



# Arizona Commission

for the deaf and the hard of hearing

100 N 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue □ Suite 104 □ Phoenix, AZ 85007  
acdhh.org

## **Minutes of the meeting of the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing, Board Meeting.**

**Meeting held August 15th, 2024 at 4:30pm.**

**Meeting was held remotely via Zoom, and streamed on the agency YouTube page.**

### **Call to Order & Roll Call**

Commissioner Sienko called the meeting to order at **4:35 PM**

Commissioners present via Zoom: Catherine Sienko, Fred Williams, Andrew Cohen, Debbie Venkatesh, Jennifer Scarboro, Scott Madsen, Virginia Thompson, Lisa Swenson, Melanie O'Rourke, Sarah Bolmarcich-

Commissioners absent: Barbara Brimhall

AAG: Elise Phalen

ADOA Rep: Brian Westerberg

Staff Present: Sherri Collins, Sue Kay Kneifel, Carmen Green Smith, Nikki Soukup, Ricky Gonsowski, Cameo Hunsaker, Chyla Dalton-Nava, Victoria Vaughn

### **Approval of Minutes**

**Commissioner Thompson moved to approve the minutes from the May 16th, 2024 meeting; Commissioner Scarboro seconded, the motion passed unanimously.**

### **Chair's Report**

Commissioner Sienko reminded the Board of Sherri's upcoming retirement, and informed the board that the ACDHH personnel committee met yesterday with Brian Westerberg from ADOA to discuss the interview process and transitional plan. She explained that the results of that meeting would be discussed later in tonight's meeting.

### **Executive Director Search**

Sherri Collins began by introducing Brian Westerberg from ADOA (Arizona Department of Administration), which takes care of human resources for the State. Brian introduced himself to the board, and explained his role in the process of selecting the next Executive Director. He will serve as a recruiter in this process. The position will be posted next week on the AZ Jobs website. Chair Sienko called on a motion to go into

executive session to discuss the details of the search with the board. **Commissioner Sienko Moved that the board move into executive session to discuss the Executive Director Search; Commissioner Cohen seconds the motion, and the board went into closed session at 4:53 PM.**

**The board returns to the meeting at 5:28 PM.**

Commissioner Sienko updated the board on the members of the ACDHH personnel committee- Commissioners Cohem Williams, Sienko, and Scarboro are serving on this committee. She also established the timeline for the process, that during the week of August 19th, 2024 the application will be posted online, and that during the week ending September 13th, the Personnel Committee will meet for the initial review of applications. On November 7th, the applicants will be called for an interview prior to the ACDHH Board Meeting, and the applicants will be presenting at the board meeting to the public. The final interviews will be conducted on November 8th, 2024. **Commissioner Scarboro moved to accept the personnel committee's recommendation for the Executive Director's transition as discussed; Commissioner Cohen seconded, and the motion carried unanimously by a roll call vote.**

**Brian Westerberg left the meeting at 5:39 PM.**

#### **Executive Director's Update**

Sherri Collins introduced the two newest commissioners- Sarah Bolmarcich, and Lisa Swenson. She also informed the Governor's office of Boards and Commissions has been interviewing applicants for the Deaf Representative, and DES representatives, and we can expect to see new appointments in the near future.

**The board went on a break at 5:44 PM**

**The board returned from break at 5:55 PM**

#### **Public Comments**

Commissioner Sienko began with the reading of the rules for public comments. The comments proceeded as follows:

**Cameo Hunsaker**- live comments: Cameo explained the reasons behind why she filed a complaint against Mr. Howard.

**Joni Horn**.- live comments: Joni commented on the interpreter complaint filed against Margaret Barta, and explained her agency's role and process with requesting interpreters.

**Casey Hassett**- live comments: Casey thanked the commission for their work with the DeafBlind community, and expressed appreciation for their partnership in the community.

**Margaret Barta-** written comments: Margaret commented on the interpreter complaint filed against her, and expressed that she felt the complaint was filed against a different interpreter, as she was not in the home on November 16th. She also stated that Caryn gave her the option to stay or leave during the assignment, and she chose to leave.

