

The RI CDHH Commissioner approved the minutes for the 07/20/2011 meeting on October 6, 2011.

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

July 20, 2011

### MEETING MINUTES

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

*Commissioner(s) not Attending:* None

*Staff Attending:* Steve Florio (Executive Director)

*Public Attending:* None

*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 conducted a roll call. He declared that the quorum was met because at least 5 commissioners were presented.

**Review of Meeting Minutes (06/20/2011):**

- 1) Jesus M Colon **made a motion** to approve the **June 20, 2011** meeting minutes as amended/corrected. Karen Davis seconded. The motion was carried 7-0 (Mary Wambach was not at the previous meeting.)

Amendments/corrections were made as follows:

- 1) Added, "He clarified that Andrew Knight was appointed to serve for the remainder of John Dunsmore's term that would end on June 30<sup>th</sup>. He was not sure about Andrew's interest in continuing to serve for a new term. He would get in touch with Andrew to find out his interest." under Candidates for Commissioner Seats on Page 4.
- 2) Revised to "Now, they were done. The blueprint needs to be implemented by the Commission staff going forward including funding to cover activities with topics." under Healthcare Report on page 6.

#### **CHAIR'S REPORT:**

Chair Zellner wanted to report on a few things:

**RISD** – The Board of Trustees had the "work session" meeting last night. The Transition Team (TT) has established and it will be running the school through the summer and the fall. Dinaz Adenwalla resigned from the Assistant Director position, Wayne Hannon assumed new position with the Budget office at the Department of Administration, and recently, Lori Dunsmore, is no longer the Director of the RISD. That would leave RISD without any experienced administrator to run the school which was why the TT was formed until these positions are filled during the year. RISD already has a special education specialist, Mary Pendergast and, interim Assistant Director of Operations, Corsino Delgado on the team. They would seek for a consultant or group that is specializing in Deaf Education immediately to serve on the team. The Letter of Interest (LOI) was still in works before sending it out to public. This person or group will be part of the team until the Spring at least. The Board of Trustees did not feel comfortable with the idea of being rushed to post the Director position until they identify the clear and recognizable areas as to where RISD is going so they would know the type of person they are looking for. The bottom line is to improve students' school performance.

Mary Wambach announced that she regrettably and respectfully resigned from the RISD Board of Trustees. Because she has been involved with the Teen Domestic Violence projects, she would not want to deal with potential conflict of interests if she involves with some RISD students.

#### **QUESTIONS/ANSWERS:**

**Question #1:** Tina Thompson asked if the BOT is looking for a group of consultants with expertise in deaf education, and if the school was going toward to diversify their student body to include hard of hearing, cochlear implants, etc. including mainstream educators with various level of expertise? Is that correct?

**Answer:** Travis Zellner responded, yes, it will be included under deaf education. The BoT wants the RISD to be an one stop center for all including deaf education, mainstream students, etc. The top priority right now is to have someone who is the expertise in deaf education, and then we would move on from there.

**Comment #1:** Sean Gill would like to add that there are approximately 9 deaf schools in the country are looking for a new director. It will be a challenge to find a qualified candidate to lead the school.

**Comment #2:** Mary Wambach pointed out that the Deaf Education is a field. In the past, someone had a rehabilitation degree or education degree and maybe, they would add some certifications for hearing loss, education, but, that is not a separate field. Deaf education itself, is the field, and it has been forced to expand because deafness does not mean what it meant 50 years ago. She added that the school is very aware that they need to serve the deaf, the deaf who use sign who have oral programs, bilateral implants, various equipment, devices, so we're aware of that at the school and hearing loss as well with other disabilities.

**Question #2:** Jim Simon wanted to know about the reform plan and about other agencies or schools sharing the building?

**Answer:** Travis responded saying that there will be a mass broadcast to the community, staff, teachers, students, etc. as to what BOT plans from now through the fall or for the year such as to who is doing what, explaining about the reform plan, what are the deadlines to move on, and pretty much everything with bulleted points. In term of building, BOT was working on the lease terms but for some reasons, it fell through due to a number of factors. It seemed that Groden Center found other opportunities with lower costs for using the space. In terms of using vacant space at RISD, we need to re-draw our priorities to include community, teachers, etc. to identify needs of school that might need that space. The BoT would wait until the consultant(s) is hired and then to discuss as to how to proceed.

