

The RI CDHH Commissioner approved the minutes for the 02/12/2014 meeting on March 19, 2014.

Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

February 12, 2014

MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners Attending: David Abell, Betsy Beach, Julia Gold, Heather Niedbala, Timothy Riker, Jordan Sack, James Simon, and Travis Zellner.

Commissioner(s) not Attending: Paul Molloy, Todd Murano, and Joshua Pila

Staff Attending: Steven A. Florio (Executive Director), Holly St. Pierre (Interpreter/CART Referral Specialist), and Mi Ok Bruining, LCSW (EPCAP Coordinator)

Public Attending: Damien Thompson

Communication Accommodations:

Interpreters: Jonathan Henry (MPA-358) and Hayley Jamroz Baccaire (Partners Interpreting)

CART service: Shelley Deming (Allied Reporters)

Location: Conference Room A at the Department of Administration building, 2nd Floor

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Jordan Sack at 6:03pm.

Chair Jordan Sack announced that the quorum was met after conducting roll call. Jordan Sack requested that the items on agenda be flexible to accommodate Chris Hartling who brought brand new FM system to the Commission meeting for demonstration and he needed to leave at 7:00pm. The commissioners were in agreement with Jordan's suggestion.

Chris Hartling of Hartling Communication from Burlington, MA explained as to how the DigiWave, two ways, FM system works. Here is a link about this product, <http://www.williamssound.com/catalog/dws-pcs-2>

He said, "This system is used by placing microphones in different strategic locations in a meeting room so that nobody has to pass a microphone around for FM transmitting and amplification. Meeting attendees with hearing loss will be equipped with FM receivers that have volume controls. These receivers can be used with a personal neckloop or headphones or any other comfortable earphone/headphone device."

The commissioners asked a number of technical and beneficial questions. Chris stressed that this product is not designed for lending to the public because it is expensive and vulnerable if not in good care. This product is great for any Commission's functions such as meetings, workshops, etc. He mentioned that the FM system that RICDHH currently has is sufficient for lending to the public.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR's REPORT (Including Legislative and Budget Updates):

1. Emergency and Public Communication Access Program (EPCAP):
 - o Steve introduced a new EPCAP Coordinator, Mi Ok Bruining, who started working on Monday, February 10th. She had a good start in her first three days by attending the Emergency Management Advisory Council meeting with an important agenda and by attending the RICDHH Commission meeting tonight. Mi Ok Bruining greeted and gave a brief introduction about herself. She will work closely with the Tech Committee.
 - o Steve mentioned that he has been working on bringing a team of trainers from TDI to provide "Preparedness for Disaster" training for up to 44 participants. 22 1st responders including state police, municipal police, EMT, municipal fire departments, Capitol Police and 22 consumers who are deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind of diverse populations. The Division of Purchases is currently reviewing it. Once it is approved, the paperwork and logistics will be implemented. He hopes this will happen in this fiscal year.
2. Action Progress Report on Interpreter/CART Referral Service:
 - o Steve pointed to a specific 2-page sheet that will be used to monitor our progress with the quality of Interpreter and CART Referral Service. We have achieved a number of projects and many to go, mostly are in progress.
3. Hearing Loss Awareness Month - 2014:
 - o Steve hopes that the publicity on Hearing Loss Awareness Month starts on the first week of March so this will give us two months to spread the words out about a variety of events during the month of May. The Hearing Loss Awareness Expo will be held on May 15, 2014 from 11am to 3:30pm.
4. Legislative Updates:
 - o Steve reported that he was recently appointed by the House of the Speaker, Gordon Fox to serve on a special joint commission to study the accessibility at the movie theaters in RI. He believed that the representatives of different organizations and agencies received similar letter from the House of the Speaker office. That is a start. The date of Commission's first meeting has not been announced. Steve will get in touch with the House Policy Office and House of the Speaker Office for the meeting dates.
 - o Steve learned that a student had a struggle to convince her professor to provide access to her video as part of her class instructions. He recommended that we re-visited our bill that was introduced twice in the general assembly to ensure that all video educational materials are accessible.

