

The RI CDHH Commissioner approved the minutes for the 09/16/2015 meeting on October 14, 2015.

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

September 16, 2015

### MEETING MINUTES

**Commissioners Attending:** Heather Niedbala, Timothy Riker, Todd Murano, Joseph Batiano, and Nico Sedivy.

**Commissioner(s) not Attending:** Betsy Beach and George Herchenroether.

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

**Public Attending:** Ellen Saideman, Law Office of Ellen Saideman

**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, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

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Chairperson Heather Niedbala called the meeting to order at 6:10pm. She determined that the quorum was met with 5 Commissioners in attendance.

**Review of Meeting Minutes (08/16/2015):**

- 1) Joseph Batiano **made a motion** to approve the August 16, 2015 meeting minutes as written. Todd Murano seconded. The motion was carried, 5-0.

**Public Comments:** Ellen Saideman introduced herself that she came to observe the meeting. She is a lawyer for her firm, Law Office of Ellen Saideman, based in Barrington, RI. She is known as a Disability Rights lawyer.

## RICDHH Officers' Reports:

- Chairperson: Caroline O'Brecht and Betsy Shealy are not officially appointed by the Governor yet but it should happen within a week from today. She looked forward to having them on board soon.
- Vice-Chairperson: Vacant, no report.
- Secretary: Vacant (Nico Sedivy is acting as interim secretary in James' place.)
- Treasurer: Not present, no report.

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

**Budget** – The deadline to submit the budget plan for FY2016 and FY2017 was thought to be on Tuesday, Sept. 15<sup>th</sup>. But the deadline was then changed by the Budget office to this coming Friday, Sept. 18<sup>th</sup>. Steve was ready to submit the budget plan on time. He needed to submit 3 scenarios up to 7.5% budget cut for the agency. He hoped that the Governor considers our recommendations for our budget.

**Personnel** – Holly St. Pierre had resumed her responsibilities as our Interpreter/CART Referral Specialist from her maternity leave, just last Monday, Sept. 14<sup>th</sup>.

Steve asked Tom Darden who was covering the interpreter referral service since late July 2015 to do a special project. This was to create a guidebook (the right name for it will be determined later) that would benefit a number of audiences in the field of legal/court interpreting. The audiences are Administrative Office of State Courts (AOSC), RI Lawyers, Interpreters, Consumers, and Jurors. The guidebook will offer an comprehensive information that each audience should know about such as best practices, standards, federal and state laws, who's responsible for paying the services, contact information to request for services, and many more. He will collect feedback from the experienced interpreters in this field and other professionals. He will complete his time sometimes next month.

**Deaf Awareness Month** – It is now underway! The Deaf Awareness Month had a good start at RISD where they provided the movie, No Ordinary Heroes, all kids were in awe because they can relate to the story. The Deaf Awareness Month will be concluded at Corliss Center's Wine and Tasting event on the last Wednesday of this month.

## Legislation –

1. Language Assessment – California Bill or known as SB210 was doing very well and it was apparently on its way to the Governor's desk. They have 5 things in their bills which are resources about language development for parents, apply to children up to 5 years old, language assessment to be conducted, advisory council, and reporting data on all children who are deaf and hard of hearing of their language levels. In RI, with the current bill, it would cover 3 things. Language assessment to be conducted, apply to children up to 21 years old, and committee. The commissioners want to make amendment to include the reporting part and change from 'up to 21 years old' to 'up to 10 years old' as required for language assessment.
2. Hearing Aid bill – Steve had a good meeting with the representatives at the Office of Healthcare Insurance Commissioner about the bill. It was pointed out that the state law should not specific the

dollar amount (i.e. \$700 per ear). The language should be consistent with the federal mandate, Affordable Care Act (ACA), that would not allow the specific-dollar amount but would require to include a plan regardless of the cost of hearing aids. This is a new way to look at it. Steve will work with the OHIC for appropriate language. Also, the OHIC mention about the Utilization Review Process that is already existed for any other healthcare insurance coverages. That process should be part of the bill for the hearing aid coverage. Any patients file complaint feeling that the insurance should cover certain plans, they can request for due process through the Utilization Review Process. It is conducted by the Department of Health. If a person who is hard of hearing is not happy with the hearing aid given by the insurance company, this person needs to appeal through their insurance company. If this person is still not satisfied with insurance company's response or remediation, then the Utilization Review Process is the place to let the independent party to hear both sides and then made a decision on their behalf.

Break – 6:50pm

Resumed at 7:00pm.

#### **ELECTION OF OFFICERS:**

The Commissioners discussed about the process of election for the officer positions. They were in agreement that the Election of Officers will be held at the next meeting on October 14, 2015 because not everyone was present tonight.

Joseph Batiano **made a motion** that all commissioners present submit nominations for officer's positions. Tim Riker seconded. The motion was carried 5-0.

#### **COFFEE HOUR:**

Tim Riker **made a motion** that the theme of Coffee Hour be related to "Language For Life". Joseph Batiano seconded the motion. The motion was carried 5-0.

- Contact Nancy Maguire Health, Deaf Kids' presentation
- Invite Peter Hauser, Ph.D to give presentation on language acquisition
- Invite someone who is hard of hearing.
- Invite Paul Molloy for deaf-blind language communication
- Theme needs to be related to language access, such as "Language for Life: Access & Resilience", or "Re-Deaf-ining Language: Communication & Resilience".

#### **AUTHORIZED AGENTS:**

The commissioners were in agreement to hold this until next month, October 14, 2015, with more members present.

Break – 7:50pm

Resumed at 8:02pm

**COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

Community Resources Committee: Tim Riker agreed to be the interim chair of this committee. He will make sure to have the meeting date ready for the meeting before next Commissioners' meeting. This committee will cover language assessment and early intervention services.

Technology Access Committee: At the previous meeting, Betsy Beach indicated that she is willing to be the chair. No report at this time.

Mental Health Committee: Joseph Batiano reported that he did made attempts to set up the meetings for the committee through the summer but the members had date conflicts. He hoped to have a meeting before the next Commissioners' meeting next month.

Chair Heather Niedbala made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Todd Murano seconded. The motion was carried, 5-0. Therefore, the meeting adjourned at 8:23pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven A. Florio  
Acting Secretary