

Please Note: This is not an approved copy of the minutes for the 08/20/2014 meeting of the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

August 20, 2014

MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners Attending: *Heather Niedbala, Julia Gold, Travis Zellner, Betsy Beach, Todd Murano, and James Simon*

Commissioner(s) not Attending: *Joshua Pila and Timothy Riker*

Staff Attending: *Steven A. Florio (Executive Director)*

Public Attending: *Nico Sedivy*

Communication Accommodations:

Interpreters: Carol Fay (MPA-358) and Elizabeth Nadolski (MPA-358)
CART service: Nicole Reis (Allied Reporters)

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

The meeting was called to order by Vice-Chair Heather Niedbala at 6:08pm.

Vice Chair Niedbala declared that the quorum was met after conducting roll call.

Review of Meeting Minutes (07/16/2014):

- 1) Todd Murano **made a motion** to approve the July 16, 2014 meeting minutes as written. Julia Gold seconded. The motion was carried 6-0-0.

OFFICERS' REPORTS:

Vice-Chair: Heather Niedbala received a letter from David Abell, a recent outgoing commissioner, entailing his experience with the Shanahan Sound and his recommendation about future project on assistive technology. The commissioners agreed that the project is still worthy pursued to ensure that the meeting is accessible to anyone who attend. The commissioners agreed to have the Tech Committee's meeting to be held at Tech ACCESS so the members of this committee may learn about their programs and assistive technology inventory and then, bring them to share with the Commissioners sometimes this fall.

Jim Simon **made a motion** to approve that the Commissioners to visit in some capacity as well as to identify the inventories at the TechACCESS facility. All were in favor.

Treasurer: Betsy Beach reported that the deadline for agency budget submission was on September 17th. Steve Florio asked the Budget office for an extension to the Friday of that week, the 19th because the commissioners have a commission meeting on September 17th, and they can look at the budget there and approve it and then make any adjustments and then get it ready for that Friday. Steve and Betsy will meet to talk about the budget plan for FY2015 and FY2016 on September 4th.

Secretary: Jim Simon felt that the meeting template that he uses to take notes needs to be updated, more accurate to how this meeting proceeds the meeting minutes. He will work with the office staff to update it.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR's REPORT:

- 1) Steve Florio friendly reminded the board of commissioners that communication between the committee chairs and office staff is very important because all meeting notices must be filed with the Secretary of State 72 hours in advance in order to comply with Rhode Island's Open Meeting Act.
- 2) Steve Florio added to Betsy Beach's report about the budget submission. This time, all state departments and agencies are required to include strategic plans as part of the budget plan. The Office of Budget and Management has already provided us the template for us to use. Steve handed out RICDHH's strategic plan as a draft for the commissioners to review. The strategic plan is consistent with what we have done and what we want to do as to where the RICDHH is going. The commissioners reviewed it and unanimously supported it. Steve also reported that the RICDHH was not asked to cut a certain percentage of the budget this time. The RICDHH was asked to submit at the level funding and they hope that we provided some cost-saving initiatives. That is good news. He intended to include 4th FTE in the budget, both in FY 2015 and FY2016.
- 3) The RICDHH was visible at the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf's Region 1 Conference in Wakefield, MA on the first weekend of August. He hoped to recruit interpreters who might never thought of working here in Rhode Island. Holly St. Pierre attended as a participant while he attended as an exhibitor. He met a good number of interpreters and had many conversations about licensing requirements, length of traveling, state rates if working for the State, etc.

