

Please Note: This is an approved copy of the minutes for the 09/16/09 meeting of the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

September 16, 2009

MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners Attending: T. Zellner, E. Rawlings, A. Knight, J. Dunsmore, J. Sack, J. Simon, C. Thompson, and J. Compton.

Staff Attending: S. Florio (Executive Director)

Public Attending: Kevin Blais

Communication Accommodations:

Interpreters: Carol Fay and Elizabeth Nadolski
CART service: Jennifer Moore

Location: Conference Room A at the Department of Administration building (One Capitol Hill) in Providence, RI

The meeting was called to order by chair Travis Zellner at 6:05 pm.

Tina Thompson made a motion to approve the July 14, 2009 meeting minutes as read. Jordan Sack seconded the motion to approve minutes. The motion was in favor with 8 votes and carried.

OFFICERS' REPORTS:

- Chairperson:
- 1) Welcome Jim Simon as his first time to be at the meeting as a commissioner.
 - 2) Travis strongly encouraged the Commissioners to participate in the orientation to learn about their roles and responsibilities as the commissioners and asked the commissioners to identify the dates to attend a 3-hour orientation session sometimes in October/November 2009. After a brief discussion, it was agreed

that Steve Florio, Executive Director, send an email to learn the commissioners' availabilities on a few dates and from there, the date should be determined.

- 3) Travis reminded the Commissioners that the Commissioners will have an important session on Open Meeting Act and Access to Public Records given by Laura Marasco of Rhode Island Attorney General Office on October 7th at 6pm.
- 4) Travis gave a brief update on the outcome of the RISD Strategic Planning Committee. RISD is currently working on an Integrated Plan and it is being reviewed by various parties within the RISD community before it starts to be implemented. 4th Goal as part of RISD Strategic Plan is still in the works and was not certain when it become active. He will keep the commissioners posted as soon as it is ready to roll. He answered questions re: new location in Warwick, external organizations participating in the process (4th goal), and new building.

Vice-Chairperson: No Report

Treasurer: No Report

Secretary: No Report

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Steven Florio said he would not elaborate the report since he already included the Executive Director's report in the Commissioners' packet, unless, the commissioners already have questions for him.

- 1) Steve reported that the state government has faced many budget challenges both politically and realistically. The Governor had to make some difficult decisions to choose various options to achieve the savings in order to balance the budget. Part of that reason, 12 shutdown days ordered by the Governor to save dollars as heard in the media were suspended by Court's order. The union leaders and Governor are still negotiating on labor issues so Steve remains vigilant because whatever options are chosen, it would affect the RICDHH services and programs. It was stressed that all 3 FTEs of RICDHH are not the members of any union parties therefore they remain neutral on this issue.
- 2) Steve explained that he received the budget instructions for FY2011 budget preparation from the Budget Office. The deadline for budget submission is October 1st. The target amount that we must prepare to meet is a level budget that includes some personnel adjustments and annual increase. The budget for FY2011 is \$382,248. No new money but I was asked to explore saving opportunities. However, one item related to personnel which he would like to discuss further during the executive session that may affect RICDHH budget such as layoff. If some positions need to be cut, Steve needs to write the IMPACT STATEMENT as to what would impact on RICDHH services and programs as well as impact on our constituents.
- 3) Steve recognized John Dunsmore for representing the RICDHH at the ADA's 19th Anniversary at Warwick Mall on 25th. Ed Rawlings and Tina Thompson were also participating in the event as well.
- 4) Steve summarized briefly on his trip to Philadelphia to attend the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf Conference last August 2009. He met many interpreters from New England who may be interested in working in RI. It was successful low-budgeted trip.

- 5) Steve asked the commissioners if they have any ideas to improve RICDHH website. He considered to include facebook, youtube, tweeter, and others in order to save state mainframe memory and these online services are typically available for anyone who has mobile devices that would enable video clips from youtube. The mobile devices would not enable video clips directly from RICDHH website. He said he would explore for more user friendly access to our website and other online services that are free of charges.
- 6) Steve reminded the Commissioners about the Deaf Awareness Week events on the week of September 29 through October 3rd.
- 7) Steve clarified on the 2010 Legislative Package that is under NEW BUSINESS. The commissioners need to approve on all items as part of the package to begin the studying and developing process on these specific items. The final legislative language for each item should be approved by the commissioners in December 2009 before seeking the legislators for their sponsors.

