

The RI CDHH Commissioner approved the minutes for the 03/20/2013 meeting on May 22, 2013.

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

March 20, 2013

### MEETING MINUTES

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

**Commissioner(s) not Attending:** *Travis Zellner, Paul Hughett, and Julia Gold*

**Staff Attending:** *Steve Florio (Executive Director)*

**Public Attending:** *Neil Leahey*

**Communication Accommodations:**

*Interpreters: Maureen McEntee and Patricia Yachimski*

*CloseVision Interpreters: Carol Fay and Robb Schmiegel*

*CART service: Shelley Deming*

*Support Service Provider: Margaret Molloy (volunteer)*

**Location:** *Conference Room A at the Department of Administration building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor*

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The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Jordan Sack at 6:07pm.

Chair Sack announced that the quorum was satisfied so the meeting may proceed. He welcomed a newly appointed Commissioner, Todd Murano. He also acknowledged that there was a possibility Commissioner Paul Hughett may not be continuing with us any longer. He would keep the Commissioners posted about him.

### Review of Meeting Minutes (02/13/2013):

- 1) Betsy Beach **made a motion** to approve the **February 13, 2013** meeting minutes as corrected. Paul Molloy seconded. The motion was carried 6-0.

#### Correction(s):

- Revised from "Jim Simon will submit the final version of draft for the Commissioners to approve at the next meeting." to "The Commissioners submitted the final version of draft for them to approve at the next meeting." (Page 3)

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR's REPORT:

Steve Florio reported that he attended 3 budgetary hearings, two related to Article 17, aka Emergency and Public Communication Access Program (EPCAP) and one on RICDHH's agency budget as part of Article 1 for FY2014 since the last meeting (Feb. 26<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup>, and March 12<sup>th</sup>). All hearings went very well both in the Senate and House Finance Committees. A number of hearings on many pieces of budgets are underway. The state comprehensive budget bill will be discussed and voted on sometimes in May or June 2013. He will monitor it and will report back to the Commissioners anything that has potential fiscal impact on RICDHH.

RICDHH monitors 5 legislative bills, HB 5818 and SB 277/317 – Access to Movies, HB 5830 and SB 415 – Access in RI Courts, and HB 5419 – Insurance Coverage on Hearing Aids. The hearing dates have not yet set but as soon as they announced them, he would send the message out to the Commissioners and to the public. He hoped for more people to take initiatives to support these bills.

The Healthcare Reform Forum held on Feb. 27<sup>th</sup> at Warwick, RI was good. Even though, it did not have a good turnout but the questions asked by the individuals who attended were very good. Steve planned to request them to host one more time during the month of Hearing Loss Awareness Month so more people become aware about this event. There are some new changes according to the Affordable Care Act or known as Healthcare Reform such as Patient's Protections, No Pre-existing Conditions, Healthcare Benefit Exchange, and rebates/discounts if qualified/eligible.

The activities are being planned for the Hearing Loss Awareness Month. He was excited about it. A good number of organizations and service providers have responded that they will participate again this year. There is an annual EXPO from 11am to 3:30pm on May 16<sup>th</sup> and EXPO II will be held at 6pm for the community on the same day. EXPO II is a pilot to see if it is successful. If it is successful, then we will continue using this format. He hoped to secure a guest speaker from Washington, DC to be part of the evening program.

He reported that the state contract including state rates established for freelance interpreters and CART captioners will expire on June 30, 2013. He has been working on drafting a new proposal starting on July 1, 2013 and ending on June 30, 2016. There will be a hearing to collect inputs and comments from the public on the proposal sometimes in April. He will meet with state agencies that made frequent requests for service to give them the opportunity to share their experience and considerations to be included in the new state contract. He will keep the Commissioners posted about this process.

He informed the Commissioners about the press release sent out by the Capitol TV a few hours ago that they will be able to live stream up to four committee hearings simultaneously, which will allow members of the public to see votes and hearings in real time. Those hearings, as well as the House and Senate

sessions, will then be archived so they can be viewed through the Rhode Island General Assembly website. He thought it was great news but he decided to write a letter right away responding to Capitol TV's press release. In his letter, he congratulated them for an exciting milestone but cautioned that they need to come up with accessibility solution for the deaf and hard of hearing viewers similar to Massachusetts as soon as possible.

#### LEGISLATIVE UPDATES:

Steve gave the latest updates on legislation.

1. Emergency and Public Communication Access Program – it is already part of Governor's Budget Plan for FY2014. – No action since last meeting. It will not be voted on until the hearings on all aspect of budget components are done which may happen in May or June 2013.
2. HB 5818 and SB 277/317 – Access to Movies - they have been introduced and referred to the House and Senate Committees. No hearing dates are scheduled yet.
3. HB 5830 and SB 415 – Access in RI Courts – they have been introduced and referred to the House and Senate Committees. No hearing dates are scheduled yet. Steve and Carol Fay, RIRID representative, met with Joseph Baxter and Erika Kruse Weller, both from Superior Court, both whom Gail Fogarty, ADA Coordinator, reports to concerning Communication Access services in Court last Monday. We had general agreement on most parts. One clear amendment that, he believes, RICDHH is willing to agree to change the effective date from "July 1, 2013" to "July 1, 2014" to give them ample time to prepare for the budget in FY2015. He is still waiting for other suggested amendments from them.
4. HB 5419 – RICDHH did not initiate this legislation but Representative Robert Jacquard sponsors this bill and it is introduced and referred to the House Health, Education, and Welfare Committee. RICDHH's position is to support this bill provided that the cost of hearing aids for children should be amended to "\$2,000" instead of "a full cost of hearing aids". If this bill passed with this language, the insurance company would buy cheapest hearing aid possible they could find would satisfy the definition of "a full cost of hearing aids". He knows people would not want this to happen.

#### MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE: Interview Questionnaires

Jim Simon asked the Commissioners to approve the new questions. Todd Murano **made a motion to approve** the interview questionnaires for candidates who are interested in serving on the Commission. Heather Niedbala seconded. The motion was carried 6-0.

**Break – 6:55pm**

**Meeting Resumed at 7:05pm**

## STRATEGIC PLANNING:

Chair Sack explained the process and expectations. The commissioners focused on Strategic Initiative #3 (prioritize awareness and access) tonight. They started brainstorming ideas and needs that they want to achieve.

Here were the initial results of brainstorming:

1. Birth Diagnosis of Hearing Loss
2. Transportation – Communication Access via hearing and visual
3. Community Awareness including legislative issues, vlogs, and social media.
4. Reaching “new” community/population including parents.
5. RICDHH’s website revision
6. Spring Events/Activities
7. Deaf-Blind Resources

The commissioners voted on #3 above more than others.

The commissioners continued to discuss on how and what will be activities or projects under Community Awareness.

### Community Awareness

- Video LOG (VLOG) for American Sign Language Community
- Information and Resources available for Youths – both Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- RICDHH to be more visibility, more videos (i.e. TV Advertisements) and brief news about RICDHH activities.

Because of time was up, Chair Sack thanked everyone for making progress on Strategic Initiative #3. He suggested the agenda items for the next meeting as follows:

1. Have someone come in to speak about the topics such as EI, Transportation, airport, etc.
2. Focus on Initiative #3 – Community Awareness
  - a. 7pm – Brainstorm begins
  - b. 8pm – Break
  - c. 810pm – reconvened
  - d. Discussion on how and where to start, website, in-person?

He adjourned the meeting at 9:01pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven A. Florio  
Acting Secretary