

The RI CDHH Commissioners approved the minutes for the 02/10/2016 meeting on March 16, 2016.

Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

February 10, 2016

MEETING MINUTES

Commissioners Attending: Timothy Riker, Betsy Beach, Caroline O'Brecht, George Herchenroether, Elizabeth Shealy, and Joseph Batiano

Commissioner(s) not Attending: Heather Niedbala, Todd Murano, and Nico Sedivy

Staff Attending: Steven A. Florio (Executive Director) and Pamela Zellner

Public Attending: Rosa Norberg, RIRID President

Communication Accommodations:

Interpreters: Heather Anderson (MPA-358) and Christine West (MPA-358)

CART service: Shelley Deming (Allied Reporters)

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

Chairperson Timothy Riker called the meeting to order at 6:24pm. He reported that the quorum was met with 6 Commissioners in attendance.

Review of Meeting Minutes (01/13/2016):

- 1) Betsy Beach **made a motion** to approve the January 13, 2016 meeting minutes as corrected. George Herchenroether seconded. The motion was carried, 6-0.

Corrections:

1. Adding the name, Pamela Zellner next to "Staff Attending".
2. Changed from "Shelley Deming" to "Jennifer Milette".

Public Comments: None

Results from the RI Registry of Interpreters of the Deaf (RIRID)'s public forum:

Rosa Norberg, President of RIRID, gave a brief presentation on the results from the public forum.

1. RIRID hired BJ Woods to facilitate the public forum last fall.
2. 24 people participated, 12 were deaf and 12 were hearing.
3. There was a little dissention gap between interpreting and deaf communities.
4. Deaf communities' feedback that interpreters refused to take certain assignments, they did not want to work with certain agencies. All point of views were heard and discussed.
5. The biggest need was the emergency interpreter referral service.
6. The other concern is that the interpreters and the deaf consumers were not appropriately matched. I.e. a female interpreter for a male patient's appointment. Vice versa.
7. Interpreters should take responsibility to say yes or no to assignments that are appropriate for their skills and credentials.
8. Holly will demonstrate new software at the next RIRID's meeting on Feb. 20th.
9. Rosa was happy to learn that the RICDHH has an ad-hoc committee to re-evaluate RICDHH's Emergency Interpreter Referral Service and she looks forward to be part of this committee.
10. Lack of interpreter training program in RI is a challenge.
11. VRI vs. Live Interpreter dilemma.
12. Seek more opportunities for Deaf Interpreters such as VRI at hospitals, State House, etc.

OFFICERS' REPORT:

CHAIR (Riker):

1. He went to the hearing with Steve Florio to testify on two bills, HB 7014 (Wireless products added to ATEL inventory) and HB 7363 (Hearing Aids Mandated Coverage).
2. June 11th is the retreat day for the Board of Commissioners and Staff. Please hold this date. Only Holly St. Pierre and Betsy Shealy could not make it. Betsy Shealy mentioned that she can make it now. Steve will double check with Holly St. Pierre to see if she can change her plan for June 11th to join us.
3. He met with Nancy Maguire from RISD and Steve. The draft has been revised which he is now satisfied with what they presented in terms of the language assessment bill. A lot of good issues were brought to the table and the meeting was productive.

VICE CHAIR (Beach): No Report

SECRETARY (Sedivy): Not Present

TREASURER (Murano): Not Present

COMMITTEE REPORTS:

Community Resources Committee: The meeting is scheduled to meet on February 15, 2016, depending on interpreter's availability. The members anticipated that the meeting will be held on President's Day but the state government offices remain open.

Technology Access Committee: George Herchenroether reported that he started developing the survey and it will be ready for the Commissioners to answer questions soon. He is considering to bring a couple of businessmen who are in the technology business of hearing assistive technology by serving in an ex-officio advisory way to the committee. Steve Florio pointed out that he can bring anyone outside of the Commission to serve on the committee, not limited to the Commissioners. If any significant action is needed, they would need to propose at the Commissioners' meeting to approve or to vote.

Mental Health Committee: Joseph Batiano reported that the latest activity is what was reported on the previous meeting minutes. He will send the list of dates for the members to consider to meet. He asked Steve to do the doodle for the committee.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT (Florio):

1. **Budget** – Good news. No budget cut for FY 2016 and 1.0 FTE is added to RICDHH's budget for FY2017 is in the proposal for approval. However, the salary base is very low comparing to the actual salary on the market for the sign language interpreters. Steve will work with the budget office and RI Division of Human Resources, hopefully, to consider re-classification of this interpreter position. This position was created in the Human Resources database and they had to use this title which comes with the current salary base.
2. **Budget Hearing** – Steve said he expects that the House Finance Committee schedules the RICDHH to hear its agency budget soon.
3. **Pam Zellner** handed out the printouts of RICDHH's new appearance and navigating pages to give the Commissioners the idea what it would look like once it is up running sometimes in the late Spring. The Commissioners discussed about the contents, information, navigation, etc.
4. **Nancy Vinacco** is the first deaf person to interpret the Governor's State of the State Address in Rhode Island's history. As for the nationwide, Jay Kreiger is the first deaf person to interpret the Governor's State of the State Address in Indiana in 2015 but no deaf interpreter is hired to cover Indiana for this year (2016). Steve said he does not know why or what happened.

