

The RI CDHH Commissioner approved the minutes for the 03/09/2011 meeting on April 27, 2011.

## Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

March 9, 2011

### MEETING MINUTES

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

*Commissioner(s) not Attending:* Jordan Sack

*Staff Attending:* Steve Florio (Executive Director)

*Public Attending:*

*Communication Accommodations:*

*Interpreters:* Carol Fay and Maureen McEntee  
*CART service:* Shelly Deming

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

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

#### CHAIR'S REPORT:

Chair Travis Zellner reported that he received an email from Jordan Sack who could not make it to the meeting tonight because he was sick. He expected everyone else to show up. He announced that 7 commissioners were present, therefore, the quorum was met. (Two more commissioners showed up five minutes later.)

Chair Zellner thanked all Commissioners for willing to make it on March 9<sup>th</sup> instead of March 16<sup>th</sup> through emails coordinated by Steve Florio. He said that Beth Wilson was supposed to be here tonight but

unfortunately, she was not available tonight as she has difficult time to leave from work. She also would not be available on a Wednesday for a few months due to work-related commitments. Beth suggested in her email a few days prior to the meeting that Tina Thompson would walk through the Output Product Report. But Tina Thompson did not feel comfortable doing this so Tina suggested that the Commissioners and staff select a date to meet on Friday or Saturday within three months so Beth Wilson will be able to join us and walk through the Output Product report. All commissioners were in agreement. Steve Florio was instructed to coordinate the dates with the Commissioners and Staff.

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

1. The Board of Trustees will meet again on March 15, 2011.
2. On March 1, 2011, the Board of Trustees approved the Mission Statement and 4 main functions of School under the Mission Statement. They are currently working on developing bullets, responsibilities, and areas of focus under each function as they have not approved yet.
3. As for the Director Search committee, the Board will review and approve the job description of the Director and then proceed to post the job notice next day. The board agreed to establish a small committee but they have not decided as to who will be the stakeholders yet. The board will establish the timeline of the Director Search process as well.
4. At the last meeting, Travis told the commissioners that Lori Dunsmore predicted 60 students enrolled at RISD this fall. He would like to add that he learned from Mary Pendergast at the recent Board meeting that there were about 120 students that RISD served in different areas in Rhode Island so they are looking really at least 160 students total.
5. Also at the last meeting, there was a presentation about the NEC AP scores that were used by the RIDE for all students in RI. The RISD students were not doing well on that test as many of them failed. He like most commissioners was aware that this test was not designed for deaf students but the RIDE relied on this test heavily. RISD was still under the PSI and was still considered as a low performing school. RIDE and the Board of Trustees are now in the right direction and are working on improving these scores in the immediate future. It has been difficult and challenging year for the RISD.

### Questions/Answers:

**Q: Tina Thompson:**

At the last commissioners' meeting, he told us that RIDE Commissioner Deborah Gist was paying a visit to the RISD. How did that visit go?

**A: Chair Zellner:**

He said that the Board did ask Lori Dunsmore, Director of RISD, as to what was her plan for Commissioner Gist at RISD. The plan was to have Deborah Gist to observe one of the classrooms for a short time then to meet with the teachers and staff afterward for questions and responses. He has not received any updates on the outcome of her visit just yet whether it was a success or productive.

**Q: Jim Simon:**

He asked about the Groden Center using the RISD facility and how did Groden Center learn about this opportunity to use the space?

**A: Chair Travis:**

He responded that the Board has recently approved the contract that was agreed between the Groden Center and the RISD to use the RISD space for 18 months. The new building has a wing

that is vacant which will eventually be filled up by the Groden Center. The contract shall begin soon. People who go to the Groden Center will need to go to the different entrance at the other far side of building. Travis emphasized that the building still belongs to the RISD and is in control of the RISD. One clear benefit is that the Groden Center with their expertise train with the RISD staff in the area of needs such as regulations, requirements, etc. for special needs students. Mary Wambach added that when the RIDE got involved for their intensive intervention, they discovered several areas that were lacking such as certification, training, qualifications, specialized support service, etc. RISD did lose some students there because of that. As part of that reason, the Groden Center was brought in to help filling in the holes just for temporary. Travis responded as to how the Groden Center learned about this opportunity to use the space, he said that the Director made a proposal to lease with the Groden Center last July or August 2010 that would bring their specialized resources to assist RISD in the certain areas. Mary Pendergast had some kinds of relationship with the Groden Center in the past. He was not sure the hows, whos, and what is and that the Groden Center was either approached by the RISD or approaching for this opportunity.

