

**Minutes from the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the
Hard of Hearing, Special Board Meeting.
Meeting held April 16th, 2025 at 4:30 pm.
The meeting was held via Zoom Teleconference.**

Call to Order & Roll Call

Commissioner Sienko called the meeting to order at 4:32 PM.

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

Commissioners absent: Scott Madsen, Lisa Swensen

AAG: Elise Phalen, Michelle Kunzman

ADOA: Stella Cunningham

Staff Present: Nikki Soukup, Sue Kay Kneifel, Carmen Green Smith, Ricky Gonsowski, Chyla Dalton-Nava

Budget Update

The agency's Business Operations Manager, Sue Kay Kneifel, initiated the budget discussion concerning the hiring of a third-party agency to assist with the Executive Director search. This was previously voted on at the February 4th Board meeting. She explained that only one company currently contracted with the state of Arizona can conduct an executive-level search, but the cost would be approximately \$60,000, which was not budgeted for this fiscal year.

Sue Kay recommended using the standard ADOA process for the job search, with the addition of posting on a few national job boards outside of ADOA to expand the reach. This would save the agency a substantial amount of money compared to using a third-party search organization. During the subsequent discussion, it was clarified that ACDHH would be responsible for paying for any additional job postings outside of the ADOA job post.

Commissioner Herron inquired about adding a line item to next year's budget for the executive director search, which Sue Kay explained would require a decision package to be created and passed by the Arizona State Legislature. Commissioner Goodstein asked about the duration of the current third-party search firm's contract with ADOA, and Sue Kay responded that it was a five-year contract that had been recently signed.

Commissioner Bolmarcich asked where funds for the search would come from if they did not appear in a line item, and Sue Kay confirmed that those funds would need to come out



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of the agency's operational funds that are used for programming, or that additional funding could be requested through the Arizona State Legislature. Commissioner Herron asked if this decision needed to be made immediately, or if it could be voted on at a later date.

Chair Sienko acknowledged her concerns about the search and the desire to avoid repeating previous issues. She also discussed that decisions on the specifics of how the search would be conducted, such as gathering feedback from stakeholders and other options, would not need to be decided on tonight. However, the board would need to decide to reopen the search with ADOA support and/or additional job postings during today's meeting.

Commissioner Scarboro expressed concern with receiving financial advice from a candidate for the position, but Sue Kay clarified that she will not be applying for the open position.

Executive Director Search Update

Commissioner Herron inquired about extending Nikki Soukup's interim assignment beyond its June expiration. Stella Cunningham from ADOA confirmed a possible six-month extension, once.

Commissioner Kidd initially moved to work with ADOA, complying with the job posting policy effective immediately, seconded by Commissioner Bolmarcich. However, AAG Michelle Kunzman expressed concerns about a previous motion's job search reach.

Consequently, **Commissioner Kidd withdrew the initial motion and proposed a new motion: initiate a nationwide search for the Executive Director of ACDHH immediately, utilizing ADOA, job posting boards, and other relevant platforms. Commissioner Thompson seconded the motion, and a roll call vote ensued.**

Bolmarcich: Aye

Cohen: Aye

Goodstein: Aye

Herron: Aye

Kidd: Aye

O'Rourke: Aye

Scarboro: Aye

Sienko: Aye

Thompson: Aye

Venkatesh: Aye

Katie Hobbs
Governor



Nikki Soukup
Interim Director

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Williams: Aye

The motion carries unanimously.

The conversation shifted to the funding for the search, with Commissioner Kidd raising a question about the allocation. Sue Kay advised working within the existing budget. The board members also discussed the interim director position, contemplating whether to extend Nikki's assignment or appoint someone new. The possibility of adding this matter to the agenda of a new special board meeting was raised.

Adjournment

Commissioner Herron moved to adjourn the meeting at 5:42 PM; Commissioner Cohen seconds, the meeting was adjourned at 5:43 PM.

22nd day of April, 2025 at 5:00 pm by Chyla Dalton-Nava, Assistant to the Executive Director.