Break – 7:18pm

Resumed – 7:30pm

OLD BUSINESS:

LEGISLATIVE UPDATES:

1. **HB 7014 and SB 2051** – Wireless products added to ATEL's inventory. It was heard on 2/3/2016. It is voted for further study. It does not mean the bill is dead. If the legislators like this bill, it will be returned back to the Committee, it will be voted to move on, not to hear the testimonies. This is something they want to see this bill returned.

2. **HB 7046** – Selling hearing aids through internet. The hearing was held on January 19th and it was voted for further study. The commissioners have concerns about the language, if the consumer purchased the hearing aid through internet, they will be punished by a fine of \$500. The question is why does the consumer need to be punished, why not to punish the dealer/seller? This is a clear form of oppressing on deaf and hard of hearing consumers.
3. **HB 7238** – Local government files audio and video recordings with the RI Secretary of State if they were used for the meeting. This hearing was held on Jan. 27th. Steve expressed concern that if this law passed, who is responsible for ensuring accessibility of these audio and video recordings such as transcript or captioning. Should it be the local government or should it be the RI Secretary of State?
4. **HB 7239** – similar with HB 7238 but this applies to the state government bodies.
5. **HB 7358** – this is a resolution to establish a study commission to improve consumer environment for the deaf and hard of hearing such as Drive-Thru. The original sponsor decided to withdraw this bill and introduce a new one.
6. **HB 7490** – this is a new bill requiring the restaurants that sell drinks and food through window to install equipment that is accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing patrons. The hearing has not yet set.
7. **HB 7363** – Hearing Aids Mandated Coverage – the hearing was held on Feb. 3rd. All parties shared their perspectives including insurance companies, hearing aid dealers, audiologists, and consumers.
8. **HB 7426** – language assessment bill for families with low income and/or from the other country. This has nothing to do with the deaf and hard of hearing population but Steve pointed out that if they passed this bill, they should pass the language assessment bill for the deaf and hard of hearing population because they are pretty similar goals.
9. **HB 7454** – this is Governor Raimondo's budget bill.
10. The only two bills that have not yet assigned the number are 1. Language assessment bill for deaf and hard of hearing children and 2. Open Captioned Movies. They were just submitted to the legislators who agreed to sponsor.

Language Assessment Bill – some revisions are made such as:

- a. Age 0-8 instead of Age 0-10, in line with National Association of Education for Young Children (NAEYC).
- b. Adding deaf and hard of hearing children that have 504 plans, requiring language assessment annually until 8 so all children who are deaf and hard of hearing don't miss out the tracking milestones.

Open Captioned Movies:

- a. Two open captioning of each motion picture every week.
- b. Sunset provision (2 years from the effective date)
- c. Hawaii passed this law in the 2015 legislative session. It already started on January 1, 2016.

Joseph Batiano **made a motion** to approve that the RICDHH position on HB 7238 and HB 7239 is to express concerns about accessibility issue, whether audio and video recordings will be guaranteed accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing constituents or not. Betsy Beach seconded. The motion was passed, 6-0.

Joseph Batiano **made a motion** to approve that the RICDHH position on HB 7426 is to support HB 7426 and support "not yet number-assigned" bill on language assessment for the deaf and hard of hearing children. Betsy Shealy seconded. The motion was passed, 6-0.

Joseph Batiano **made a motion** to approve that the RICDHH position on HB 7490 is to support it because it is about the deaf and hard of hearing's human rights. Caroline Obrecht seconded. The motion was passed, 6-0.

Joseph Batiano **made a motion** to approve that the RICDHH has no position on HB 7046 (selling hearing aids through internet) and the RICDHH continues more investigation and invite people who are behind this bill to the next Commissioners' meeting. Betsy Shealy seconded. The motion was passed, 6-0.

Commissioners/Staff Retreat:

Steve reported that June 11th is the date so he asked the Commissioners to hold the date. He contacted a number of places ideally for the retreat. The Alton Jones Center in West Warwick is not available due to wedding exclusive. The only available place is Providence-Marriott at 1 Orm Street. It will cost \$400 for a room all day if we order food on site. Steve will continue looking for a different place and get back to the Board of Commissioners next month. RISD and Department of Administration building are certain on the list but he will try a different place. The Commissioners suggested to look into Community College of Rhode Island in Newport, Roger Williams University, and Johnson and Wales University as they both have building next to water (ocean/river).

NEW BUSINESS: None

AGENDA for MARCH 16, 2016:

Format

6:00pm to 7:00pm – 3 committee meetings
7:00pm to 9:00pm – regular business meeting.

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Timothy Riker at 8:36pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Steven A. Florio
Acting Secretary