

The RI CDHH Commissioner approved the minutes for the 05/18/2011 meeting on June 30, 2011.

Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

May 18, 2011

MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners Attending: Travis Zellner, Ed Rawlings, Jordan Sack, Mary Wambach, Christine "Tina" Thompson, Sean Gill, James Compton, James Simon, Andrew Knight, and Jesus M. Colon.

Commissioner(s) not Attending: Karen Davis

Staff Attending: Steve Florio (Executive Director)

Public Attending: Courtenay Petraccia

Communication Accommodations:

Interpreters: Jessica Morgan and Elizabeth Nadolski
CART service: Shelley Deming

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 6:05pm.

Chair Travis Zellner informed the Commissioners that Jesus Colon and Andrew Knight would be here a little late. He was not sure about Karen Davis. He announced that 8 commissioners were present, therefore, the quorum was met.

Review of Meeting Minutes (04/27/2011):

- 1) Tina Thompson made a motion to approve the April 27, 2011 meeting minutes as amended. Jordan Sack seconded. The motion was carried 8-0.

Amendments were made as follows:

- 1) Inserted, "Jordan Sack expressed his disappointment that the detailed discussion that led up to vote rejecting on "voting" before quorum was not included in the March 9, 2011 meeting minutes." under the approval of the March 9, 2011 meeting minutes.
- 2) Changed from "Jordan Sack" to "Ed Rawlings" before "requested that the bylaws specifically on "voting quorum" be added to the next meeting's agenda."
- 3) Revised the 1st sentence under Chair's Report from, "his time has been concentrating on the Rhode Island School for the Deaf matters a lot than the Commission." to "the Rhode Island School for the Deaf is taking up more of his time."
- 4) Inserted, "Travis and Mary Wambach wanted to stress that the decision made by the RISD Board of Trustees was not a reflection on the director herself, character, professionalism, or performance." under Travis Zellner's first response under Questions/Answers.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

Chair Zellner reminded the Commissioners that the next item on agenda is to develop strategic plan. He did not have any specific format or process as to how to develop the strategic plan. It was pretty open that leaves up to the Commissioners as to how to come up with the plan. He asked for any suggestions and ways to accomplish something at the end of the day. The Commissioners were in consensus that they will go with each strategic initiative of four.

The result of the action plan is as follows:

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STRATEGIC PLANNING OUTPUT – ACTION PLAN

MAY 18, 2011

Initiative I: Expand Information and Breakdown Barriers for accessing information for the Hard-of-Hearing Population

Possible Solutions to In-Office Communication Barriers:

- Continue to fight for a budget that allows for a staff interpreter to assist with drop-in's.
- College Interns to assist in office for drop in's/calls.
- Expand Paul Barnaby's Role to include this knowledge base/skill set.
- Look at acquiring technology to address possible communication barriers such as VRI, texting/typing equipment.
- Volunteers from HLA-RI to be in the RICDHH office.

Possible Solutions to Updating Resources and Information for Hard-of-Hearing:

- Set up an Advisory Board that would involve HLA-RI and other stakeholders. It was suggested that 3 Commissioners along with Pam Zellner would get the ball rolling.

Initiative 2: Improve Sign Language Referral Service

- A new Task Force has been formed since the Strategic Planning Session occurred. The TF has been looking at:
 1. Existing Service
 2. Educational Programs
 3. Training

Initiative 3: Prioritize Awareness and Access

- Prioritize issues to tackle – narrowing down the focus to be more effective.
- Create another focus group or Task Force (Sean, Steve, and Andrew) –create a blue print.
- Do a thorough needs assessment – town hall meetings.
- Hit businesses and large organizations including Chambers of Commerce that need awareness trainings.

Initiative 4: Improve Commission Relationships

- Commissioners noted that this feels like there would be a lot of overlap between this initiative and initiative #3.
- Connect with Legislators
- Possible champions for this – Jesus and Jordan

With some remaining time left, Steve gave the updates on Performance Management meeting that was held on May 4th with a good number of representatives from Office of the Governor (Policy Director), Department

of Administration (Deputy Director), Budget Office (Executive Director and Assistant Director), and three Commissioners (Travis Zellner, Mary Wambach, and Jesus Colon). The meeting was productive as we exchanged information as to what the RICDHH is all about and how the RICDHH assess its programs and service for quality assurances. The representatives learned a great deal of what services and programs that the RICDHH is offering and shared that the RICDHH is in a good shape in terms of evaluation/assessment/measurement process. The RICDHH will be asked again to meet with the representatives to follow up from the 1st meeting. It will be an ongoing process in preparing for the Fiscal Year 2013 Budget Cycle.

Steve pointed out the importance of having a full-time staff interpreter. It was addressed in the past budget submissions every year as well as discussed at the Performance Management meeting on May 4th. Steve said it is an "Equal Employment Opportunity" issue in which Steve and Pam should be provided a full-time staff interpreter to support their job performances. Steve strongly believe that once the RICDHH has a position of Staff Interpreter, the RICDHH would be able to carry out much-needed deliveries and to satisfy the legislative mandates effectively. The Commissioners were in agreement that a full time position should be created to serve as Executive Staff Interpreter to support the RICDHH functions and deliveries. This would become one of the long-term goals in addition to strategic action plans that were developed earlier this evening.

After discussing briefly about meeting with the legislators about our issues, Travis Zellner said he was invited by the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to provide the speech during MCDHH's Legislative Day at the State House in Boston, MA last week. His topic was about to develop relationship with the legislators and why it was important to persist educating the legislators about particular issues. Two or three Commissioners thought if the RICDHH could do the similar activity here in Rhode Island like Legislative Day or something like that. Steve said RICDHH can make arrangement that is similar to the one in Mass but he said it has to happen in the afternoons between January and June because the legislative session begins in January and ends in June. The RI Legislators are part time and they do have their full-time jobs in different profession such as lawyers, restaurant owners, etc. while the Mass Legislators are full-time, 100% dedicating to the legislative issues. It would make sense to meet with the RI legislators in the afternoons between January and June.

Steve updated with the Commissioners about the Hearing Loss Awareness Expo tomorrow, May 19th from 11:00am to 3:00pm at the atrium in this building. He hoped that many commissioners will be able to be part of the event. He said the number of vendors increased comparing to last year and he was exciting about it.

Steve wanted to note that he congratulated Travis for his leadership as the chairperson of the RISD Board of Trustees that they successfully went through a number of reform phases as part of the process in the recent months. The commissioners were concurring with his statement by high-handed flashing waves/applauses.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:57pm declared by Chair Travis Zellner.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven A. Florio
Executive Director
(Secretary for the May 18, 2011 meeting).