- He would ask the legislators to sponsor similar bill that was introduced in the past. The Commissioners were in agreement with this initiative.
- Steve strongly encouraged the Commissioners to be more proactive pursuing the legislators to support the addition of a FTE, Staff Interpreter, in the RICDHH's FY 2015 budget. He would discuss more in depth once we arrive at this subject later on agenda tonight.
 - The legislative session will be on recess next week (Feb. 17th – 21st)
5. Budget Updates:
- Steve said that the FY2014 and FY2015 Budgets for the RICDHH are level-funded. No new money or no budget cut. That is good. The only thing we need is to include a FTE in the RICDHH budget which requires legislative action. He reported that there is no hearing scheduled for the agency budget to date.
6. Board Orientation Session:
- Steve received the list of dates of Tim Riker's availability and he will follow up with Joshua Pila to receive his availability for the Board orientation session. He hoped the orientation session will be held before the next commission meeting.
 - At least two commissioners approached him to see if he could offer Deaf Culture training to gain understanding of their issues better. Steve proposed that the meeting either in April or May is dedicated to training on Deaf Culture, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind, as well as other important reminders like Open Meeting Act (OMA). The commissioners would like to have a "retreat" on one of the weekends to cover this type of activity.
 - Julia Gold proposed and the rest of the Commissioners were in agreement that all commissioners submit their 100-word bios and photos to Pamela Zellner to put on the RICDHH website, under the Commissioners' page.
 - Chair Jordan Sack asked if it is possible to move the Commissioners' page to "next page from front page" on the RICDHH website instead of clicking on the tabs several times to arrive this page. Steve said this can be done.
7. Personnel for next week:
- I will be out of office (vacation) next week (Feb. 17th to 24th)
 - Pam will be out office starting on Wednesday (Feb. 19th to 21st)
 - Holly and Mi Ok will be in the office as scheduled.

Break – 6:54pm

Meeting Resumed at 7:06pm

CHAIRPERSON:

1. Chair Sack welcomed Timothy Riker as a newly appointed member of the Commission. He mentioned that Joshua Pila was also newly appointed member but he could not make it to the meeting tonight. Jordan met him at the Tech Committee meeting on Monday evening, Feb. 10th.
2. He explained as to what to expect for the rest of the meeting and encouraged the Commissioners to move along through the agenda until 9pm.

Review of Meeting Minutes (12/18/2013):

- 1) Betsy Beach **made a motion** to approve the **December 18, 2013** meeting minutes as corrections. Julia Gold seconded. The motion was carried 7-0-1. (Timothy Riker did not vote because he was not a member of the commission at the meeting.)

Corrections were made as follows:

- A. Suggestion: add page number on each page of meeting minutes.
- B. Page 3, Number 7, 1st bullet, and last sentence: changed from 1914 to 2014.
- C. Page 6, under interview with candidates, and 2nd paragraph: changed from "preferred" to "elected" for each candidate.

Approval of Back-Up Monthly Meeting Calendar:

1. March 19, 2014 – (Back up: March 26th)
2. April 9, 2014 – (Back up: April 23rd)
3. May 21, 2014 – (Back up: May 28th)
6. June 18, 2014 – (Back up: June 25th)
7. July 16, 2014 – (Back up: July 23rd)
8. August 20, 2014 – (Back up: August 27th)
9. September 17, 2014 – (Back up: September 24th)
10. October 15, 2014 – (Back up: October 22nd)
12. December 10, 2013 – (Back up: December 17th)

Travis Zellner **made a motion** to approve the **Back-Up** 2014 Monthly Meeting Calendar for the Commissioners. Julia Gold seconded. The motion was carried 8-0.

DISCUSSION OF REQUEST FOR 4th FTE, STAFF INTERPRETER:

1. Steve Florio explained the history of Agency's attempt to hire a full-time staff interpreter over two decades including trying to fill in once.
2. Now, he experienced an increased demand of the need to have an interpreter on a full-time basis but he could not do it because of budget limit. He pointed out on a number of substantiations as to why a full time staff interpreter is the most cost effective approach to meet Agency's needs.
3. Jordan Sack shared same frustration. Holly St. Pierre shared her insights explaining that the loss time after extensive search for an interpreter would have better used to coordinate requests for the public only. Each commissioner shared their experience and felt strong about this issue. All were in agreement that this issue must be done at the Commissioners' level.

