

The RI CDHH Commissioner approved the minutes for the 11/19/2014 meeting on December 10, 2014.

Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

November 19, 2014

MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners Attending: Heather Niedbala, Betsy Beach, Todd Murano, Nico Sedivy, and Timothy Riker

Commissioner(s) not Attending: Travis Zellner, Julia Gold, James Simon, and Joshua Pila

Staff Attending: Steven A. Florio (Executive Director)

Public Attending: Sameth Anderson-Grose, Richard Anderson-Grose, and Dorothy Hodge

Communication Accommodations:

Interpreters: Jessica Morgan (MPA-358) and Patricia Geddry (MPA-358)
Noelle Spinale (Mentee)

CART service: Jennifer Milette (Allied Reporters)

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

Vice Chairperson Heather Niedbala called the meeting to order at 6:16pm.

Vice Chair. Niedbala conducted a roll call and reported that the quorum was met. Three commissioners who could not make it tonight were Travis Zellner, Jim Simon, and Julia Gold. She regretted to inform the board of the Commissioners that Joshua Pila recently sent me a letter of resignation. He will move out of State because he has a new job. She wished him the best of luck with his new job. She gave a brief report on Annual Coffee Hour. She felt that the program was a success and had a good turnout.

Review of Meeting Minutes (10/15/2014):

- 1) Betsy Beach **made a motion** to approve the October 15, 2014 meeting minutes as written. Todd Murano seconded. The motion was carried 5-0-0.

RICDHH Officers' Reports:

Vice-Chairperson: Heather wanted to thank the Coffee Hour committee to plan the event. She really appreciated it, taking time to finish some touches.

Secretary: No Report

Treasurer: No Report

Executive Director's Report:

1. Budget Update: Steve received the report from the budget office that the RICDHH budget were level funded that covered all three FTEs and the programs/services the RICDHH has been providing thus far. They wouldn't add the fourth FTE in the budget for FY2015 and FY2016. The budget office and RICDHH had a meeting together to walk over their recommendations. Betsy Beach and Julia Gold were able to join us to observe and presented their thoughts and concerns on the RICDHH budget recommendations. \$34.5 million deficit of FY2015's 1st Quarter is being reported. The 4th FTE committee would need to find a way because a number of FTEs were created among the departments and agencies during the economic downtimes.
2. The Arts and Entertainment Community meeting was held this month. More work to do especially collecting more information about current technology that were shared by Randal Rosenbaum who came back from a LEAD conference in Chicago, Ill last summer hosted by The Kennedy Center. LEAD is the short name for Leadership Exchange in Arts and Disability. Steve planned to contact people from England because Randy was impressed with their captioning program.
3. He received a letter of appointment dated November 13, 2014 from Speaker of the House Nicholas A. Mattiello to serve on the Special Legislative Commission to Study Captioning and Audio Descriptions for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing and Visually Impaired in Rhode Island Commercial and Residential Settings. The first meeting was not yet scheduled but he is looking forward to it. The meeting will be open to public. Steve will let them know as soon as the meeting date is announced.
4. RICDHH and State Representative Robert Jacquard hosted 2nd Hearing Aid Stakeholders meeting this morning at State House. The meeting was productive. Some information was brought up by State Representative Jacquard such as population in RI, the users of Hearing Aids, etc. but all are mostly based on old information. The stakeholders agreed to bring the up-to-dated data as to how many people are wearing hearing aids. They did not expect an exact number but good quality of information from hearing aid dealers,

audiologists, insurance companies, and other sources that may have information on hearing aids. We all agreed to hold another meeting after the holidays to review the latest information and go from there.

5. A Joint Letter from Dr. Fine, Dept of Health and Steve Florio of RICDHH has been sent out to all 43 licensed hearing aids dealers and fitters including 10 pamphlets of ATEL, 10 pamphlets of "T-Coil and You", and 5 pamphlets of RICDHH. All hearing aids dispensers are required by the statute that they provide these materials with the receipt to the buyers. It was instrumental by David Abell, who was the chair of the Tech Committee at that time and it was finally carried out by the Tech Committee with support from the RICDHH and DOH staff. We should do this on an annual basis so the hearing aids dispensers are having good habit providing these materials on a regular basis.
6. Annual Coffee Hour: This event was a success, not without supporters like RI Hamilton Relay, Partners Interpreting, SorensonVRS, Purple Communications, Sprint, and Perspective Corporations. Steve was looking forward to having another success next year but he hoped for early planning this time.
7. RICDHH and RIRID had a meeting together to introduce RICDHH's 7-Point Strategic Plan and to discuss how the RICDHH support the RIRID on any interpreter related concerns going forward. Trainings/Workshops and emergency preparedness were the two main subjects discussed as to how they get involved. The proposed legislation on 5-71 was also discussed but briefly. It started the process. The RICDHH and RIRID will have the opportunity for the public to review the draft of legislative bill for their inputs before the RICDHH seeks a sponsor of this bill.

Break – 7:15pm

Meeting resumed – 7:21pm

Election of the Officers

- 1) Tim Riker **made a motion** to postpone the Election of Officers until next meeting in December 10, 2014. Todd Murano seconded. The motion was carried 5-0-0.

