

Katie Hobbs
Governor



Sherri L. Collins
Executive
Director

Arizona Commission

for the deaf and the hard of hearing

100 N 15th Avenue □ Suite 104 □ Phoenix, AZ 85007
acdhh.org

Minutes from the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing, Special Board Meeting.

Meeting held December 20th, 2024 at 2:00 pm.

The meeting was held via Zoom Teleconference.

Call to Order & Roll Call

Commissioner Sienko called the meeting to order at 2:10 PM.

Commissioners present: Catherine Sienko, Randal Kidd, Harvey Goodstein, Diana Herron, Virginia Thompson, Fred Williams, Scott Madsen, Jennifer Scarboro, Andrew Cohen, Melanie O'Rourke, Sarah Bolmarcich, Lisa Swenson, Debbie Venkatesh

AAG: Elise Phalen

Staff Present: Ricky Gonsowski, Chyla Dalton-Nava

Public Comments

Public Comments on the executive director search played or read for the board from the following:

Comments regarding the Executive Director:

Mona Dixon

Comments in favor of reopening the search for executive director:

Ernest Willman-Video Comments

Corrina Moore

LaDonna Gabrielson

Comments to endorse Sue Kay Kneifel for Executive Director:

Mike Crago

Comments to endorse Carmen Green Smith for Executive Director:

Dr. Tanae Morrison

Jeanne Hann

Fran Altmaier

David Carey

Courtney Joseph

Kennette Ruben

Michael Mitchell

Dr. K.L. Denman

Austin Lee, Sr.

Vicki Cuscino

Marisa Spalding

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The mission of the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing is to ensure, in partnership with the public and private sectors, accessibility for the deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing, and persons with speech difficulties to improve their quality of life.

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Laura Leach
Valerie McMillan
Jimmecka Henry
Cris Travis
Mary McClendon
Tanisha Hollis
Dr. Terry Mackey
Tshaka Jackson
Staci Scott
Ruby Douglas
Lutaeme Bangura
Ronnie Gammage
Carol Gray
Marnicia Conway
Chaunie Horton
Jessica Woodruff
Claudette Ross
Curtis Humphries
Devray Baker
Tierny Cratic
Ebony Gammage
Michelle Ballard
Kimberly August
Carranza Guidry
Michele Michaels
Gina Williams
Charles St. Clair

Executive Director Final Decision

Commissioner Kidd moved to go into executive session to ask a legal question of the agency AAG, Commissioner Bolmarcich seconded the motion, the board went into closed session at 3:03 PM The Board returned at 3:50 PM. Quorum established by roll call, Commissioner Madsen left the meeting at 3:10 PM. Commissioner Bolmarcich moved that each voting member present their assessment of each candidate, discussing their strengths and weaknesses, and once all commissioners have had the chance to speak, the board will make their final vote. Commissioner

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Kidd seconded the motion, the motion carried. A discussion followed, with commissioners expressing their concerns, and assessments. Commissioner Kidd expressed his concerns as a recently appointed commissioner, and feels like he is limited in making a decision as he feels that he does not have enough information on the process from the Personnel Committee about the process they followed in determining the qualifications of the finalists selected. Commissioner Sienko shared that she and the rest of the Personnel Committee had several meetings with ADOA (Arizona Department of Administration) representatives to discuss the candidates and the qualifications needed for the position. She stated that all of the candidates who were interviewed for the position were qualified. Commissioner Bolmarcich spoke on the candidates strengths and weaknesses, and had concerns on both candidates visions for the agency, namely that she felt there was not an overarching vision for the future. She also mentioned that public comments, from the November 7th meeting were almost entirely- except for two - were in favor of re-opening the search. Three of the comments from today were also in favor of re-opening the search. In the rest of today's public comments, there was one comment in support of Sue Kay Kneifel, and 37 in support of Carmen Green-Smith. She stated that she wished to provide those figures so the board could get an overall sense of the investment of the public in this search process. Commissioner Herron discussed how from her perspective as a member of the Deaf community, the community in general are not happy with either of the candidates. She expressed that from the community's standpoint, if they were really allies of the Deaf community, they would understand that they should withdraw their candidacy for this position. She felt that Sue Kay's presentation was not well prepared, but that she has been very supportive of the Deaf community. She felt that Carmen Green's presentation was presented well, and expressed her appreciation for her efforts, but that it lacked details about her relationships with Deaf organizations. She stated that she would be voting against both candidates. Commissioner Scarborough discussed her concerns with both candidates, namely that they did not address internal issues within the agency, and also how neither candidate addressed the community's disagreement of either one of them being selected for the role. She feels that both candidates are highly qualified, but need to address internal agency issues, and work to secure the trust of the communities they serve. Commissioner Thompson expressed that she felt both candidates were highly qualified for the role, and that both candidates had differing approaches to the role, and that both candidates had strategies to address funding issues within the agency. She expressed that though she understands concerns about lived experience from the community, that lived experience alone does not mean you are the best person for a position. Commissioner Kidd followed with his concerns on the candidates experience with working with legislators and the Governor's office, as well as concerns on experience with working with the media- and that these things were not mentioned in their presentations. He stated that The Executive Director is the face of the agency and mobilizes the Deaf community. He also expressed that he would like the next director to be a part of the Deaf community, part of

