

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

**Meeting held January 28th, 2026 at 6:00pm.**

**Meeting was held via Zoom.**

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

**Call to Order & Roll Call**

Commissioner Sienko called the meeting to order at **6:04 PM**

Commissioners present: Commissioner Kidd, Commissioner Madsen, Commissioner Sienko, Commissioner Herron, Commissioner Swenson, Commissioner Venkatesh, Commissioner Williams, Commissioner Goodstein, Commissioner Scarboro, Commissioner Thompson

Commissioners absent: Commissioner Bolmarcich

Staff Present: Chyla Dalton-Nava, Ricky Gonsowski

AAG: Elise Phalen, Michelle Kunzman

ADOA Staff: George McNeely

**Chair's Report/Summary of Events**

Chair Sienko began by welcoming attendees and encouraging them to participate in the upcoming Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind day at the Capitol next week, February 5th.

**ADOA Announcement on Executive Director**

Chair Sienko explained to the board that the selected candidate for the Executive Director position, Eric Raff, has withdrawn from consideration. George McNeely discussed the next possible steps with the board, which could include selecting from the remaining candidates, or initiating a new search for the role. Commissioner Goodstein wanted to know why Mr Raff withdrew, and Michelle Kunzman explained that before discussing the matter in closed session, Commissioner Goodstein would need to cite the relevant ARS statute to determine if the discussion is for legal advice or about the recruitment process. She believes it relates more to "personnel matters," which is one of the seven exceptions, and asks for confirmation from Commissioner Goodstein.

**Commissioner Goodstein confirmed and moved that the board enter an Executive Session to discuss personnel matters concerning Eric's most recent application and other related personnel concerns; Commissioner Kidd seconds, the ACDHH**

**Board was in Executive Session between 6:14-6:20 PM.**

The discussion centered on the next steps for selecting an executive director from the two remaining candidates, Michele Michaels and Nikki Soukup.

**Commissioner Herron moves to go into Executive Session, pursuant to ARS 38-431.03(A)(1) to discuss the candidates' options and finalize the interview process- should there be any; Commissioner Scarborough seconded, the board entered Executive Session at 6:29 PM, the Board returned at 7:03 PM.**

**Commissioner Herron moves to approve Michele Michaels and Nikki Soukup, the two remaining candidates from the last round, to proceed to the final round of interviews for the Executive Director position of the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Commissioner Thompson seconds, the motion carried unanimously.**

**Commissioner Kidd moved to vote on the two remaining candidates; Commissioner Herron seconded the motion.** Commissioner Goodstein asked if it were possible to enter an executive session to discuss the two final candidates. Elise explained that a motion to vote on the two finalists had already been made and seconded. After Chair Sienko asked, Commissioner Kidd agreed to withdraw his motion to vote in the interest of transparency. **Commissioner Goodstein moved to go into Executive session to discuss the two remaining candidates; Commissioner Kidd seconded, the board entered executive session at 7:12 PM. The board returned at 7:20 PM.**

**Commissioner Kidd moved to vote on the two remaining candidates; Commissioner Madsen seconds the motion, the motion carried unanimously.**

**Executive Director- Final Decision**

**The board proceeded with the vote for the next executive Director of ACDHH.**

**The board voted as follows:**

**Herron:Nikki Soukup**

**Goodstein:Nikki Soukup**

**Kidd: Nikki Soukup**

**Madsen: Nikki Soukup**

**Swenson: Nikki Soukup**

**Scarboro: Nikki Soukup**

**Venkatesh: Nikki Soukup**

**Williams: Michele Michaels**

**Thompson: Nikki Soukup**

**Sienko: Nikki Soukup**

Chair Sienko confirmed the board's majority vote, with no abstentions or opposition, to approve Nikki Soukup as the new Executive Director. The board began to discuss the terms of the job offer. **Commissioner Herron moved to go into executive session to discuss the job offer for Nikki Soukup, compensation, and official start date; Commissioner Kidd seconded the motion, the board went into executive session at 7:33 PM. The board returned at 7:48 PM.**

After returning from Executive Session, **Commissioner Herron moved to authorize the Board Chair, Katie Sienko, to work with ADOA to offer a salary up to \$142,000 to Nikki Soukup and set the effective start date for the next payroll period. Commissioner Kidd seconded, the motion carried unanimously.** Chair Sienko congratulated Nikki, and expressed her gratitude to the Board, ADOA, and AAG for their assistance throughout the process.

### **Adjournment**

**Commissioner Madsen moved to adjourn the meeting at 7:56 PM; Commissioner Goodstein seconded the motion, the meeting ended at 7:56 PM.**

Posted this 2nd day of February, 2026 at 5:00 pm by Chyla Dalton-Nava, Assistant to the Executive Director.