



**STATE OF NEW MEXICO
COMMISSION FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING**

Thursday, March 26, 2015
NMCDHH Conference Room
505 Marquette Ave. NW, Suite 1550
Albuquerque, NM 87102
3:00 p.m.

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Mark Apodaca called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Present: Mark Apodaca, Chair Luis Quiñonez
 John A. Johnson, Jr. Johnny Robertson

Chair Apodaca said that Commissioner Austin Welborn would be in attendance but was arriving late. Vice-Chair Deb Hambel and Secretary Ronald Stern would not be present at the board meeting, but they had met quorum and would proceed. Chair Apodaca introduced Johnny Robertson, President of NMAD, as a new board member and mentioned that he was the person who founded NMCDHH.

Ten staff members from NMCDHH were present: Executive Director Nathan Gomme, Sam Martinez, Jason Siergey, Corina Gutierrez, Deborah Romero, Cheryl Padilla, Lori Neubauer, Lisa Dignan, Roger Robb, and Rich Bailey. Four interpreters were present: Rebecca DeSantis, Andrea Ginn, Audrey Blanco and Trena Franck. Six members of the community were in the audience.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Apodaca asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

15.4

Commissioner John Johnson made a motion to approve the agenda.
Commissioner Luis Quiñonez seconded.
Motion passed unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER 12, 2014 MINUTES

Chair Apodaca asked if there were any corrections to the minutes.

15.5

Commissioner Johnny Robertson made a motion to approve the minutes as read.
Luis Quiñonez seconded.
Motion passed unanimously.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

The next item on the agenda was Election of Officers. Chair Apodaca explained that since Commissioner Austin Welborn had not yet arrived, the Board would go on to New Business and have the Election of Officers after when Commissioner Welborn would be present.

a. Budget Update

Executive Director Nathan Gomme asked Chief Financial Officer, Deborah Romero, to discuss budgeting issues.

Deborah Romero said that the second quarter of FY15 the Commission did well, meeting the 50/50 rule, under the 50% spending that was required. At that point NMCDHH had expended \$1.2 million, and the TRS revenue was 1.2. She mentioned that on the Board Report there was a wrong calculation at the bottom. So it was 1.2 million brought in, and through February the TRS revenue was at 1.3. NMCDHH was right where she expected it to be. In March, 2 million were spent, but the Commission has some savings due to vacancies. Also in the FY15 request, Ms. Romero had projected money for moving expenses which were actually covered by the new building, so there is savings there, as well.

Chair Apodaca announced Ms. Romero's recent promotion to CFO and congratulated her on her hard work that led to that long overdue promotion.

Chair Apodaca asked about House Bill 2 which says we have money budgeted to spend and we have revenue, but those numbers do not balance. Ms. Romero said there was a decrease in revenue and there has been a continuous decrease in the last five years. She stated that the Commission can meet the expenditures due to savings from vacancies and contracts and she monitors the budget very closely. She had also been in contact with Tax and Revenue in an attempt to meet with the appropriate people to discuss what options there are, and is considering doing an audit to make sure that those vendors that are supposed to pay into the revenue fund are actually doing so.

Executive Director Nathan Gomme added that it was good there was some savings, but they still need to have that meeting with Tax and Revenue and also the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) for the \$466,000 transfer. He added that it may be necessary to bring in a paid contractor to do an audit.

Executive Director Gomme said he would be working with Ms. Romero as well as the staff to look at places where the budget can be cut, and keep some savings available to continue providing services at a high level. He mentioned that if we focused on funds alone, we would not be able hire staff in Las Cruces, but it was necessary to have another staff member there. Gomme said he was looking at restructuring as well.

Commissioner Johnny Robertson asked if the budget needed to be spent so it would not revert to the general fund. Executive Director Gomme said that we do operate by fiscal year and

everything will need to be spent. Some money cannot be transferred between departments without providing the appropriate paperwork to move the finances. He added that it is not a good thing to do that and then approach the legislature to validate the reasons for moving the money. The Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) has rules established for finances. Therefore, NMCDHH cannot just spend money on anything, but we would like our savings to cover our losses so it can balance out. The Commission must address the issue with Tax and Revenue, have an audit and get our finances back where they need to be.

Director Gomme explained that he could not comment on the future budget since it is awaiting the governor's signature, but the Commission is looking to add two full time employees: one in Las Cruces and a staff interpreter in Albuquerque. NMCDHH has had a contract interpreter for a while, but by decreasing the budget for the contract position we can afford the full-time position, and the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) is in favor of that.

