

The RI CDHH Commissioner approved the minutes for the 04/27/2011 meeting on May 18, 2011.

Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

April 27, 2011

MEETING MINUTES

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

Commissioner(s) not Attending: *Andrew Knight*

Staff Attending: *Steve Florio (Executive Director)*

Public Attending:

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 6:34pm.

Chair Travis Zellner reported that he received an email from Andrew Knight who could not make it to the meeting tonight because he was unable to find a babysitter. He announced that 10 commissioners were presented, therefore, the quorum was met.

Review of Meeting Minutes (03/09/2011 and 04/15/2011):

- 1) Jesus Colon **made a motion** to approve the **March 9, 2011** meeting minutes as written. Karen Davis seconded. The motion was carried 8-1. (Only 9 were eligible to vote because they were at the meeting.)

Prior to Commissioners' approval on the meeting minutes, Ed Rawlings requested to expand information as to why "voting" before quorum as part of revised bylaw recommendation was rejected at the March 9 2011 meeting. The commissioners voted to decline his request to expand information by 8 to 2.

Jordan Sack expressed his disappointment that the detailed discussion that led up to vote rejection on "voting" before quorum was not included in the March 9, 2011 meeting minutes.

Aye: Travis Zellner, Mary Wambach, Christine Thompson, Sean Gill, James Compton, James Simon, Karen Davis, and Jesus Colon.

Nay: Ed Rawlings and Jordan Sack

Ed Rawlings requested that the bylaws specifically on "voting quorum" be added to the next meeting's agenda. The commissioners voted to decline his request to add an item to the next meeting agenda by 8 to 2.

Aye: Travis Zellner, Mary Wambach, Christine Thompson, Sean Gill, James Compton, James Simon, Karen Davis, and Jesus Colon.

Nay: Ed Rawlings and Jordan Sack

- 2) Karen Davis **made a motion** to approve the **April 15, 2011** meeting minutes as corrected. Jesus Colon seconded. The motion was carried by 8-0. (Only 8 were eligible to vote because they were at the meeting.) Correction: Beth Wilson be added on the attendance list.

CHAIR'S REPORT:

Chair Zellner shared his concern that the Rhode Island School for the Deaf is taking up more of his time. Therefore, he announced that he would not run for the officer position in the 1st Quarter of fiscal year so he can continue involving with the RISD matters as it would continue through many months ahead. He said he is very much interested to continue as the Commissioner and he will submit his interest for the other term shortly. He encouraged the commissioners to start thinking about running for the officer positions now.

Chair Zellner updated with the Commissioners about the Rhode Island School for the Deaf.

1. On March 29, 2011, the RIDE announced that they identified 5 schools as **Persistently Low Achieving** (PLA) schools. Unfortunately, RISD is one of them.
2. There are four (4) Reform models that the RISD Board of Trustees must consider and choose as part of the reform process. They are as follows:

- **Turnaround Model** – It would fire everyone and then re-hire up to 50% and a number of reform projects must be carried out.
 - **Re-Start Model** – it would hire a group-based school management to take over the school and to do various reform-related projects.
 - **School Closure Model** – the school would be closed for good.
 - **Transformation Model** – it would require a new director to oversee school including instilling rigorous evaluation, performance recognitions, rewards, removal of staff not evidently improving their professional practices and commitments.
3. From March 29, 2011, the board of trustees must meet various stakeholders about these models within 30 days. For this case, the board of trustees had set up two dates to hear inputs, suggestions, and comments from the stakeholders on which reform models that they think best for RISD. These dates were on Tuesday, April 26th and on Saturday, April 30th.
 4. From March 29, 2011, the board of trustees must choose which model that would be best suitable for RISD within 45 days. This one, the board of trustees will need to pick which model at their meeting on Tuesday, May 3rd, and Tuesday, May 10th if they need more time.
 5. RIDE Commissioner Gist must approve Board of Trustees' recommendation of a reform model within one week.
 6. Then the Board of Trustees has 120 days to develop plan for an approved model. Afterward, they must implement the model according to the plan.
 7. He said that the Board of Trustees has approved the Mission Statement and 4 main functions of School under the Mission Statement. These mission statement and functions will be considered as to which reform model fits best.

Questions/Answers:

Q: Commissioner:

How does Lori Dunsmore, Director of RISD, fit in this process?