FTE Staff Interpreter

1. Steve reported that no committee meeting was held. He did not receive words from the Budget office since they met concerning on 4th FTE. He knew Travis Zellner, Chair of the Committee would want to have a follow up meeting between tonight and next month.

Legislative Update:

4 legislative bills were proposed for consideration to pursue. The commissioners reviewed all 4 legislative bills and had the opportunity to ask questions. As all agreed, when these bills were voted by the board of commissioners, it did not mean that the languages in each bill were final. It started the process and to

collect inputs and feedback from anyone who is interested or passionate about these bills before they are ready for the 2015 Legislative Session in January 2015.

1. **Hearing Aids Mandate Coverage** as supported by the State Representative Robert Jacquard. Increase from \$700 to \$1500 to cover the hearing aid per ear per 3 years for people who are 18 years old or older. Increase from \$1,500 to \$2,500 to cover hearing aid per ear per 3 years for children who are under 18 years old.
2. **Board of the Examiners for the Interpreters, RI General Law 5-71.** The major changes are as follows:
 - a. To recognize deaf professionals as interpreters.
 - b. To recognize people who are deaf-blind as consumers.
 - c. To recognize tactile interpreting, communicating with people who are deaf-blind.
 - d. Only one license to work in RI is needed. (Certified/Screened)
 - e. CEUs for certain certification groups are up for dialogue.
3. **POC for 504 Plan and IEPs.** Each school in RI must identify a point of contact person(s) who is responsible for coordinating 504 plan and/or IEPs and report them to the RI Department of Education. Rationale: Opportunity for raising awareness about children with disabilities' needs and technology through training/workshop offered for these POC by outside of RIDE. There are many more benefits to have a list of POCs in Rhode Island.
4. **American Sign Language and English Language Assessment** is required as part of IFSPs and IEPs. Rationale: to eliminate potential language deprivation during the early years of childhood especially for children who are deaf and hard of hearing.

Todd Murano **made a motion** to approve that the four legislative bills be moved forward. Tim Riker seconded. The motion was carried 5-0.

Early Intervention Services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Todd Murano wanted to put EI on the agenda so the Board of Commissioners can talk about this topic. His main concern is about the information that parents receive or don't receive. They don't get all the information that they should get about Deaf education in Rhode Island. He felt like our state and the hospital and the audiologists really focused on the oral method or different implants and in fact, not all Deaf babies benefit from that one option. For example, a brochure was distributed from Hasbro's Cochlear Implant program emphasizing that the spoken language will be a success without providing balanced information. He wanted to make sure that parents learn about ASL and Deaf culture. Most importantly, how ASL can benefit their language development. He wanted to propose to the commission and figure out how they as a commission, and how the RICDHH office can help addressing this problem. He was thinking that the Commission needs to do some fact-finding and documentation as to what's going on with the Early Intervention system in RI. What are the protocols when the baby is identified as Deaf or any type of hearing loss? He wanted audiologists and hospitals to be part of the fact-finding.

Steve Florio said he can be related to this because of his personal and professional experience. Comparing this year and 10 years ago, he would say this is a lot better but there are still a lot of works to do. For starter, the RICDHH was instrumental to establish the RI Early Intervention Partnership two years ago to get everyone that contribute to all children under 3 together and communicate with each other so everyone is on the same page about these issues. One year later, the workbook was developed by this group for the EI service coordinator who works with parents who have children with hearing loss. The workbook is called,

"Planning for Children Who Are Deaf or Hard of Hearing and Their Families". This is a step further. The committee is working on to identify what information the service coordinator should provide to the parents. He is still trying to pursue parents through the EI Service Providers to visit different places to give them better picture of what different programs and services are available to them. He pointed out that Orchard Farm, oral program in RI supported and funded by the Northern Rhode Island Collaborative has often received their students with no language. Clearly, the system is broken, not necessarily failing to strengthen ASL but also English as their primary language.

Betsy Beach mentioned that she has a granddaughter that needs to be assessed for Hard of Hearing issues. She also has a friend who's Deaf daughter got a cochlear implant at about age 12. And used sign. This girl decided not to become oral and used sign. She thought it's worth us getting involved in. She would like to set up a committee next meeting because she would think Julia Gold would have a lot of good input on that committee and she might want to be part of it. She agreed it's an issue of access for all levels of people affected by hearing issues for people that are either totally Deaf or people are somewhat deaf as a child.

Steve Florio pointed out that the Rhode Island School for the Deaf hosted one-of-its-kind statewide Early Intervention Conference on October 16, 2014. He hoped that RISD continues to host this event on an annual basis. Rhode Island does not have a luxury or well-established programs for all children who are deaf or hard of hearing under 3 until the last few years ago.

Break – 8:10pm

Meeting resumed – 8:18pm

Public Comments:

1. Dorothy Hodge
 - a. Shared concerns about RI General Laws, 5-71

Community Concerns:

1. Dorothy Hodge
 - a. RICDHH website should have meeting information on 1st page, not requiring navigation.
 - b. Parking issue at the Department of Administration building
 - c. Suggested meeting be held at RI School for the Deaf because of its convenient location and friendly access to public.

Vice Chair Niedbala adjourned the meeting at 8:58pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven A. Florio
Acting Secretary