Commissioner John Johnson asked if it would help if the Commissioners should put together a plan to approach the Legislators and the Governor about our decreasing TRS funds, but Director Gomme stated that the legislature is well aware of the situation and instead it might help for the Commissioners to be involved in a push for Tax and Revenue to work with NMCDHH to find out where the loss is. Commissioner Robertson asked if there should be a motion, but Chair Apodaca said that item wasn't on the agenda and therefore would need to be held for the next meeting.

Chair Apodaca asked about the transfer of \$466,000 to DVR that continues every year. He didn't understand why that amount wasn't going down when our revenue was decreasing. Director Gomme stated that this topic has been discussed with the legislature often as well as with the former Interim Director of DVR. There were discussions regarding this and DVR has agreed to the decrease, but that needs to be put in writing. Senator Rodriguez is in support of the decrease, too, but did express concerns about cutting it completely. Before moving forward, Executive Director Gomme wanted to make sure DVR and NMCDHH were on the same page, and he thought that they could have something in writing by the end of FY16.

Commissioner Robertson wanted information on what the \$466,000 transferred to DVR was used for. Executive Director Gomme explained that House Bill 2 says the purpose is for Deaf and Hard of Hearing to receive services from DVR. The problematic point is that DVR has not allocated the money for that purpose only. They are, however, as can be seen in their report, serving Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals, and DVR jointly with NMCDHH needs to figure out a way for them to continue those services.

At 3:20 p.m., Commissioner Austin Welborn arrived.

b. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Gomme, as mentioned earlier, reported that there would be changes to the structure of NMCDHH. This was previously discussed with managers and some of the staff to make sure the agency's best services were provided to the consumers. A new employee was hired for southern New Mexico and, as mentioned before, NMCDHH would like to hire a full-time interpreter as opposed to contracting an interpreter. He also wanted to see a more focused approach to contracts. The RFP processes are complex, and he wanted to see a neutral party who is a member of the staff focus on them. Furthermore, he wanted to find some of the staff more appropriate position titles.

Mr. Gomme added that he wanted to allocate funds responsibly and appropriately and make sure the Hard of Hearing and speech disabled community was served better as far as advocacy and direct services. He wants the agency to work with a variety of communities like those who have Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) and create better relationships using what we have.

Mr. Gomme said that members of his staff were working hard and taking on more. He wants to see that everyone's hard work is recognized. Deborah Romero's title of CFO now gives her the recognition and the appropriate level of benefit that she deserves. Lisa Dignan has been working as CDHH's human resources and also has increasingly been given other responsibilities. Corina Gutierrez has been promoted to Director of Public Policy and Advocacy. Sam Martinez is working as the Interim Director of Telecommunication and Technical Assistance. He wanted to make sure everyone is given the recognition they deserve as well as the appropriate level of benefit.

Executive Director Gomme explained to the board that the numbers on the second quarter report are not where he would want them to be, but he expects those numbers to increase because of the work that everyone is doing now. Roger Robb has been developing trainings and approaching the Social Security offices and a variety of different agencies as has Corina, who would expand on that during her report. Lisa Dignan was working with NMRID and finding out how NMCDHH can work with VRI services and is working with Corina to determine best practices in court interpreting as well. He said that although we have not seen vast improvements, they will be evident over time.

Chair Apodaca asked about issues with loop systems and if those were fixed. Mr. Gomme responded that all of the loop systems are not fixed, but he would be meeting with HLAA to discuss that and other issues including having a member of HLAA represented on the board when there is a vacancy.

HLAA is still pushing a bill to assist with hearing aid distribution. Utah recently passed a bill related to the provision of hearing aids and audiograms. New Mexico does not currently have support for this. Mr. Gomme said he would like to see higher standards for people who have a hearing loss. Often Hard of Hearing people go to the audiologist and get sent out the door with a hearing aid without counseling and advice. He wants the Hard of Hearing community to have a voice, a seat at the table, and he would like to be able to go to HLAA events and hear their concerns at a national level and learn what the State of New Mexico can do to improve their issues.

Commissioner Johnson thanked NMCDHH for looping the conference room as it was working wonderfully. Mr. Johnson stated about 4.3% of the population had a profound hearing loss as opposed to .4% deaf. As the baby boomers move through the system the numbers will increase. There will be many issues that they will face and will need to be educated and assisted.

Director Gomme said that the numbers Mr. Johnson stated were basically drawn from the census and are an estimated percentage. One of the goals for NMCDHH is to do is extensive research and data collection so that we have a more precise number.

