

Part of the reason for that is the lion's share of that money if it were paid would go straight through to Free Conferencing. It wouldn't go to NAT. And, in

fact, NAT can't be financially viable going forward given its current business plan.

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There are also disputes of facts about whether NAT's statements about its intrastate activities during 2013 are true. We've submitted an Affidavit suggesting it's not true. And I think AT&T did as well. NAT doesn't have a certificate to do business in the state now that it's CCT, Crow Creek Telecom. And we pointed that out. That's a requirement of the rules.

So you certainly cannot find that there are undisputed facts that show that NAT is going to win this case.

In addition, I believe there's great confusion and inconsistency about what NAT is asking for. This started as a request for a local certificate, and then it morphed into something much different earlier this year.

NAT in its application said that it wanted the authority to provide intrastate access services, which is a service provided to interexchange carriers. That's not the same thing as Mr. Swier was talking about a few minutes ago.

He was talking about, I think, something that came to originating intrastate long distance services provided to the Crow Creek tribal members. And it's just

not the same thing as what NAT asked for in its application.

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And I think we quoted a discovery response in our Brief in which NAT made it very clear it was not seeking any authority to provide service to any tribal members. It believed it already had that.

So we need to unscramble and the Commission needs to have NAT's help in unscrambling what it is it's asking for before you can grant the certificate. Because if you don't know what you're granting, there's going to be further lack of clarity as to what NAT's doing and whether what they're doing is appropriate.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you.

Any further direction? We have Mr. Van Camp here in chambers.

Good afternoon, Bill.

MR. VAN CAMP: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Your Honor, as the case may be. Briefly, Bill Van Camp on behalf of AT&T Corp. We did file in opposition in this matter.

And I don't want to belabor the points made by Sprint, but at this late stage in the game as Staff has been working with the parties to expedite the process to get us to hearing after summary judgment is rejected, now AT&T comes and asks for a temporary authority that isn't

allowed by statute or by rule.

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And AT&T filed its opposition and just thinks that's plainly not allowed by statute or by rule and for that reason alone it should be denied and this should move forward to hearing.

Thank you.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Van Camp.

Further presentation on this item?

MR. TOPP: This is Jason Topp from Centurylink.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Please, go ahead.

MR. TOPP: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Centurylink, as well, has filed an opposition to this motion. You know, we've got significant concerns associated with the standards. We haven't addressed them as comprehensively as Sprint has, but we have raised some specific issues and raised opposition to this application as a whole.

We think that we're entitled to be heard regarding those concerns and find it very surprising that, you know, we would have had a hearing date delayed due to discovery concerns and then shortly thereafter get a request to have the case resolved, at least in the intervening time period for -- while this goes forward. We also don't think it's supported by statute.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you.

Is there anyone else wishing to address on this item?

MS. MOORE: Yes, Mr. Chairman. This is Meredith Moore on behalf of Midstate.

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CHAIRMAN HANSON: Please, go ahead, Ms. Moore.

MS. MOORE: Thank you. I will provide just a few brief comments on behalf of both Midstate and then also SDTA and then obviously Mr. Coit can fill in if I missed anything.

Both SDTA and Midstate acknowledge that the Commission possesses the discretion to determine whether the requirements for issuance of a Certificate of Authority have been met by the party petitioning for that Certificate of Authority. And neither SDTA nor Midstate is going to weigh in on that particular issue at this time. We'd simply defer to the Commission as to whether NAT has met those requirements.

What Midstate and SDTA would like to point out at this juncture is the stipulation that was executed by and between NAT, SDTA, and Midstate in March of 2012.

At that time following representations made by NAT to both Midstate and SDTA, as well as discovery responses filed by NAT, the parties addressed the intended scope of NAT's application for a Certificate of

Authority. And in that stipulation NAT confirmed its intention to provide service only within Midstate's Fort Thompson exchange.

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Based upon that stipulation, both Midstate and SDTA stated their respective intentions not to object to NAT's request for a waiver of Administrative Rule 20:10:32:15, which is the rule that requires the petitioning party to provide services throughout the entirety of that study area.

