The RI CDHH Commissioner approved the minutes for the 06/17/2015 meeting on August 26, 2015.

Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

June 17, 2015

MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners Attending: *Heather Niedbala, Betsy Beach, Todd Murano, Timothy Riker, Joseph Batiano, Travis Zellner, and George Herchenroether.*

Commissioner(s) not Attending: *Julia Gold, James Simon, and Nico Sedivy*

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

Public Attending:

Communication Accommodations:

Interpreters: *Carol Fay (MPA-358) and Christine West (MPA-358)*

CART service: *Shelley Deming (Allied Reporters)*

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

Chairperson Heather Niedbala called the meeting to order at 6:10pm. She determined that the quorum was met.

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

1) Tim Riker made a motion to approve the May 20, 2015 meeting minutes as corrected. Todd Murano seconded. The motion was carried, 7-0.

Corrections: Spelled out on "DA". Disabilities, in page 3 under HB 5014 and 5015.

RICDHH Officers' Reports:

Chairperson: Heather Niedbala reviewed the commissioners' terms that were going to expire at the end of June 2015. They are Travis Zellner, James Simon, Elizabeth Beach, Heather Niedbala, Timothy Riker, and Joseph Batiano.

- Travis Zellner announced that he will not seek for another term. He was advised to submit an official letter that he is not seeking for another term.
- Betsy Beach announced that she wanted to continue serving on the commission for another term.
- Tim Riker, Joseph Batiano, and Heather Niedbala wanted to continue.
- Since James Simon was not present, so they did not know whether he wanted to continue or not.
- Steve was asked to start advertising all seats except hard of hearing seats.

Executive Director's Report:

1. *Holly St. Pierre, Referral Specialist:*
   Steve reported that she is now on family leave immediately due to a new baby she adopted on June 10th, a day old. Steve will advertise a temporary position to cover the service through ADIL as soon as the required paperwork is approved. It will take time to have someone available to cover this service. Pam and Steve will cover the service until a new person is hired through ADIL.

2. *Legislative Updates*

   Steve reported that there are only two bills that are still very active in the legislative session but they are very close to the finish line. They are HB 5695A/SB 0478 and HB 5697. The remaining bills that the RICDHH supports would not go far this time. Steve was optimistic about these two bills after talking with the legislators. Steve asked the commissioners to help if the bills remained active in the legislative session after he left for the NASADHH meeting and Hearing Loss Association of America Convention in St. Louis, MO. He would keep in touch with volunteers and check the status of all bills periodically while he is in St. Louis.

   HB 5695 - Interpreter License Program

   HB 5697 – ASL and English Language Assessment

3. *Budget Updates*

   Steve reported that the RICDHH Budget will be level funded for FY2016 and will have 3.0 FTE authorized. In regard of Article 19 that would merge all 25 professional boards into one including sign language interpreters, Article 19 was removed from the budget bill therefore these professional boards will no longer be affected.

4. Hearing Loss Awareness Month

Steve reported that the RICDHH just wrapped up a couple of weeks ago. They had a full month of education, entertainment, and activities. This year, the Hearing Loss Expo, which we do every year had a small attendance. However, many people came the first time. A lot of people said parking was a big issue. Historically, many years until last year, it was free parking and accessible. They could park anywhere on the property. But now because of a new policy posted by the Department of Administration last year, anyone can't get into the parking lot for free or available for them. They had to choose between paying the meters or they were forced to go to the Providence Place Mall Parking and then walk up the hill to the Department of Administration building. Either way, it was very inconvenient.

Steve talked to all of the vendors and got some feedback. They said a different location would be better. The suggestions are the Providence Place Mall, the Warwick Mall or the Twin River Casino. Steve will look into them and collect information such as what the costs might be, what are the requirements, insurance required?, and all of that.

Steve is aware of challenges of each location such as the acoustic level, is it acceptable level?, age restriction? Etc.

- The Providence Place Mall has a carpeted floor and has space.
- The Warwick Mall has ceramic tiles and has space.
- The Twin Rivers Casino might have ceramic tiles or less smoking restriction? Age restrictions? Kid friendly?

These kinds of information Steve would like to have before determining which location is ideal for RICDHH's next Hearing Loss Expo.

4th FTE COMMITTEE – Travis Zellner reported, that he, Heather Niedbala, and Steve Florio met with Deborah Dawson, Director of the Division of Human Resources within the Department of Administration. They had a decent discussion. Steve did have a follow up meeting with Deobrah Dawson just last week. She introduced other person who will do the assessment on our agency's concern. Basically, Steve went through the same way what they did at the first meeting. They expect to have another follow up meeting sometimes next month.

