

The RI CDHH Commissioner approved the minutes for the 01/16/2013 meeting on February 13, 2013.

Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

January 16, 2013

MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners Attending: *Jordan Sack, Travis Zellner, James Simon, Heather Niedbala, Paul Molloy, and Betsy Beach.*

Commissioner(s) not Attending: *Paul Hughett*

Staff Attending: *Steve Florio (Executive Director)*

Public Attending: *Julia Gold and Todd Murano*

Communication Accommodations:

Interpreters: Elizabeth Nadolski

CloseVision Interpreters: Jonathan Henry and Carol Fay

CART service: Shelley Deming

Support Service Provider: Margaret Molloy (volunteer)

Location: *Cafeteria at the Rhode Island School for the Deaf in Providence, RI*

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Jordan Sack at 6:09pm.

Chair Sack announced that the quorum was met, therefore, the meeting proceeded. He hoped that everyone had a new year, good holidays, a good time relaxing at home or vacation or whatever they did during the break. He reviewed the meeting agenda as to what to expect for the evening.

Review of Meeting Minutes (10/17/2012):

- 1) Travis Zellner **made a motion** to approve the **September 19, 2012** meeting minutes as corrected. Paul Molloy seconded. The motion was carried 6-0.

Correction(s):

- Changed from "Chairperson to Vice-Chairperson" after "was called to order by" on page 1.

Review of Meeting Minutes (12/19/2012):

- 2) Paul Molloy **made a motion** to approve the **December 19, 2012** meeting minutes as written. Heather Niedbala seconded. The motion was carried 6-0.

Chairperson Sack asked Paul Molloy to start his presentation on Deaf-Blind Awareness. Paul Molloy came on the floor.

Paul Molloy pointed out on a few things about deaf-blind as follows:

1. Deaf-blind is based on the level of hearing and vision, not deaf and secondary disabilities.
2. Deaf-blind is one of the largest low incidence populations that are underserved in the country.
3. In the country, 10,000 children, birth to 22, are identified as deaf-blind.
4. Over 50,000 adults are identified as deaf-blind in the country.
5. In Rhode Island, there are roughly 100 to 150 deaf-blind children.
6. There are roughly 5 to 800 deaf-blind adults in RI.
7. 10% of Deaf and Hard of Hearing population has a syndrome called Usher's Syndrome which is currently one of the leading causes of blindness right behind Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP) in the country.
8. There are lack of resources and preparedness for people who are dealing with their deaf-blindness in RI especially children who has Usher's Syndrome. They are perfect fine when they were little but their vision will become more restricted at some point of their lifetime when they grow up. It became more challenging when transitioning from totally independence to seek assistance and/or resources to lead their lives.
9. The same goes for People who are Deaf plus secondary disabilities, third, fourth, so forth. Lack of awareness, resources, and support available for them.
10. Average 62% of children at all schools for the deaf have at least secondary disability (range from mild to severe).
11. 92% of Deaf-blind and Deaf-secondary disability in the country are unemployed.
12. 62% of people with single disability are unemployed.
13. 43% of people who are deaf and hard of hearing are unemployed.
14. Clearly, issues related deaf-blind and deaf-secondary disabilities have not been properly addressed.
15. SSP means a professional Support Service Provider. SSP works with deaf-blind, deaf-secondary, third where they might need support going to a store, where they might need support shopping for clothes or need support reading their mail; might need support filling out job applications.
16. SSP programs available in several states such as Massachusetts (known as DBCAN), State of Washington, and other states. Unfortunately, no program that is designed for deaf-blind and deaf-secondary is available in Rhode Island.
17. RISD as a site for the CDHH meeting would be great as they do provide best accessibility for Deaf-Blind including maneuverings, lightings, and spaces.

After presentation, the "questions and answers" session were held. The commissioners were consensus that the RICDHH shall create some kind of resources on Deaf-blind as part of strategic planning projects.