Since the parties filed that Stipulation in March of 2012 SDTA and Midstate have confirmed with NAT that it intends to honor that stipulation and it intends to keep the scope of any Certificate of Authority which it ultimately seeks here consistent with what was agreed upon in that particular stipulation.

And so, therefore, if NAT did not intend to honor that Stipulation, honestly Midstate and SDTA would have concerns with regard to any grant of temporary authority at this time or any grant of an actual COA without a hearing.

So in that respect both Midstate and SDTA would simply ask the Commission to keep in mind the parameters of the Stipulation that the parties previously executed in making a determination as to what to do on NAT's issue today.

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1
              Thank you.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON:
                                Thank you, Ms. Moore.
              And Mr. Coit is in the chambers with us.
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     have anything to address the Commission on?
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              MR. COIT: Mr. Chairman, Commissioners and
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     Staff, Richard Coit on behalf of SDTA.
              I would just indicate that -- and Ms. Moore
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8
     stated our position well. We continue to believe that
     the Stipulation that we entered into, which was filed
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     with the Commission, is valid from our perspective.
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              With regard to any sort of grant of temporary
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     authority or final COA, we believe the terms of that are
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     applicable at this point in time and just wanted to make
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     that point on the record today as you consider the
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     motion.
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              Thank you.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you, Mr. Coit.
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              Is there anyone else on the phone or with us
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     today who wishes to testify on this question?
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              If not, I have one question of Mr. Swier.
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              Mr. Swier, do you know of any statutory
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     authority that would allow the Commission to grant
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     temporary authority?
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              MR. SWIER: Your Honor -- or, Mr. Chair, what I
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     would say is this: Is that this -- this Commission, just
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like any court, would have the authority to grant temporary authority in a situation like this.

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The Commission has volumes of information that's been filed that at least for a temporary matter shows that technical, financial, and managerial experience of NAT meets the requirements. It's been operating, except in this proceeding, extremely well since 2009.

So when you ask if you have the authority, I think it's very clear you have the inherent authority as the decision-making body, just like a court, to go ahead and issue a temporary certificate to give these folks on the reservation these type of services.

And you can place any conditions that you think are reasonable on the certificate. But, yes, you have the inherit authority in this case to do exactly what NAT is requesting.

CHAIRMAN HANSON: Further questions from the Commission on this item? On this question?

Commissioner Nelson.

COMMISSIONER NELSON: Mr. Swier,

Mr. Schenkenberg has put in some Affidavits indicating that Sprint believes that you -- or I should say NAT is continuing intrastate services. And you have told us that they ceased those services last spring.

Can you help me resolve that difference?

MR. SWIER: You bet. The Affidavit filed by
Ms. Clouser is the cookie cutter Affidavit that Sprint
files in all of these cases. That Affidavit is not based
on what has happened since NAT stopped providing those
intrastate services.

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So technically the contents of the Affidavit are correct. But it's a cookie cutter Affidavit that they file, and it doesn't take into consideration what NAT has done from the time it stopped its intrastate activity up until now.

So that Affidavit does not take into consideration what's happened since NAT took that step in deference to the Commission.

Mr. Schenkenberg, can you try to help me with this?

MR. SCHENKENBERG: I can, Commissioner Nelson.

I do not know what Mr. Swier means when he says cookie cutter. That's an Affidavit that, as I understand it, is a one of a kind. This issue has never come up before in my dealings with Sprint that a company has claimed to have ceased providing intrastate services and company data shows otherwise.

The information that we provided which was

- redacted to prevent customer proprietary networking
  information from being disclosed publicly was taken from
  the Sprint network. Ms. Clouser pulled it herself. It
  shows calls in August from 605 numbers located within
  South Dakota to Free Conferencing 605 numbers.
  - So I do not know what NAT is doing as of October 9, 2013, but certainly, in August they were not doing what they told this Commission they were doing starting back in May.
- MR. SWIER: Mr. Commissioner, it's Mr. Swier.