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Phoenix Association of the Deaf, and the Arizona Association of the Deaf, as well as the Northern Arizona Deaf community, the Hard of Hearing community, and the Arizona DeafBlind and visually impaired community. He feels like neither candidate is qualified based on the information he's received. Commissioner Cohen discussed the excitement he had on serving on the Personnel Committee for the Executive Director search, and the difficult task of narrowing down candidates to present to the board. He stated that both candidates were top qualified candidates, and expressed his wish that the board move forward with a vote. Commissioner O'Rourke discussed her role as a Hard of Hearing representative on the board, and that she felt that both candidates are excellent and very well qualified, and that they had both mentioned their experience in working with the government and media in their resumes. Commissioner Goodstein expressed his concerns with the candidates, and stated that it would be difficult for the Deaf community to sit back and accept a hearing person in the position of director. He expressed concerns with a hearing individual advocating for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities, as Legislators may look at the community as needing help from a hearing person, and that the Deaf community may be patronized as a result. He feels that a Deaf individual is in a much better position to advocate for access, as they will not give up if their efforts fail. He asked the Personnel Committee why Nikki Soukup and Rob Voreck were not selected as finalists, and stated that he would not vote for either candidate. Commissioner Sienko followed up with her vision of the person who will be the Executive Director- that this would be a person who would meet the needs and be able to serve every population. She expressed that she feels both candidates, they're both highly qualified, and that they have incredible knowledge of resources at their disposal. She highlighted Sue Kay's experience serving on the NAD board, and also that she is the current chair of the ASDB board. She also discussed Carmen's current experience as the current Deputy Director, and her years of advocacy experience with the Deaf and DeafBlind communities. The board followed up with a discussion on voting procedures. **Commissioner Goodstein moved that the candidate must have at least 7 votes to become the next Executive Director. Commissioner Herron seconded the motion, a discussion followed. Commissioner Sienko explained that the board has historically gone with a majority vote. Commissioner Herron withdrew her second on Commissioner Goodstein's motion, the motion died. Commissioner Bolmarcich moved to go into closed session to ask the AAG questions on voting procedures, Commissioner Kidd seconded the motion, the board went into closed session at 5:16 PM. The board returned at 5:30 PM. Quorum was established with Commissioners Cohen, and Scarboro leaving the meeting at 5:30 PM. The board proceeded with voting for the candidates and voted as follows:**

Commissioner Williams- Carmen Green Smith
Commissioner O'Rourke- Carmen Green Smith

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Commissioner Venkatesh- Carmen Green Smith
Commissioner Swenson- Carmen Green Smith
Commissioner Bolmarcich- Abstain
Commissioner Thompson- Sue Kay Kneifel
Commissioner Goodstein- Neither
Commissioner Kidd- Abstain
Commissioner Sienko- Abstain
Commissioner Herron- Abstain

Commissioner Goodstein moved to reopen the executive director search.

Commissioner Sienko reminded the board of Sherri's upcoming retirement date, and discussed the possibility of appointing an interim director. **Commissioner Bolmarcich moved to have a meeting in January, outside of the two previously scheduled meetings to focus on appointing an interim director; Commissioner Herron seconds the motion.** Commissioner Kidd asked about Commissioner Goodstein's motion of reopening the search still being on the floor. **Commissioner Williams seconded the motion, and it carried.** Commissioner Venkatesh expressed concerns with possibly opening the board up to potential legal issues with the voting process, as a few commissioners had to leave and were not able to participate in voting. Commissioner Thompson also expressed that she'd like the board to vote again with most members present before re-opening the search.

Adjournment

The meeting ended at 5:54 PM.

The undersigned certifies that a copy of the attached notice was duly posted this 3rd day of December, 2025 at 3:30 pm by Chyla Dalton-Nava, Assistant to the Executive Director.