**Q: *Steve Florio:***

He recalled that the Board was in consideration to give a contractual award to the Groden Center because they were under impression that their budget would be cut by at least 10% for the next fiscal year and the Groden Center will pay the amount of money per agreement for using the space at the RISD as a substitute. Now, Governor Chafee introduced the State budget last night. He did not see any significant budget cut for RISD. Would that information affect the Board's decision on the Groden Center?

**A: *Chair Zellner:***

He said he will get the latest budget updates from Corsino who is RISD's "Financial Director" about the impact of the budget introduced by Governor Chafee but he said it is a small and short-term program. It is probably not a significant impact on the Board's decision.

**VICE CHAIR'S REPORT:** No Report

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:** No Report

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** No Report

**Review of Meeting Minutes (02/16/2011):**

- 1) Karen Davis **made a motion** to approve the **February 16, 2011** meeting minutes as read. Tina Thompson seconded. The motion was carried 7-0. (Only 7 were eligible to vote because they were at the meeting.)

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

- 1) Steve Florio reported that the RICDHH budget for FY2011 and FY2012 introduced by Governor Chafee last night will remain at the level funding. This means no new additional funding for any programs or FTE. Also, the number of FTE remains the same, 3.0 FTE. Some commissioners suggested to develop a plan B or C to increase hours of interpreting time at the office. Some of them made some suggestions by talking with different key positions and have them to support this case.

- 2) Steve updated on the legislation action. He had 5 bills in the House and one in the Senate. The House bills are hearing aids, implantable FDA approved hearing devices, communication access services, fund established for the RICDHH, and Board of Interpreters for the Deaf. One bill in the Senate is related to the Board of Interpreters for the Deaf. He said there are a number of mirror bills that should be introduced in the Senate like hearing aids, implantable hearing devices, communication access service, and fund established for the RICDHH. He will keep the commissioners posted.
- 3) Steve shared the news that there will be other State Commission Directors meeting on March 25<sup>th</sup>. The tentative agenda items will be about the budget for FY2011 and FY2012, State and Federal legislation affecting the New England states, and creation of the regional collaboration.
- 4) Steve announced that the Hearing Loss Awareness Expo will once again be held this year. It will be held on May 19, 2011 and it will be at the Atrium of the Department of Administration building in Providence, RI. He will begin contacting vendors and then advertising about the event. The RI Hamilton Relay will sponsor this event.
- 5) Steve let the Commissioners know that Steve and Pam are considering to cut two of the telephone lines at the office. These lines were used for the Main Office and for Steve's TTY. Since the usage of TTY for Steve has rarely used for many months, it is necessary to cut this line and use Pam's TTY going forward as a Main Office TTY and also, because of the features available on a Z-150 model that can handle all incoming calls from either voice or video callers, we decided to cut the main office telephone line. Pam's phone number will become the main office phone number. We will place an advertisement about the telephone number change soon. This action would save the RICDHH approximately \$700 a year. It may be used for communication access services or other program that is greatly in needs.

#### **BYLAWS:**

Chair Zellner explained that there are two portions of revisions that the Bylaws committee proposed, one is to approve on procedures on the election of officers and the other is RICDHH bylaws. He reminded the commissioners that procedures on the election of officers have been approved by the Commissioners on Feb. 16, 2011. He asked the Commissioners to look at three revisions on bylaws.

The commissioners reviewed three revisions and made some amendments as they went along.

Mary Wambach **made a motion** to accept and approve all revisions that were amended today by the current commissioners on the RICDHH Bylaws. Jesus Colon seconded the motion. The motion was carried 9-0.

All revisions amended are noted below by the commissioners at the meeting:

1. Issue #3 – changed from "**calendar**" to "**fiscal**" (Proposed by the bylaws committee.)
2. Issue #5 – adding "**voting**" before quorum (Proposed by the bylaws committee). But it was not recommended to add, "**voting**" by the Commissioners. (Amended by the Commissioners)
3. Issue: Communication Access – changed from "**unanimous vote**" to "**consensus**". (Amended by the Commissioners.)

THE MEETING WAS ON RECESS at 7:35pm.

THE MEETING RESUMED at 7:45pm.

**COMMITTEES' REPORT:**

**MEMBERSHIP:** There was a discussion about the objectives of the Committee as to how to recruit future quality board members to serve on the board. They are responsible to provide orientation for new members as well as provide the mentorship if they are interested in becoming an officer one day.

Sean Gill and Andrew Knight expressed their interest to join with Travis to serve on the Membership committee.