A: Chair Zellner:

He said that any binding decisions such as personnel or unions for this matter have been re-assigned to avoid potential conflict of interests with the process effectively about two weeks ago. Therefore, Lori Dunsmore is no longer making these decisions. Lori will only focus on the day-to-day operational matters. 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. He clarified that Lori Dunsmore had notified the Board of Trustees that she would not seek for a new contractual term effectively on July 1st back in January 2011.

Q: Commissioners:

What would each model look like for RISD if chosen? How will the strategic planning projects that have been developed in the past few years fit into this process? How long would it require to complete the process? Have you checked other deaf schools as to how well they do with the reform or how do they do to keep schools in a good shape? And many other similar questions were asked.

A: Chair Travis:

He said he has received many comments and input yesterday at the 1st Stakeholder's meeting. He appreciated their honest opinion and they clearly were very compassionate about the future of school. The Board of Trustees has not yet come to the decision until they collect all information from the stakeholders. May 3rd is when the Board of Trustees starts to discuss on which reform model that will be selected for RISD's future. They will review and consider the reform models

based on various sources such as budget, needs, mission statements and 4 functions, comments and suggestions from the stakeholders, future of students, and among other information. There is no easy or simple answer. There are several schools that have similar situations in the past but their issues were probably different than the RISD currently has. Because RISD received various federal funds (Title 1, Race to the Top, etc.) to support school programs and RISD is labeled as persistently low achieving school, it's a very straight, clear federal law that you must substantially reform the school over 3 years and if RISD does not, then the RI Department of Education can take over and close the school. There are the federal guidelines that must be followed to make sure that students are successfully learning.

Q: Steve Florio:

He asked if the Board of Trustees chose a model that would close the school for good, even though, he hoped not, when would it become effective? This coming fall of 2011 or one year later?

A: Chair Zellner:

He said he does not have the answer as the board of trustees has not gone further as to which model is best fit for school. The process, including various deadlines such as developing the plan would require to happen within 120 days, will take time.

VICE CHAIR'S REPORT: No Report

SECRETARY'S REPORT: No Report

TREASURER'S REPORT: No Report

THE MEETING WAS ON RECESS at 7:42pm.

THE MEETING RESUMED at 7:53pm.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

- 1) Steve Florio reminded that the RICDHH budget for FY2011 and FY2012 introduced by Governor Chafee remain at the level funding. This means no new additional funding for any programs or FTE. Steve went to the Budget hearing hosted by the House Finance Committee's subcommittee on Human Services on April 26th. He gave the testimony about the RICDHH in general as to how did they do for the year and challenges they were dealing with because the members on the committee are either just elected or a new member on the committee so he thought it was good opportunity to expose them as to what the RICDHH does.
- 2) Steve explained that the new initiative created by the Governor Chafee's office is what it called, Performance Management Process for each agency. As part of the process, they hope that they would be able to identify on 4 parts which are as follows:
 - a. Identify what programs and services Rhode Island government currently provides;
 - b. Determine how well state agencies deliver those programs and services;
 - c. Align programs and services with Governor's objectives;
 - d. Achieve savings through re-alignment of program and service delivery.

He said since this is new, he does not know what process would look like and how much RICDHH needs to get involved in the process. He said the Budget office requested us to submit information to the Budget Office on three things such as:

- a. Mission statement of the agency
- b. List of data currently collected and tracked by the agency
- c. Metrics used to measure progress

He had responded to their request on April 7th. Earlier today, He was invited to meet with 9 representatives from Governor's office, Department of Administration, and Budget Office at the State House either on May 3rd at 2:45pm or on May 4th at 3:00pm. He believed this is part of the process where they use this to learn more about the agency. He requested that a commissioner or two to join with him because the commissioners would become familiar with the new process 1st hand and that help them to design evaluation tools to evaluate the Executive Director's performance in line with new performance management team. Chair Travis Zellner, Mary Wambach, and Jesus Colon expressed their interests to join him on May 4th at 3pm.