**Question #3:** Jordan Sack asked who is the authority of the RISD building?

**Answer:** Travis Zellner responded that the decision is the collaboration between the State and RISD but basically, the Board of Regents owns the title of the school. Whoever comes to RISD building, it would be the BOT to make decisions but it would have to go through the Department of Administration, Board of Regents, etc. to make sure that everyone is on the same page about using the space at the RISD building. He will provide more concrete information at the next meeting in August.

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

**SECRETARY'S REPORT:** No Report

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** No Report

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

- 1) **Transition from FY2011 to FY2012 News:** Steve Florio reported that the last two weeks was focusing on wrapping up the fiscal year 2011 business such as to ensure that all invoices are being paid for FY2011 and to close out all accounts. It was smooth transition to FY2012 this time. They are ready for the FY2012 year.

**Staff** – Steve informed that Paul Barnaby was on vacation this week in Maine. Pamela Zellner covered his responsibilities and he covered if Pam needed to do the Information and Referral work or something else. So far, it went very well.

- 2) **Budget News:** He mentioned in my previous report, the budget for FY2012 is at the budget level. The RICDHH will have no new money, therefore, everything remains status quo.

Steve said it was a short report because we met only two weeks ago and not much had happened since then.

#### **NEW BUSINESS: CANDIDATES FOR COMMISSIONER SEATS**

Chair Travis realized after receiving the message from Steve Florio that he overlooked making an official record to nominate incumbent candidates and new candidates with formal votes during open meeting at the previous meeting. He suggested that the Commissioners made a motion again today to nominate Betsy Beach and Paul Hughett for newly appointment and Travis Zellner and Jordan Sack for re-appointment. Then the Commissioners interview with Mary Wambach before making another motion to nominate her for re-appointment. The Commissioners were in agreement with Travis as to how the process was going to be.

Jesus M Colon **made a motion** to recommend that Paul Hughett be appointed to serve as a Commissioner for the remainder of the term of Ed Rawlings who resigned from the Commission effective July 30, 2011, that Betsy Beach be appointed to serve as a Commissioner for a full 1<sup>st</sup> term in replacing for James Compton who expired his term on June 30, 2011 and that Travis Zellner and Jordan Sack be re-appointed for the other term, 2011-2013. Sean Gill seconded. The motion was carried, 6-0.

The Commissioners interviewed with Mary Wambach as to why she is interested in continuing serving on the Commission. Jesus M Colon **made a motion** to recommend that Mary Wambach be re-appointed for the other term, 2011-2013. Karen Davis seconded. The motion was carried, 7-0.

#### **COMMITTEES' REPORT:**

**BYLAWS:** No Report.

**Membership:** Board Recruitment: Travis reported that there will be one 'Deaf' seat remaining vacant because Andrew Knight was not interested in continuing for the other term. As for two departing 'Hard of Hearing' representatives, two 'Hard of Hearing' seats were successfully filled by Betsy Beach and Paul Hughett.

Election for 2011: Travis realized that the election process should have started last month but we will start the election process today. Travis had clearly stated that he will not assume the chairmanship this time. Someone had to step up this time. All officer positions can be filled by any Commissioners who have served the Commission for one full year. There was a discussion on the difference between 'serving at least one year by calendar' and 'serving at least one year by fiscal year'. There was a general consensus that the definition of one year is equal to one fiscal year rather than from July to June by calendar. With this definition, only Betsy Beach and Paul Hughett are not eligible for the election of officers.

The commissioners have expressed their interests to assume officer's roles and the Commissioners will vote to pick individuals for the Officers' positions at the next meeting on August 31, 2011. So far, the commissioners are interested as follows:

**Chairperson:** Tina Thompson  
**Vice-Chairperson:** Jesus M Colon and Jordan Sack  
**Secretary:** Jesus M Colon  
**Treasurer:** Karen Davis

Healthcare: Tina Thompson gave the report:

The healthcare committee meeting scheduled for July was not held due to an interpreter who was sick on that day and a few members could not make it in the short notice. The meeting will be rescheduled for either August or September.

