

The RI CDHH Commissioner approved the minutes for the 05/20/2015 meeting on June 17, 2015.

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

May 20, 2015

### MEETING MINUTES

*Commissioners Attending:* Heather Niedbala, James Simon, Betsy Beach, Todd Murano, Nico Sedivy, Timothy Riker, Julia Gold, and George Herchenroether.

*Commissioner(s) not Attending:* Travis Zellner and Joseph Batiano

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

*Public Attending:* Raymond Niford

*Communication Accommodations:*

*Interpreters:* Maureen McEntee (MPA-358) and Christine West (MPA-358)

*CART service:* Shelley Deming (Allied Reporters)

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

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Chairperson Heather Niedbala called the meeting to order at 6:05pm. She determined that the quorum was met.

**Review of Meeting Minutes (04/08/2015):**

- 1) Todd Murano **made a motion** to approve the April 8, 2015 meeting minutes as corrected. Tim Riker seconded. The motion was carried, 8-0.

Corrections: Changed from "He" to "Steve" on page 2, 1<sup>st</sup> bullet under Executive Director's Report.

Changed from, "Not Presented" to "Not Present" on page 2 under RICDHH Officers' Reports.

### **RICDHH Officers' Reports:**

Chairperson: No report  
Vice-Chairperson: Not present  
Secretary: No report  
Treasurer: No report

### **Executive Director's Report:**

#### **1. Governor's Budget Plan HB 5900:**

The RICDHH Budget for FY 2015 and FY 2016 were heard before the Health and Human Service Sub-Committee under the House Finance Committee on May 5, 2015. Heather Niedbala and I testified on RICDHH's behalf. They will continue having the hearing on budget with each department until June 2015. So far, the budget remained at the funding level.

Article 19 and 20 were still part of the HB 5900 unless they made an amendment to remove these articles.

2. **Hearing Loss Awareness Month**– Steve reported that HLAM was underway. A number of events were held. The most recent was David Abell's presentation, "Advocating for Hearing Assistive Technology at the public place" both at Newport Public Library and Warwick Public Library.

Commissioners brainstormed as to how to outreach large audience such as Department of Elderly Affairs, Department of Health, Meals on Wheels, churches, community centers, etc. for the next time.

3. **Interpreter/CART Referral Database Management System:** Steve reported that Steve and his staff members have looked into one of the software solutions that have developed database system for referral services. Three companies have used their service. Steve believes that it matches with the RICDHH nicely because of its size and costs that are very reasonable. The company is EZ Request Manager. They would continue inquiring this company on various features that are offered by EZ Request Manager before considering for a contract as part of the RICDHH Interpreter/CART Referral Services.

### **LEGISLATION UPDATES**

**SB0478 and HB 5695A** – Interpreter Licensure – 5-71 – HB 5695 was voted to pass as amended by the House HEW committee on May 6<sup>th</sup>. The House Floor voted to pass this bill on May 13, 2015. It went over to the Senate Health and Human Service Committee. Since then, the hearing on this bill had not been set by the Senate HHS Committee yet. The amendment was made by the RICDHH and RIRID.

- HB 5611** – Hearing Aids Mandated Insurance – No activity since the hearing was held on April 15<sup>th</sup>.
- HB 5696** – Contact List for 504 and IEP Plans – March 25<sup>th</sup> Hearing was held.  
**Result:** Further Study. No activity since then.
- HB 5697** – ASL and English Language Assessment – After the hearing on April 15<sup>th</sup>, Steve set up a meeting immediately with Tim Riker and Nancy Maguire, Director of RISD. They met twice and they came up with an amendment to HB 5697. They were satisfied with newly revised languages. The amendment was sent to Rep. Joseph McNamara, Chairperson of the House HEW Committee and asked him to schedule the hearing or consideration on this bill. To date, no news.
- HB 5685** – Wireless products added to ATEL program. – No activity since the hearing was held on April 15<sup>th</sup>.
- HB 5014 and 5015** – RICDHH and Governor's Commission on Disabilities proposed these bills to be merged and add Deaf and Hard of Hearing. – No progress since the hearing was heard on February 4, 2015.

Steve encouraged the commissioners, organizations, friends, neighbors, etc. to write the letters of support of any bills if not all.

#### **REVIEW AND APPROVE the GRIEVANCE RESOLUTION GUIDELINE:**

Steve explained that the portion of the Interpreter Referral Service Policies and Procedures needed to be updated after receiving two complains since February 2015 that they were uncomfortable sending the letter to the Interpreter Referral Specialist directly as instructed by the Policies and Procedures. With this proposed change, it would give anyone who wishes to file grievance the ability to send to the Executive Director, the Chairperson of the Commission, and/or the Interpreter Referral Specialist of their concerns. The Commissioners reviewed, discussed, and recommended that the language of the grievance resolution guideline continued to be revised.

Break – 7:05pm

Meeting resumed at 7:17pm

**4<sup>th</sup> FTE COMMITTEE** – Heather Niedbala, Travis Zellner, and Steve Florio met with Deborah Dawson, Director of the Division of Human Resources within the Department of Administration. They had a decent discussion. Deb asked good questions and made notes of almost everything what they told her. She said she would like to continue dialoguing on this matter in two weeks. She said she might bring someone in to help identify issues and to see what they can to build case on RICDHH's behalf. It was very productive meeting.

## GENERAL COMMITTEE PROCESS:

The board of commissioners brainstormed and discussed as to how and when should the committees meet as well as regular meetings.

Tentative Process:

1. Full-Board Meeting (Traditional including Officers' Reports and Executive Director) – 4 times a year.
2. Rotating Meetings – 8 times a year.
  - a. Ad-Hoc Committee Updates (4<sup>th</sup> FTE, Coffee Hour, etc.)
  - b. Standing Committee Meetings (Mental Health, Community Resources, Policies, and Tech)
  - c. Full-Board meeting to approve any initiatives or business proposed by the committee or the board of commissioners.
  - d. No Officers' reports/Executive Director's Reports
3. Anytime to meet between monthly evening meetings (Ad-hoc and standing committees)
4. Community Forums/Events

**Future Plan:** Community Forum on Mental Health in July 2015. The plan will be determined by the Mental Health Committee in June 2015.

## COMMUNITY RESOURCES COMMITTEE:

- 1) The Board of Commissioners were in consensus that Early Intervention Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing is part of the Community Resources Committee's priorities.

## MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE:

- 1) Betsy Beach **made a motion** to create a Mental Health Committee as part of RICDHH's standing committee. Todd Murano seconded. The motion was carried, 8-0.

## GENERAL COMMENT:

1. Raymond Niford announced about the road trip to New York City, 911 Museum, and other sites to visit for the Deaf Senior group. It will be a day trip in September 2015 as part of the Deaf Awareness Month. He asked for the RICDHH's assistance to ensure that the interpreters will be provided for the museum in New York City. Steve Florio responded that he was happy to set up a time with Ray and make phone calls to arrange communication access service for the Deaf Senior group.

Chair Heather Niedbala adjourned the meeting at 8:59pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven A. Florio  
Acting Secretary