Break at 7:27pm.

The meeting resumed at 7:39pmExecutive Director Report:

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Steve reported that right now our Governor Lincoln Chafee was giving the State of State Address speech at the State House. He got paged from one of the viewers that the interpreter they hired was not shown in the TV screen of Governor's Speech. He said this was nothing new. He would look into this issue first thing in the morning and would create a different approach to educate people who were responsible for providing TV coverage on the State of State Address speech.

He said he hoped that one of our legislative bills, Emergency and Public Communication Access Program, is part of Governor's Budget plan as Governor introduced the budget bill to the legislators and the public tonight. He had been working with the budget office and lawyer on this bill and he was not sure if it would be included this year. If they did, he would let the Commissioners know right away because this means the Office of the Governor endorses it.

He liked Paul Molloy's assessment about accessibility and convenience to have the meeting held at the RI School for the Deaf. The Commissioners were in agreement through consensus that this subject will be discussed at the next meeting about the locations for future commissioner meetings.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES:

Steve gave the updates on 3 legislative bills.

1. Emergency and Public Communication Access Program – If Governor included it as part of their budget plan, it would be fantastic. If not, then he would seek the legislator to sponsor it. No new language revision since last year.
2. Theaters with at least 10 screens must provide captioning and audio describing - No new language revision. The last time this bill introduced was the 2010 legislation session. He feels that there is a good chance the bill is going out of the committee because there was nothing being done since 2010 on the theaters' part for deaf and hard of hearing population in RI. He plans to find the legislator to sponsor it.
3. Court-ordered classes, trainings, meetings, - Since the last meeting, Steve had worked with the representatives who are experienced or trained as legal interpreting in court to come up with the language. Not only working with these representatives but also, learned other states' laws, i.e. Colorado and State of Washington, as to how the language should be written. As this result, parts of the bill were expanded to include assistive listening devices, CART providers, video recording for people who request it for appealing purpose, and the waivers. He feels that this bill, if passed, will become one of good laws to have for deaf and hard of hearing people who are part of the court proceedings. He plans to find the legislator to sponsor it too.

He explained that as soon as the number is assigned to each legislative proposal, he would let the commissioners know via e-mail so they can start preparing to conduct the campaign to support these bills.

COFFEE HOUR REVIEW AND PLANNING:

Chair Sack requested that this topic be tabled until the next meeting since they did not have much time to discuss on this tonight. The Commissioners were in agreement through consensus with his request.

INTERVIEW FORMAT:

The Commissioners discussed and agreed that the Membership Committee should review the interview questions. They hope to see some improvements including finding out their skills and experience that may help CDHH, deaf-blind and deaf-secondary disability, more questions related to current trends, etc. The commissioners expressed their interests to serve on the Membership committee: Jim Simon, Betsy Beach, and Paul Molloy. Todd Murano, a nominee to be appointed by the Governor, is interested to join the committee.

Julia Gold asked a question about voting in front of candidates who interviewed for the opportunity to serve on the Commission. The commissioners explained that this process, called, Open Meeting Act, that the commissioners or like any state and municipal body such as commission, board, committee, etc. must adhere in best interest of public. All votes must be announced in public with a few exceptions such as character, performance, and legal related confidential.

STRATEGIC PLANNING:

Chair Sack said there was not much time to discuss on this topic. However, next meeting will be primarily focusing on strategic planning. The Commissioners were in agreement via consensus.

Chair Sack concluded by reviewing the meeting agenda for next month, February 13th.

1. Approval of Meeting Minutes
2. Suggestions and Recommendations on Deaf-Blind based on what we learned from Paul Molloy.
3. Executive Director's Report
4. Legislative Updates
5. Strategic Planning including all committees
6. Sub-Committees: Membership on Interview formats
7. Coffee Hour

Chair Sack adjourned the meeting at 8:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven A. Florio
Acting Secretary