

Minutes of the meeting of the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing, Search Committee.

Meeting held December 3rd, 2025 at 4:30pm.

Meeting was held in person at the ACDHH Boardroom, located at 100 N 15th Avenue, Suite 104 Phoenix, AZ 85007

Commissioners participated in person and via Zoom and recording was posted to the agency YouTube page.

Call to Order & Roll Call

Commissioner Sienko called the meeting to order at **4:53 PM**

Commissioners present in person: Commissioner Kidd, Commissioner Madsen, Commissioner Sienko

Commissioners present via Zoom: Commissioner Bolmarcich, Commissioner Herron, Commissioner Swenson, Commissioner Venkatesh, Commissioner Williams, Commissioner Goodstein

Commissioners absent: Commissioner Scarboro, Commissioner Thompson

Staff Present in person: Chyla Dalton-Nava

AAG: Elise Phalen, Michelle Kunzman

Executive Director Candidates: Michele Michaels, Eric Raff, Nikki Soukup

Chair's Report/Summary of Events

Chair Sienko began by announcing the schedule for tonight's meeting: The agenda for the evening was adjusted due to time constraints. The structure is as follows: Each candidate will present for 15 minutes, with a dedicated time slot for Q&A following each presentation. Following this, the board will enter closed session to conduct the final interviews, with public comments following.

Candidate Presentations

Eric Raff began first with his presentation, and explained that he was born Deaf and language deprived until attending Gallaudet University at age 19, he presented his vision for strengthening agencies that provide services to the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing community. With 25 years of experience, including directorial roles in Washington and Virginia, he emphasizes that all Americans in this community need full access to participate in all aspects of life without barriers. He proposed his formula for

strengthening agencies: **Laws + Funding + Programs = Access.**

Michele Michaels continued with her presentation, outlining her experience in broadcasting, and her 18 years here at ACDHH, where she has been promoted twice, and has served as a legislative liaison and then Hearing Healthcare Program Manager since 2017. She has written seven position papers adopted by the Board and manages two statutory programs. She is a Certified Public Manager. She then outlined her plans for the agency, which is to focus on teambuilding, reestablishing trust, improving cross-team communication, conducting accessible town halls (including Spanish speakers and rural/Tribal Lands outreach), and addressing critical funding/staffing issues. She emphasizes that funding is the most important issue. She would also like to Develop ambassador training using the AARP model to free up staff time for crucial tasks, and launch the new website.

Nikki Soukup presented to the board, explaining her background as being Deaf and coming from a multigenerational Deaf family. She expressed her commitment to ensuring communication equity for all Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind individuals in Arizona. She also highlighted her experience as interim director, focusing on supporting the team and maintaining services. She outlined her goals for the agency, communication and equity for all, statewide connection to collaboration, equity across all life stages, and sustainability and readiness for the future.

The ACDHH Board was on break between 6:00-6:22 PM.

Public Comments

There were a total of 51 public comments received, with one commenter being physically present to deliver comments. Chair Sienko advised that due to time constraints, the board should consider the written comments at the Special Board Meeting taking place on December 4th.

Commissioner Kidd moves to postpone the discussion of all written comments until tomorrow's meeting; Commissioner Herron seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously.

Caryn Tenin provided live comments asking for the board to reinstate the DeafBlind specialist position at ACDHH.

Candidate Interviews

Commissioner Kidd moved that the Board go into Executive Session in order to discuss personnel matters, which include interviewing the final candidates according to ARS Provision number 1; Commissioner Madsen seconded the motion, the motion carried unanimously. The Board entered Executive session at 6:33 PM.

The Board returned at 9:02 PM.

Chair Sienko expressed her sincere gratitude to the community, our three finalists, ACDHH staff, and the Board for your patience throughout this process. She explained that the board would be meeting again on December 4th at 4:30 PM to make their final selection.

Adjournment

Commissioner Madsen moved to adjourn the meeting at 9:06 PM; Commissioner Kidd seconded the motion, the meeting ended at 9:06 PM.

Posted this 4th day of December, 2025 at 9:00 pm by Chyla Dalton-Nava, Assistant to the Executive Director.