Award: Travis said we will advertise to seek nominations for two awards, RICDHH Recognition Award and RICDHH Legislative Award starting tomorrow. The Commissioners wish to give a special award for Ed Rawlings as well as other departing Commissioners for their time with the Commission. This is something for this committee to explore further.

**BREAK AT 7:03PM**

**RESUMED AT 7:15PM**

Interpreting Service

Task Force: Karen gave the report:

The Interpreting Service in RI Task Force met last week. They have been trying to identify a few areas that the Task Force needs to concentrate on as there are many issues to deal with. They were talking about having interpreting class in high school for the students as the interpreter may be one of other fields they can consider to become in the future. The Task Force needs to look at various data sources, economic benefits, barriers, challenges, etc. They plan to invite Sandy Lygren of Bristol Community College based in Fall Rivers, MA to introduce the programs that BCC currently offers and how can that program bridge to any bachelor-degree universities in RI.

Discussion:

1. Jim asked if there is any RIRID representative on the Task Force. Karen responded, yes, they have a RIRID representative on the task force which is Carol Fay.
2. The Cost Analysis including benefit is needed to see if it is feasible to have a full time salaried position as staff interpreter at the RICDHH or for any state agency as well as private sectors. Steve Florio noted that we have only one full time staff interpreter in the entire state of Rhode Island. In comparison with Massachusetts and Connecticut, MA has more than 20+ full time positions and the same goes for CT. Jesus M Colon insisted that the salary position has to be a minimum of \$40,000, not under. The interpreters have been underpaid in term of a full time position. The commissioners were in general consensus with Jesus' comments. The interpreters have their needs whether they wanted to remain freelance contractor or to seek for a full time position with benefits.

What their needs are different now than when they were 20+ years ago because of emerging profession' demands and better conditioning. Travis Zellner looked forward to hearing the report at the next meeting on this topic.

**OLD BUSINESS:** 2 items. Please see below.

OLD BUSINESS ITEM #1 – Approval on CART Referral Services Policies and Procedures

OLD BUSINESS ITEM #2 – Approval on Interpreter Referral Services Policies and Procedures

Clarification and/or Corrections needed on both Interpreter and CART Referral Services Policies and Procedures:

1. Clarification on the definition of Deaf Interpreter on Page 2. Adding "Screened" before Deaf Interpreter is to reflect that this interpreter is not certified by the RID but by another state that has the screening program.
2. Clarification on State Screening program. Adding an emphasis that Rhode Island does not have the screening program but the Board of the Interpreters for the Deaf does recognize the screening program offered by other states like Massachusetts, Florida, Texas, etc.
3. Elimination of definition on "Interpreter" on Page 2.

**BREAK AT 8:10PM**

**RESUMED AT 8:17PM**

4. Create the sub-sections under definition on page 2 through page 4 and under 5.1.3 MPA on page 6 through page 8 of each manual for more friendly readable.
5. Expansion of information on license requirement under Eligibility of Interpreter on page 5.
6. Clarification on post secondary institutions. Amending the language to reflect the state institutions such as "For Post Secondary State Colleges and Universities" instead of "For Post Secondary Institutions.
7. Create the protocols as to how to approve the CART providers to be on the state vendor list and to be part of the CART Referral service.

Jim Simon suggested that these manuals be reviewed at the Interpreting Service in RI Task Force meeting. The commissioners were generally in agreement that they are not ready to approve it until they see the revisions per their suggestions at the next meeting.

**OPEN DISCUSSION:**

**RICDHH Strategic Plan:** The commissioners debated whether the evaluation on Executive Director should be done immediately or should it be on hold until the RICDHH Strategic Plan is in the place, then develop the evaluation tools that are tied to the RICDHH strategic plan because it will be part of performance evaluation of Executive Director.

The Commissioners agreed that the agenda items on August 31<sup>st</sup> will be limited to three (3) items, Election of Officers for fiscal year 2012, Interpreter/CART Referral Service Policies and Procedures, and RICDHH Strategic Plan (output product) along with the time allocations on each topic for effective time management guidance. The commissioners were generally in consensus with this arrangement.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Steven A. Florio  
Executive Director  
(Secretary for the July 20, 2011 meeting).