Steve reported that he had a meeting with Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott, Director of the Department of Health earlier this week. It was more of an introduction and how they support each other in a general term going forward. We did touch on a number of issues before arriving at a FTE subject. She became more interested in supporting RICDHH's initiative and she said she will look into her department to see if they can be of any help in regarding of FTE. Steve and Dr. Alexander-Scott agreed to have a follow up meeting which is not yet scheduled at this point.

Break – 7:08pm

Meeting resumed at 7:12pm

Heather Niedbala explained that this was a new format they tried out this time. First, Mental Health Committee meeting and then Technology Access Committee meeting. She asked the Commissioners for clarification purpose who is interested in serving on the Mental Health Committee.

1. Joseph Batiano, James Simon, Nico Sedivy, and Todd Murano have expressed their interest to contribute.

MENTAL HEALTH COMMITTEE:

Todd Murano suggested that the first action item is to identify the chair of the committee before they can move forward. All were in agreement with Todd.

Joseph Batiano accepted the role as a temporary chairperson of the Mental Health committee until they have full members on the committee to determine the chairperson for this committee.

They discussed including the rest of the Commissioners as to where the committee is going. They will review the resources that RICDHH currently has such as findings on primary doctors' perceptions on Deaf and Hard of Hearing patients and their training educations by Dr. Jordan Sack, findings on patients who are deaf and hard of hearing dealing with medical professionals by Dr. Martell, etc. They agreed to identify issues, to prioritize and organize these issues into committee's objectives, and to identify them that can be accomplished in the next 3 months, 6 months, and so on using the templates that George Herchenroether created.

TECHNOLOGY ACCESS COMMITTEE:

Heather Niedbala asked the Commissioners who is interested in serving on the Technology Access Committee.

1. Betsy Beach, George Herchenroether, and David Abell.

Betsy Beach agreed to be a temporary chairperson for 3 months. At the next meeting, they can identify the chairperson for this committee.

They would need to identify issues, to organize the issues into committee's objectives and identify them that can be accomplished in the next 3 months, etc.

They reviewed the past activities of this committee.

1. They found the challenge to schedule a meeting including communication access accommodations in consideration.
2. The committee was instrumental to have the RICDHH and RI Department of Health to write a letter together to remind all licensed hearing aid dealers and dispensers that they are required to provide information about the benefits of T-Coils on hearing aids to their consumers.
3. They did the same thing for all licensed audiologists who can obtain hearing aids for their clients.
4. In the past, the committee did discuss about a clearinghouse that has information on all facilities that provide access to assistive technology such as museums, theaters, or other places. And having that clearinghouse available on the website so people can see where those assistive technologies were available in the community.

Recently, David Abell as an advocate for RI State Office of Hearing Loss Assocation has entered into an agreement with URI speech and audiology department to create a website about hearing assistive technology and they will conduct a brand new assistive technology survey of hospitals, government, libraries, theaters, etc. They are committed to doing that over the next six months.

David did ask Steve if the RICDHH would be willing to support initiative and to be involved in collaboration. He responded in a heartbeat that RICDHH would like to be part of it.

These are some ideas where the Tech Access Committee can do on behalf of RICDHH going forward.

Break – 7:52pm

Meeting resumed at 8:00pm

REVIEW AND APPROVE the GRIEVANCE RESOLUTION GUIDELINE:

Steve presented the most latest revised grievance resolution guidelines for the RICDHH Interpreter and CART Referral Services Policies and Procedures.

A few suggestions were made such as layouts, bold fonts, etc.

Travis Zellner made a motion to approve the Grievance Resolution section of the RICDHH Interpreter and CART Referral Services Policies and Procedures as corrected. Todd Murano seconded. The motion was carried, 7-0.

GENERAL COMMENT:

Heather Niedbala followed up on the meeting formats going forward. She had concerns about using interpreters if both committees are to be held at the same time.

Joseph Batiano suggested that the committee meeting to be held at the end of meeting, one committee at a time until we figure it out.

Heather Niedbala reminded them that the committee meetings do not have to be held on the commissioners' night. If they manage to meet during the weekdays or on the weekend, please send agenda items to Steve. He will help coordinating the schedule and logistics within the committee members.

Chair Heather Niedbala adjourned the meeting at 8:26pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven A. Florio
Acting Secretary