BREAK – 7:02pm

Meeting resumed at 7:14pm

- 4) The activities for the Deaf Awareness Month here in Rhode Island are underway. It will be announced through facebook, e-mail, website, and postcard. Once again, Steve thanked Sprint for its sponsor to defray the cost of printing. He felt this year, the Deaf Awareness Month, will have great turnouts. The RICDHH and Brown University will host the “Madness in the Mainstream”, name of the book written by Mark Drolsbaugh who will be here to give presentation on September 24th. Steve said the book is based on his experience when he was in the mainstream when he grew up in the Philadelphia area. Steve noted that the humors will be part of the presentation. Mark is currently a licensed School Counselor at the Pennsylvania School for the Deaf. His trip to Rhode Island will be sponsored by the Rhode Island Hamilton Relay. It is possible that his presentation will be live-streamed. The logistics have not yet worked out at this point.
- 5) Steve made a note that there are some leadership changes going on in Rhode Island.
 - a. PARI, Inc. – Leo Canuel is no longer working there as Executive Director. He left the agency about two months ago. I was told that PARI, Inc. intended to post the job advertisement to fill in his position.
 - b. A bit of old news but just in case. TechACCESS of RI – Judy Carlson is no longer working with TechACCESS. She left early this year. Their new executive director is Kelly Charlebois. She works there for a long time so she is familiar with the programs there.
- 6) There is no news on House Commission on Movie Access. Steve contacted the Director of the House Policy office a week ago and was told that the legislators are now busy with their campaign for election. They will keep Steve posted soon.
- 7) EPCAP – MiOk Bruining has received more than 156 responses to the survey that she sent out earlier. The high percentage of responses are coming from the municipal offices, libraries, and police stations. MiOk will continue outreaching entities that have not responded by making a phone call, e-mail, fax, and other means. MiOk and Steve will meet and develop the training plans for those who responded and coordinate speakers to provide training depending on topics such as federal laws (ADA, 504, etc.), deaf issues, hard of hearing issues, communication access resources, etc. The plan should be identified by October 2014.
- 8) Coffee Hour – ideas for the program. The Commissioners discussed about a few speakers who may be perfect for the program. Steve considered inviting all candidates who are running for Governor to join us for the Coffee Hour. He pointed out who knows one of them won the election and is available to attend our event like what Governor Cariceri did when he was first elected in 2002. More discussion continues until next month. Steve said he will ask Pam to send e-mail that RICDHH seeks nominations for its award program by the end of this week.

SUB-COMMITTEES’ REPORTS:

Ad Hoc Committee for FTE Staff Interpreter (Zellner-Chair, Sack, Gold, and Niedbala):

Travis Zellner reported that the committee met on July 24th to discuss about 4th FTE. They brainstormed ideas and identify ideas and scenarios as to which is the best way for the RICDHH to go. The committee agreed to write a letter to Anthony Bucci, Administrator of the Division of

Human Resources, as this is a employee-related concern. The letter was sent on August 4th. To date, Travis Zellner has not received a response from him. Travis asked the Commissioners as to what they want to do with this letter. After a brief discussion, the commissioners agreed that the committee sends another letter, a very brief one, to Anthony Bucci to follow up. The 4th FTE committee will meet again if they still have not received a response from them by the end of this month.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES COMMITTEE (Gold-Chair, Riker, Niedbala, and Beach):

Julia Gold reported that the committee met on July 24th and again yesterday they were brainstorming ideas, the focus was really talking about how they could do an event that isn't going to take a ton of resources but bring lots of different people and get new folks involved. The idea they came up with is some kind of either picnic or outdoor event they can have in a park where they wouldn't have to pay money for the location. They discussed getting other community organizations involved. So going out to all of our different partners, perspectives, other agencies, lots of, I don't know all of them, but many organizations, we're going to set up a meeting. Steve Florio is going to reach out to a list of people for a meeting and ask them what they think they would want and how they would want to be involved in putting an event like this together. So, the goal would be to try to have something for the spring or early summer for next year. That is pretty it.

TECHNOLOGY COMMITTEE (Pila-Chair, Beach, and Murano):

Betsy Beach reported since Joshua Pila was not here. She will ask the Tech Committee to explore having its next meeting to be held at TechACCESS.

CANDIDATES FOR COMMISSIONERS' SEAT:

Vice Chair Niedbala asked Travis Zellner to facilitate the interview process. Travis agreed and resumed the floor to begin the interview process. Zellner introduced a candidate, Nico Sedivy, to all current commissioners and explained an overview of the Commission as to what it is about, why it exists, how it is operated, how often the commissioners meet, what expectations of the commissioners, and a brief of its history.

Zellner confirmed that Nico Sedivy wished to be interviewed in executive session rather than in open session.

Jim Simon **made a motion** to go into the executive session to discuss on questions for a candidate and to start interviewing with Nico Sedivy. Todd Murano seconded. The motion was carried 6-0.

The Executive Session began at 8:15pm.

Nico Sedivy was asked to be interviewed for the Hard of Hearing seat.

The Executive Session was open after Todd Murano **made a motion** and seconded by Julia Gold at 8:49pm.

Julia Gold **made a motion** that the board of the commissioners recommends Nico Sedivo to be appointed by the Governor to serve on the Commission as a Hard of Hearing commissioner. Elizabeth Betsy seconded. The motion was carried with 6 - 0.

Vice Chair Niedbala asked the Commissioners to agree that all other items on agenda be postponed to the next meeting. All agreed. Vice Chair Niedbala adjourned the meeting at 8:55pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven A. Florio
Acting Secretary