

Katie Hobbs
Governor



Nikki Soukup
Interim Director

Arizona Commission

for the deaf and the hard of hearing

100 N 15th Avenue □ Suite 104 □ Phoenix, AZ 85007
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**Minutes from the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the
Hard of Hearing, Special Board Meeting.
Meeting held May 15th, 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 4:33 PM.

Commissioners present: Sarah Bolmarcich, Harvey Goodstein, Diana Herron, Randal Kidd, Scott Madsen, Melanie O'Rourke, Jennifer Scarboro, Catherine Sienko, Lisa Swenson, Virginia Thompson, Debbie Venkatesh, Fred Williams, Andrew Cohen (in at 5:07 PM)

Commissioners absent: none

AAG: Elise Phalen,

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

Chair's Report

None.

Interim Director's Report

Nikki Soukup began her report by thanking ACDHH staff for their contributions and important work in maintaining the agency's mission. She also thanked the Board for their valuable contributions to the community as well as their leadership in serving on the Board. One of the most significant events this year was DeafBlind Day at the Capitol. DeafBlind individuals from Phoenix and Tucson met with their legislators to discuss their concerns regarding SSP funding and potential increases. These direct interactions and the presence of DeafBlind community members in the gallery highlighted the importance of this funding for the legislators, and further partnerships are anticipated as a result. ACDHH staff also participated in the Northern Arizona Deaf Expo in Flagstaff, a great opportunity for networking. While there, we also provided training to Lowell Observatory staff on best practices for working with individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind, and we plan to return this summer. We recently held another fire alarm walk in Surprise, installing nearly 40 fire alarms in homes, building on previous events in Prescott, and with hopes for future events in Tucson and other areas. We are also collaborating with the Phoenix Chief of Police Cross Disability Advisory Board through a dedicated detective. ACDHH has developed visor cards for the Hard of Hearing and Deaf communities to aid communication during police interactions, offering helpful tips for officers. Our team has

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also established a new partnership with the Alzheimer's Association of Arizona to provide a monthly online support group for caregivers. We continue to support the Hearing Health Care Assistance Project through universities and remain an active partner in the Early Hearing Detection and Intervention Project. Another highlight from this quarter is the launch of the Interpreter Launch Pad Program. This six-month annual apprenticeship aims to address the shortage of interpreters in Arizona by providing novice interpreters with hands-on experience in supervised volunteer settings. Participating individuals receiving interpretation services will offer feedback to the apprentices, who will hold provisional licenses and be eligible for payment. ACDHH will cover their interpreting certification exams upon program completion. We received significant interest with 52 applications, and we were able to select 13 mentors and 13 apprentices. Training begins in June, and the apprentices will start working on July 1, so you will soon see them in the community. Lastly- we are also developing new marketing materials and our website will transition from a .org to a .gov domain as part of moving to a state platform and aligning with new state branding guidelines. Our team is discussing upcoming branding, including color choices, which will be discussed at future board meetings.

Approval of Minutes- April 17th Meeting

Commissioner Goodstein moved to approve the minutes from the April 17th, 2025 meeting, seconded by Commissioner Kidd. The motion passed unanimously.

Annual Report

Commissioner Kidd moved to approve the Annual Report and submit it to the Governor's Office; commissioner Herron seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously.

Public Comments

Chair Sienko explained to the Board and the audience that the public comments received for tonight's meeting were submitted after the deadline of Tuesday, May 13 at 2:00 pm. Due to the late submission- these comments would not be able to be addressed at this time to maintain transparency with the board and livestream viewers regarding our public comment submission policy. Chair Sienko encouraged all who submitted late comments to resubmit their comments for discussion at the next meeting.

Interpreter Complaints

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Regarding April Maldonado: Victoria Vaughn gave a brief summary of the complaint- this is a continuation of the investigation of the complaint originally discussed at the April 17th, 2025 meeting. Commissioners requested feedback from Deaf UPS employees who received Ms. Maldonado's services. Attempts to contact the other Deaf employee named in the complaint failed. UPS supervisor Tracy O'Neil was interviewed to gather additional perspectives beyond Mr. Craig's dissatisfaction. The interview revealed that Ms. O'Neil witnessed Mr. Craig's dissatisfaction with Ms. Maldonado's interpreting and perceived conflict of interest. While no other Deaf employees complained to Ms. O'Neil, she believed they would likely direct concerns to Mr. Craig. Ms. O'Neil described Mr. Craig's objection as a "small altercation" and found Ms. Maldonado's behavior unprofessional and disruptive. These points support the original recommendation; however, commissioners can make their own decisions on how to proceed with the case. A discussion followed.