- 3) Steve said that the Hearing Loss Awareness Expo that will be held on May 19th from 11am to 3pm is growing stronger this year as he received 8 new exhibitors more than last year. He said he might have to re-visit the floor plan because of the number of exhibitors. His goal is to ensure that any one who comes will have the opportunity to visit EVERY exhibitor such as a passport, etc. He is excited about this. He noted that he has submitted a letter of invitation to Governor Chafee to see if he could be part of the program by kicking off the Better Hearing and Speech Month and make some brief welcoming remarks. He will let the Commissioners know if Governor Chafee is coming.
- 4) Steve summarized the legislative updates that the legislative committees heard 8 bills so far. He appreciated with people who showed up for the hearings and gave their testimonies. All bills were approved for further study so he will keep up-to-date either via e-mail or at the next meeting.
- 5) Steve gave the Commissioners the heads up that there will be different process in establishing the state rates for sign language interpreters and CART services for the State. In the past according to the RICDHH Sign Language Interpreter Referral Service Procedures and Process, the RIRID would send a letter of recommendation on state rates before May 1st for the RICDHH to consider to be part of the State's Master Pricing Agreement. Because of serious concern of a potential violation of RID's 501 c3 status as a nonprofit organization, the RICDHH is considered to emulate Massachusetts' model by posting the state rates to the public in advance and the hearing on the state rates will be posted where anyone can come and express their comments about the state rates. After collecting comments and suggestions from various stakeholders, RICDHH will review and modify if any on the state rates. Then the Commissioners need to approve the state rates for FY2012 to FY2013 (July 1st, 2011 to June 30th, 2013) before asking the Division of Purchasing to update all Master Pricing Agreements of all sign language interpreters and CART captioners, effectively on July 1, 2011.

COMMITTEES' REPORT:

BYLAWS: Ed Rawlings, Chair, said no report.

MEMBERSHIP: Travis Zellner, Chair, said that a few vacancies of the Commissioners have been advertised. There was a discussion among the Commissioners about adding specific

number of seats for each category (Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf but not ASL, and Hearing) should be mentioned in the advertisement. Steve Florio will look into this and share with the Commissioners to see if they are acceptable to the way the information is going to be advertised with the number of seats under each category before sending out to the public.

Travis encouraged the Commissioners to start thinking about running for the officers in the next fiscal year.

HEALTHCARE: Tina Thompson reported that this committee has been meeting on a regular basis.

1. The Consumer Education Training. The workgroup just completed a blueprint for the program and they will present the blueprint at the next Healthcare Committee Meeting.
2. Resource Manual. Jim Simon reported that the workgroup members met with Debbie Topal to review her work with the RI Hearing Assessment Program. After reviewing her work, the workgroup realized that they are doing on the different things. She is focusing on children's future education while the workgroup is focusing on healthcare access. Because of this, it became clear as to where the workgroup will go. The workgroup will focus on developing materials through electronic such as website instead of creating a printed manual on healthcare resources.
3. Policy/Legislation. Steve Florio reported that most legislative actions that were recently mentioned under Executive Director's report are part of this workgroup effort. This will continue.
4. Training Module: Tina and Steve will give presentation on May 5th at the Roger Williams Medical Center and they will give the updates at the next meeting.

Jordan Sack pointed out that he invited Steve to give presentation generally about the healthcare access for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for Brown Medical students at Brown University. Jordan established the Disability Awareness Group at the Brown Medical School and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing was the topic at the first event. About 39 people were in attendance. Tina and Steve agreed and asked Jordan if they could set up a good 2 or 3 hours of presentation for new class students on an ongoing basis in the immediate future.

AWARD: No Report. It has been advertised but the actual work will probably begin in the summer.

INTERPRETING SERVICE TASK FORCE:

Tina Thompson reported that the task force members are continuing conducting the fact finding about the interpreter services and issues. They will now start working on identifying issues and developing objectives, and then put them into a plan.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

RICDHH Strategic Output Product Report

Chair Travis suggested and the Commissioners were in agreement that the next meeting on May 18th will only focus on Strategic Output Product Report and nothing else so they can review, discuss, and develop strategic plans. The commissioners agreed to look at the mandates and four (4) initiatives recommended by Beth Wilson, 6 Sigma Expert from Raytheon as a start point of discussion. The next regular meeting will be held in June.

Jordan Sack recommended that the press release should be produced to mention that the Commissioners are planning to have a strategic planning meeting on May 18th, just to let the public to know what the Commissioners are doing this far. Steve Florio will write something up for this and get it out to the public per Commissioners' request.

Evaluation/Tool for CDHH Personnel

Mary Wambach was not available to give report as she left from the meeting earlier.

OLD BUSINESS: No item.

NEW BUSINESS: No item.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:52pm declared by Chair Travis Zellner.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven A. Florio
Executive Director
(Secretary for the April 27, 2011 meeting).