  May I respond to that?

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- COMMISSIONER NELSON: Please. Because I have not gotten an answer to my question yet.
  - MR. SWIER: NAT, as indicated in its Affidavits, is not providing intrastate service that starts on the reservation and ends somewhere in South Dakota.
  - What Sprint is referring to, and they know this -- what they're referring to are the calls that are terminated on the reservation from Free Conferencing Corporation customers. Those are interstate minutes.

    Those fall under -- those fall under NAT's FCC interstate tariff.
  - So, for instance, if you're calling from -- if you have a Free Conference calling number and it's a 605 area code number, that call can come from, let's say,

California and it terminates in Crow Creek. That is an interstate telecommunications activity.

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There is no activity that NAT is doing that involves any intrastate telecom services within the State of South Dakota.

So what they've done is they've grouped all the interstate minutes together and said, here, you see they're terminated at Crow Creek. Those are interstate, under which, of course, the FCC has jurisdiction.

COMMISSIONER NELSON: I believe his testimony was that those calls originated in 605 area codes, though.

MR. SWIER: The 605 area code is given by

Free Conferencing to their customers. So the 605 area

code can be used, let's say, with a caller in California

who calls in to the 605 prefix at Crow Creek. Again

that's interstate.

If we had a person who from Sioux Falls, let's say, who was calling on the Free Conferencing prefix one and that activity was limited to the State of South Dakota -- for instance, Sioux Falls wants to do a conference call and terminates at Crow Creek. That is intrastate activity of which NAT is not participating.

So, again, our Affidavit is very clear. We in deference to this Commission until the Certificate of

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     Authority is ruled upon, we are not providing intrastate
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     services outside the reservation boundaries within
     South Dakota.
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              COMMISSIONER NELSON:
                                    No further questions.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON: Ouestions?
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              Is there a motion?
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              MS. AILTS WIEST: I had a question.
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              CHAIRMAN HANSON:
                                Please, Ms. Wiest.
              MS. AILTS WIEST: Mr. Swier, when you stated in
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     your motion that you're asking for temporary authority to
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     originate and terminate intrastate telecommunications
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     services what type of intrastate telecommunications
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     services are you actually referring to?
              MR. SWIER: Here's what we'd be looking at.
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     We'd be looking, for instance, if a tribal member on
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     the reservation wanted to call their grandmother in
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     Sioux Falls, that is an intrastate call. We would ask
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     that that temporary authority be granted so that tribal
19
     member on the reservation could call their grandmother
     who lives in Sioux Falls.
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              MS. AILTS WIEST:
                                But I thought with respect to
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     what Sprint stated in their response to your motion that
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     you stated in a discovery request that you're not
24
     requesting interexchange long distance service
25
     authority?
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- 1 MR. SWIER: Rolayne, could you ask that question 2 again, please.
  - MS. AILTS WIEST: I thought in your amended application you state that you're asking for interexchange access service. And according to Sprint, in a discovery request to Staff you have stated that you're requesting interexchange access service and not interexchange long distance service.

So what are you requesting?

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- MR. SWIER: Well, I think that we're requesting temporary authority to originate and terminate intrastate telecommunications traffic.
- MS. AILTS WIEST: But you're not asking for interexchange authority?
- MR. SWIER: Intraexchange authority. I believe we are asking for that also. We're asking to simply be able to provide telecommunications services outside of the reservation but within South Dakota, to make it hopefully as clear and as easy as possible.
- MS. AILTS WIEST: Okay. So what did you mean when you said you are not asking for interexchange long distance service in your response to a Staff data request?
- MR. SWIER: And, you know, I don't have the data request in front of me. Can you point me to the data