Commissioner Bolmarcich moves have Ms. Maldonado complete five clock hours of ethics training specifically targeted to conflicts of interest and the legal resources available to both the client and interpreter within a 60 day period; Commissioner Herron seconds, the motion carried unanimously.

Regarding Delynn Saunders: Delynn Saunders, who has been in the Legal D Licensure category since the early 2000s, did not meet the ACDHH requirement of completing 20 hours of legal-themed workshops within her certification cycle (four or five years, depending on the certifying body). This lack of compliance is considered unprofessional conduct according to the rules, necessitating Board review to determine the next steps. Delynn wanted to present her comments on this situation to the board, which may give further context to the situation. Further details and Delynn Saunders' related comments will be presented at the next agenda. Chair Sienko reminded the Board that Delynn had submitted a late comment.

Commissioner Goodstein moved that Delynn Saunders' complaint be tabled to the next Board meeting to allow her time to present comments on her complaint; Commissioner Herron seconds, the motion carried unanimously.

Regarding Whitney Weirick: A complaint was filed against Dr. Weirick for failing to immediately notify the Commission about the summer 2024 suspension of her Arizona interpreter license due to a lapsed RID membership caused by financial hardship. Notification is required when an interpreter's certification status changes from "active." The Commission discovered the suspension during her renewal application. Dr. Weirick, continuously certified since 2010 with no prior issues, stated she was unaware RID equated membership lapses with ethical violations and overlooked informing ACDHH. She affirmed she did not perform paid interpreting work during the suspension, which ended in January 2024. Given Dr. Weirick's employment outside of community interpreting during the suspension, the investigator recommends dismissing the complaint.

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. Commissioner Herron moves that the complaint against Sarah Campbell be dismissed; Commissioner Kidd seconds, the motion carries unanimously.

The Board goes on break at 5:30, with Commissioner Thomposon leaving the meeting at 5:30 PM.

The Board returns at 5:41 PM- Quorum is re-established by roll call.

Executive Director Search Process and Committee Selection

Chair Sienko opened the discussion by explaining the need to determine the next steps for the executive director search, having previously agreed to continue working with ADOA. Feedback has been provided to ADOA regarding expanding the search and posting the job description. The Board should now consider how they want to engage with potential candidates. Options include interviews, town halls, and meet-and-greets. Board members will be hand-selected to participate in this process, which will be conducted by a search committee (formerly the personnel committee). The goal is to find a talented and bright individual to lead the agency and represent the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, DeafBlind, and combined hearing and vision loss communities in Arizona. A discussion followed. Chair Sienko asked for volunteers to serve on the committee, and Commissioners Herron, Kidd, Bolmarcich, Swenson, and Madsen all expressed their interest. Commissioner Goodstein recommended Commissioner Cohen as a DeafBlind Representative. The Board continued discussing the possibility of including staff feedback. Commissioner Kidd moves that Chair Sienko be appointed to lead the search committee as a non voting member, with Commissioners Herron, Bolmarcich, Kidd, and Swenson serving on the committee with the final addition of either Commissioner Cohen or Thompson being added once either one makes a decision on if they would be willing to serve; Commissioner Madsen seconds, the motion carries unanimously. Chair Sienko will work with Chyla to get these meetings scheduled.

Interim Executive Director

Chair Sienko reminded the Board that Nikki's term as Interim Executive Director will expire June 30th, and will need to be formally renewed by the Board, by drafting a new letter to ADOA. **Commissioner Herron moved to extend Nikki Soukup's contract to continue serving as ACDHH Interim Director; Commissioner Kidd seconds, the motion carried unanimously.**

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Age of Access-Senior Community Program

Nikki Soukup discussed the Age of Access program, which was initiated in 2023 with dedicated funding. This program focuses on Arizona's senior population and their caregivers. Activities within the program have included developing a website and hosting community forums with presentations. Gallaudet University conducted a needs-assessment survey of Arizona seniors and older adults. A report on this ongoing project has been provided to the Board for review. A discussion on the report followed.

Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Goodstein would like to discuss the forensic audit taking place at ASDB, and how ACDHH could possibly provide assistance. Commissioner Kidd would like to discuss improving the process for young adults who are not attending college and improving their outcomes in life. Commissioner Scarborough would like to investigate the topic of communication access for Deaf and Hard of Hearing seniors in medical facilities. She would also like to revisit the process for interpreter complaints.

Adjournment

Commissioner Herron moved to adjourn the meeting at 6:56PM; Commissioner Sienko seconds, the meeting was adjourned at 6:56 PM.

20th day of May, 2025 at 5:00 pm by Chyla Dalton-Nava, Assistant to the Executive Director.