Ed Rawlings declared that he will submit a letter of resignation from the Commissioner role effective on June 30, 2011 and Jim Compton has informed the Commissioners that he would not seek for the other term this time.

The Commissioner application will be advertised starting in April and then, the candidates will be interviewed in June 2011.

The election of 2011 will happen in the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter of fiscal year. Since Ed Rawlings will be leaving, this seat will become vacant. Travis said he does not mind giving up the chairmanship to someone else if one person steps up and he said he does not mind to continue as well if nobody steps up. He asked the commissioners to think about this opportunity next few months.

Some suggested that the title of chairperson become co-chairperson without creating some pressures on each one of the twos.

Travis encouraged discussing more about this issue at the next meeting.

**HEALTHCARE:** Tina Thompson reported that this committee has been meeting on a regular basis. The committee is focusing on three things.

1. Training Module. The training has done to the Roger Williams Medical Center last September 2010. She and Steve met with the Hospital Association of Rhode Island to discuss about future training opportunity. The HARI agreed to sponsor CEU for the next two trainings, May and October 2011. It would cost HARI \$1500 for the CEU for nurses to attend the training. She said it is fantastic that HARI is willing to absorb the amount of dollars. Steve hopes to do individual training with individual hospitals as some specific hospitals have trouble providing access to deaf people in the recent weeks. That training part is moving very nicely.
2. The Consumer Education Training. The survey went out to public. They have three different formats of surveys such as online text only, online ASL Video, and hard copy survey. This is to get a sense of what people would be interested in terms of consumer education around health topics. Many people responded to the survey. The committee will meet at the end of this month to determine which topics should be

identified as part of the presentations. They also will look into a long term funding commitment from various sources to support this program development.

3. Resource Manual. Jim Simon explained what this committee has done so far. The committee had the opportunity to learn what the RICDHH's resources related to health are available to deaf and hard of hearing as well as healthcare professionals including websites, books, materials, presentations, etc. Also, the committee is interested in developing the list of professionals with some codes indicating that they have experienced using interpreter, hiring interpreter, or have staff members who know sign language, etc.
4. Policy/Legislation. Steve Florio added that the House Bill that was mentioned earlier in his report and that would require insurance to pay for communication access services is also coming from this committee.

Mary Wambach commended this committee for their work and efforts that have made so far.

**AWARD:** No Report

#### **INTERPRETING SERVICE TASK FORCE:**

Tina Thompson reported that the task force has had three meetings so far. They are focusing on identifying members to serve on the task force. They have a hard of hearing individual, Jodi Merryman, who is also a board of trustee member. She is a social worker for the Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals. Karen Davis as a hearing individual from the Office of Rehabilitation Service. Paul Barnaby from the RICDHH and Steve Florio for the commission support. Tina was just a facilitator of the meeting. Carol Fay who is a RID representative is interested to serve on the task force and she will start at the next meeting.

#### **OPEN DISCUSSION:**

##### ***RICDHH Strategic Output Product Report***

Chair Travis said that the commissioners had discussed on this topic earlier in the meeting so he can move on to the next topic.

##### ***Statewide Coordinating Council on Education for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing:***

Chair Travis suggested that the commissioners hold this topic until a special meeting that will focus on the Strategic Planning and this Statewide Coordinating Council on Education for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. All Commissioners were in agreement.

***Evaluation/Toll for CDHH Personnel:***

After a lengthy discussion on which committee this evaluation tool for Executive Director should be assigned to, etc., the commissioners were in agreement that Mary Wambach who offered to assume the responsibility on behalf of the commissioner develop the evaluation tool for the Executive Director. Mary Wambach welcomes anyone to assist her on this specific task.

**OLD BUSINESS:** 1 items. Please see below.

**OLD BUSINESS ITEM #1 – RICDHH Bylaws Revisions** - Chair Travis reminded that the Commissioners have approved the bylaws revisions earlier this evening but there is other part of the bylaws that need to be addressed.

It was suggested that the language under Article X- Meetings, both Section 2 and 3, "*These Open Meeting requirements do not apply to Commission working committees of 4 members or less (not a quorum)*",

be replaced with this new language, "*According to the Open Meetings Act, regardless of the number of members, all committees, or in any form of groups (task force, subcommittee, workgroup, etc.), must comply with the postings of meeting notices (48 hours in advance) and record minutes. It can be done by filing with the Rhode Island Secretary of State.*"

**NEW BUSINESS:** No item.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:45pm declared by Chair Travis Zellner.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven A. Florio  
Executive Director  
(Secretary for the March 9, 2011 meeting).