Travis requested that the executive session be moved down until right after OLD BUSINESS and the Commissioners are in agreement.

COMMITTEES:

Bylaws: Ed Rawlings reported that he has one item that will be added to the bylaws such as to what procedure should be used to recognize contributions by any outgoing commissioners and to host a farwell ceremony.

Membership: No report as the commissioners are currently filled.

Hospice: No activity but the commissioners suggested that Steve contacted Home and Hospice Care to update on their volunteer program, to see if they need to recruit more volunteer from the deaf and hard of hearing community, and Tina mentioned that their facilities have been moved to Providence.

Healthcare: Tina Thompson, chair of the Healthcare Task Force, updated on the Task Force's progress. Most recently, Tina, Jim Simon, and Steve Florio met with the members of Hospital Association of Rhode Island. Steve did a very nice job with the powerpoint presentation on an introduction to RICDHH and Interpreter/CART Referral Service. The members of HARI asked many questions and expressed interests in working with the RICDHH to address deaf and hard of hearings' needs.

Awards: Steve reported that he has received one nomination so far and reminded the commissioner that the deadline was today, Sept. 16th. The commissioners discussed briefly and agreed that the deadline is extended to October 5th, Monday. It was also agreed that a special meeting to be held on the same evening as OMA session on Oct. 7th to discuss on nominations and select the winner for the award.

Ad-Hoc: No Report.

OLD BUSINESS:

- 1) Steve reported that HB5703 is flatly dead, however, this item will be part of RICDHH's 2010 Legislative package that the commissioners would need to approve on.
- 2) Tina Thompson gave a powerpoint presentation on Promoting Tri-Vision Philosophy including its history and meaning and then, she pointed out some areas that missed opportunities to put Hard of Hearing issues on map and access to RICDHH needs to be more effective for Hard of Hearing people who need services from them. (Please see attached for its powerpoint presentation slides). The commissioners and staff discussed about various solutions in responding to her presentation and agreed that it is good time to create a new strategic plan since RICDHH's goals are now more than 5 years old. Steve will collect resources such as foundations, federal grants, and other financial sources to help financing the strategic planning activities. He will bring that information to the Commissioners on Oct. 7th as part of a special meeting along with list of award nominations.

CLOSED/EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Tina Thompson made a motion to go into Closed/Executive Session to discuss personnel re: Governor's instruction on layoff process and to approve the executive session meeting minutes of July 14, 2009. Jordan Sack seconded. The motion passed.

Travis Zellner rescued himself from the executive session due to potential personal conflict with this subject and asked Ed Rawlings, Vice-Chair, to assume the floor.

The open meeting closed and the Closed/Executive session began at 8:16 pm.

The regular meeting was reopened and executive session concluded at 8:45pm.

Travis Zellner was called to go back in the meeting room.

- 1) Ed Rawlings acknowledged that the commissioners heard about the layoff and impact statement that may impact on RICDHH. No vote was necessary.
- 2) Ed Rawlings announced that the executive session meeting minutes of July 14, 2009 were approved by all 7 commissioners.

Travis Zellner re-assumed the floor as a chair.

NEW BUSINESS:

- 1) John Dunsmore made a motion to approve Revised Budget for FY2010 and Budget for FY2011. Andrew Knight seconded.

All 8 commissioners were in favor and voted unanimously.

- 2) Tina Thompson made a motion to accept the 2010 legislative package for 2010 legislative session as written. To be reviewed, revised, and finalized and proposed in the December meeting. Jordan Sack seconded.

All 8 commissioners were in favor and voted unanimously.

Announcements:

Tina Thompson explained that the RICDHH needs to create a "Green" policy and all materials that have been sent to the Commissioners prior to meetings via regular stamped mail may be reduced in the future if all materials converted into an electronic format such as a pdf file. Travis suggested that the RICDHH shall explore other ways to keep the files at the RICDHH website like other organizations. For example, there is one webpage with username and password where all commissioners can access, once they passed the password, they would be able to see various files to review such as meeting minutes, Statistics on Interpreters and CART, etc. They agreed that a "Green" policy be put on agenda for next meeting. Steve said he did not see any problem with sending materials via electronics right away, however, for now, requests need to be made. He said Tina will be the first person to receive materials via electronic.

Jim Simon made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Tina Thompson seconded. The meeting was adjourned at 9:01 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven A. Florio
Executive Director (Secretary for the September 16, 2009 meeting).