Julia Gold **made a motion** to create an ad hoc committee to develop strategic plan addressing the fourth FTE, Staff Interpreter, on behalf of the Board of the Commissioners. Heather Niedbala seconded. The motion was carried 8-0. Chair Jordan Sack appointed Travis Zellner to be the chair of the Ad-Hoc committee.

Break – 7:56pm

Meeting Resumed at 8:03pm

SUB-COMMITTEES' REPORTS:

TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE (David Abell, Chair):

David Abell reported that the members of technology committee met last Monday, Feb. 10th. The first hour was the opportunity for each member to tell how they grew up as deaf or hard of hearing person. He felt that this was very helpful gaining understanding of where each member was coming from. Each member respects each other's background. They found themselves with common challenges requiring different needs. Chair Sack, Heather Niedbala, and Steve Florio were completely in agreement with David's assessment about the first hour.

David Abell explained about the Committee's plan to roll out the survey. The purpose of this survey is to find out whether the public places (museum, town halls, library, etc.) have Hearing Assistive Technology (HAT) available on their premises. After collecting data, the information will be shared to everyone as to which place do have HAT available and to develop strategy to address the facilities that lack HAT. (a copy of Tech Committee's report can be requested at the RICDHH office).

Steve Florio reminded the Tech Committee that EPCAP Coordinator, Mi Ok Bruining, will work closely with the Tech Committee to support this project.

Travis Zellner **made a motion** to support the Tech Committee process and direction to pursue survey. Betsy Beach seconded. The motion was carried 8-0.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES COMMITTEE (Julia Gold, Chair):

Julia Gold reported that the Community Resources Committee met on Wednesday, January 15, 2014. Betsy Beach, Paul Molloy, and Julia Gold are on the committee. The committee came up with 3 priorities and walked through these priorities:

1. Build community through access to resources
 - a. Arts/Theater Accessibility
 - b. Educational Resources
 - c. Family Resources
2. Expand our reach by building our network and providing opportunities for community involvement
 - a. Improve our mailing list
 - b. Hold town hall meetings
 - c. Hold art events
 - d. Hold various events that reach different audiences or attract a more diverse audience
3. Build and strengthen outside awareness of our needs.

(a copy of Community Resources Committee's report can be requested at the RICDHH office).

Julia Gold explained that the meeting format, the Community Resources Committee feels, does not give adequate opportunity to interact with the public or to hear their concerns or insights about various issues.

The committee encourages the Board of Commissioners to hold a town hall format that would create opportunities for the public to participate and to engage into issues they may have. Julia gave an example that could work, out of 10 Commission meetings, 2 town hall-like meetings are held.

Betsy Beach **made a motion** to consider a Town Hall meeting format for future meetings. David Abell seconded. The motion was carried 8-0.

Physician Survey (Chair Jordan Sack):

Chair Jordan Sack explained that the survey is developed by Jordan Sack and supported by his professor from Brown School of Medicine, Dr. Patricia Nolan, who was the former Director of the Department of Health. Jordan got in touch with the Department of Health's licensing Department to discuss about the possible project that the Department of Health may consider to be part of after collecting the data. The survey is to ask the physicians to answer the questionnaires concerning deaf and hard of hearing patients. Jordan mentioned that he has obtained the list of more than 4,500 licensed Physicians from the Department of Health. He did not expect to receive responses from all of them but he is confident that a good number of responses will be received on this survey. He asked for Commissioners' input on questionnaires and to have the Commissioners to endorse the survey.

Some commissioners expressed their concerns about not enough time to review the survey and give feedback and asked if this survey can be hold until the next meeting after reviewing the survey. Jordan appreciated their instant feedback and suggested that he would like to collect feedback from the commissioners by this coming Friday so he can start sending the survey out to the physicians right away.

Some commissioners did not feel comfortable to endorse the survey until they see the final product.

Chair Jordan Sack **made a motion** that the Commission supports the survey for licensed physicians on deaf and hard of hearing patients. Nobody seconded. The motion was not advanced.

Chair Jordan Sack adjourned the meeting at 9:00pm.

The Board of Commissioners did not have a chance to discuss on the remaining items on agenda below:

1. Closed Session: Commissioners and Microphone System
2. Evaluation of Microphone Equipment
3. Public Comments

Respectfully submitted,

Steven A. Florio
Acting Secretary