## **Interpreter Complaints**

### **Regarding Margaret Barta:**

Victoria Vaughn gave a brief summary of the complaints: The complaint, filed by Caryn Tenin, a DeafBlind consumer, alleged failure to comply with the RID code of Professional Conduct, as Ms. Barta left an assignment before its end on November 16th 2023. She acknowledged an error within the request that did not indicate a tactile interpreter was needed for this assignment, and that the request was submitted for an interpreter to do copy signing for this assignment. Victoria refrained from making a recommendation and left this to the board to decide. The board discussed the case. **Commissioner Cohen moved that an ad hoc committee be formed to work with ACDHH to review the interpreter intake process; Commissioner Thompson seconded the motion, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote. Commissioner Scarborough offers an amendment to the motion, to establish an ad hoc committee to revisit the process of requesting interpreting services for the DeafBlind community, and identifying gaps. This is with the understanding that the lead of the ad hoc committee would be involved in the process, as well as the AAG; Commissioner Williams seconds the motion, and the motion carried with a unanimous roll call vote.** The board continued to discuss the allegations, and Commissioner Bolmarcich asked why Pablo Felix, the other provisional interpreter assigned to this case did not have a complaint filed against him, as he remained at the assignment despite the general interpreter leaving the assignment, as his provisional license requires a general interpreter to be present during an assignment. **Commissioner Scarborough moved that the board move into executive session to consult with the agency AAG on the complaint filed against Margaret Barta; Commissioner Madsen seconds the motion, the board goes into executive session at 7:43 PM.**

**The board returns from executive session at 7:56 PM.**

**Commissioner Cohen moves to dismiss the complaint against Margaret Barta due to its complicated nature; Jennifer Scarborough seconds the motion, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.**

**Regarding Tyrae Howard:** Victoria Vaughn gave a brief summary of the first of two complaints filed against Mr. Howard, and this complaint was filed by Cameo Hunsaker. ACDHH was able to investigate the complaint with photos provided. A complaint was also filed through RID, and they will complete an investigation of their own. Mike Adams, and Carlos Valenzuela, representatives from Akorbi, the interpreting agency the request was made through were on hand to answer questions from the board. A discussion followed between Mr. Valenzuela and the ACDHH board. **Commissioner Scarboro moved to send a letter to Mr. Howard asking him to discontinue interpreting for Arizonans until he receives an Arizona license; Commissioner Cohen seconds the motion, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.**

Commissioner Sienko expressed that due to the time, the board would need to move the complaints left on the agenda to be moved to the November meeting.

### **Strategic Plan**

Sherri Collins briefly discussed the 5 year strategic plan. Commissioner Scarboro expressed concern with the language used in relation to the advisory committee for DHS and ACDHH to partner with EHDI- that this committee will be composed of 25% Deaf and Hard of Hearing Parents- her concern is that this is a very small number. A discussion followed. **Commissioner Scarboro moved that the board approve the strategic plan with an edit if needed in accord with federal compliance; Commissioner Venkatesh seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously via roll call vote.**

### **Budget Decision**

Sue Kay Kneifel discussed the budget for fiscal year 2026 with the board, and explained that though we do not anticipate any changes to the operating budget previously approved, we would like to ask for an increase in SSP funding, from \$192,000 as it currently stands to \$375,000. The funds would come from the telecommunication funds. **Commissioner Scarboro moves to accept the budget for Fiscal year 2026; Commissioner Madsen seconds, the motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.**

### **Adjournment**

**Commissioner Scarboro moves to adjourn the meeting at 8:23 PM; Commissioner Sienko seconds the motion, the meeting adjourned at 8:23PM.**

Dated this 20th day of August 2024 by Catherine Sienko, Acting Committee Chair.

The undersigned certifies that a copy of the attached notice was duly posted this 20th day of August, 2024 at 5:00 pm by Chyla Dalton-Nava, Assistant to the Executive Director.

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