1 request that you're referring to? MS. AILTS WIEST: I'm only speaking to Sprint's 2 3 Brief. I don't have data requests from Staff. Well, I think that we have to look 4 MR. SWIER: 5 at that data request because I'm not sure that that's 6 actually what the data request answer was. 7 MS. AILTS WIEST: And then when you say you want 8 it within the Crow Creek Reservation, Midstate has stated and there's a Stipulation that you're only asking for 10 authority on the Fort Thompson exchange; is that 11 correct? 12 MR. SWIER: Yeah. The stipulation that we have 13 with Midstate and with SDTA, that is the stipulation that 14 we've entered into, and it's our intention to continue to 15 honor that, as we have. 16 MS. AILTS WIEST: So when you say within the 17 Crow Creek Reservation you're really just talking about 18 the Fort Thompson exchange? 19 MR. SWIER: We're talking about providing it at 20 the Fort Thompson exchange, yes. 21 MS. AILTS WIEST: Okay. That's all I have. 22 CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you. Are there any 2.3 further questions by the Commissioners? 24 If not, in TC11-087 I will move that the 25 Commission deny NAT's Motion For Grant Of Temporary

1 Authority and deny the Request For An Expedited 2 Decision. Is there any discussion on that motion? 3 4 Commissioner Nelson. 5 COMMISSIONER NELSON: I intend to support your 6 motion, Mr. Chairman, for two reasons. One, I am not 7 convinced that we have the authority to grant what has 8 been requested here. And the other point that I would make, Mr. Swier 10 had made the comment that NAT is offering services that 11 have never been provided for on the reservation. And in 12 this particular case we are simply talking about 13 intrastate services, and there are other companies that 14 offer intrastate services. 15 And so the members of the tribe and the folks 16 in Fort Thompson have access to those services already 17 from other providers. So I intend to support your 18 motion. 19 CHAIRMAN HANSON: Thank you. 20 Any further discussion on the motion? 21 If not, Commissioner Fiegen. 22 COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: Fiegen votes aye. 2.3 CHATRMAN HANSON: Commissioner Nelson. 2.4 COMMISSIONER NELSON: Aye. 25

Hanson votes aye.

CHAIRMAN HANSON:

1 The motion carries. 2 Thank you all for your participation. 3 COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: In talking about the 4 hearing is it looking like we're going to be having the hearing in December, or where are the parties going? 5 Because I don't know that Staff has heard back. 6 7 And, Patrick, you may be part of that. Can you, 8 Patrick, give the Commission kind of information on where we're at and if you're hearing back from the 10 parties and if they're working with you or what's going 11 on? 12 MR. STEFFENSEN: Yep. We're shooting for December 11 and 12 for this docket. We sent an e-mail to 13 14 all the parties. And I believe it's just NAT that we're 15 The 11th and 12th of December. waiting on. 16 COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: And so NAT, have you 17 gotten back to the Staff, NAT, or are you getting back to 18 them this week or where are we at there? 19 MR. SWIER: Yeah. Actually we e-mailed 20 Mr. Steffensen this morning just to confirm those dates, and we don't object to that December 11 and 12 date as of 21 22 right now. 2.3 COMMISSIONER FIEGEN: Great. Thank you. Wе

Excellent questions.

Thank

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appreciate that.

CHAIRMAN HANSON:

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you for bringing that up.
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                    (The proceeding is concluded.)
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1	STATE OF SOUTH DAKOTA)
2	:SS CERTIFICATE
3	COUNTY OF SULLY )
4	
5	I, CHERI MCCOMSEY WITTLER, a Registered
6	Professional Reporter, Certified Realtime Reporter and
7	Notary Public in and for the State of South Dakota:
8	DO HEREBY CERTIFY that as the duly-appointed
9	shorthand reporter, I took in shorthand the proceedings
10	had in the above-entitled matter on the 9th day of
11	October, 2013, and that the attached is a true and
12	correct transcription of the proceedings so taken.
13	Dated at Onida, South Dakota this 17th day of
14	October, 2013.
15	
16	
17	
18	Cheri McComsey Wittler,
19	Notary Public and Registered Professional Reporter Certified Realtime Reporter
20	Certified Realtime Reporter
21	
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