In the past, Commissioner Robertson said he wanted to collect data, but he didn't have the cooperation he needed and finally gave up. He wanted to find out what happens to people who graduated from the school for the deaf and then seem to disappear, as well as outreach to the Native American communities. He wanted to see how the Commission and DVR and other agencies can best serve them and bring them more training, support, counseling, and employment opportunities. It is a great idea to see NMCDHH, NMSD and DVR collaborate. Mr. Gomme said there is a research group connected to the Deaf Education Task Force that is working on transition services with NMSD, Workforce Solutions and DVR.

Mr. Gomme said that in FY16, NMCDHH will be working on data collection. There are Deaf, Deaf-Blind, Hard of Hearing, Speech-Disabled, the Senior Community; a huge variance. It is necessary to collect more accurate numbers to get legislative support on bills. Commissioner Robertson stated he could see this as being a two or three year project, and Director Gomme

agreed that it would not be a short-term project. However, this information is needed to NMCDHH will be well equipped to provide services.

Chair Apodaca wanted to bring up the option of live streaming for the community so others can watch. Gomme said that Roger Robb was looking into this. The live stream that was used at a recent NMSD event was interrupted every five minutes by commercials. The Commission would like to provide streaming without asking the community to pay for it.

c. Staff Reports

Chair Apodaca asked Corina Gutierrez, Director of Public Policy and Advocacy, what was happening with VRI at hospitals. Corina replied that she, along with Roger Robb, had a meeting with UNMH regarding VRI. They were impressed and understood why sometimes VRI is successful and sometimes it is not and are willing to bring in an interpreter at those times. We know they are still using VRI at the clinics and some aren't providing interpreters and we will be discussing that further.

Ms. Gutierrez also stated that NMCDHH would be making a vlog to the community about the issues that we have been seeing at the hospital, and to please come let the Public Policy and Advocacy Department know if they are experiencing situations with VRI or not having an interpreter. Her department will get in touch with Presbyterian Hospital next, and then Lovelace.

Executive Director Gomme stated that Ms. Gutierrez was not able to attend, but he along with Lisa Dignan attended a NMRID Town Hall. Commissioner Robertson was there as well. Mr. Gomme stated that the Commission is more than happy to work in collaboration with NMRID to develop best practices and guidelines for VRI use. He said Ms. Gutierrez would be working with NMAD and NMRID to inform the Interpreting Community and the Deaf Community what the issues and needs are. He added that Ms. Gutierrez had been working on the VRI issue for quite some time. UNMH has approximately 30 foreign language interpreters and are now considering having an ASL staff interpreter.

Commissioner Robertson stated that he was at the Town Hall and several Deaf people were there complaining about the technological problems they experienced with VRI, such as the picture freezing or not having the proper internet connection. The hospital doctors have become frustrated as well. There is a lot that needs to be ironed out. He also stated that there is talk about using it in rural areas where the internet connection is weak. Mr. Robertson was also extremely concerned about the Department of Education using VRI in some school districts.

Director Gomme stated that Ms. Gutierrez was already part of the Language Access Advisory Committee (LAAC) for the courts and she is also talking about VRI in the schools. She is actually working on a variety of different things. He mentioned that Lisa Dignan and Roger Robb have been developing trainings and the staff works collaboratively to make things happen and are aware of the issues in the schools and will approach that, too.

Chair Apodaca asked Lisa Dignan if she knew where the VRI interpreters are located. She responded that VRI services were provided by a variety of places all over the country, and a large concern was raised at the town hall meeting was that the interpreters providing services to the people in New Mexico are not familiar with New Mexico signs and spellings of our locations. NMRID and NMAD are working together with the Commission and the Community on a best practices paper which will include such things as, if going to use VRI, use interpreters here in New Mexico who are familiar with our terminology rather than interpreters far away from NM. Chair Apodaca asked if we could use VRI Centers in New Mexico, and Ms. Dignan responded that there were just a couple agencies here in New Mexico and they would need to be expanded significantly to cover the needs in this state. The best practices paper will offer ideas of how to

work with local entities that can provide the service, and that is an area where we could see some significant growth within the state.

Commissioner Robertson was concerned that VRI interpreters should be certified and have their New Mexico interpreter license. There are also several different cultures within New Mexico that have to be considered. Director Gomme interjected that there is a cost issue in New Mexico as well and they can't make too many hasty decisions. With people like Ms. Dignan, Dr. Barb Shaffer, Ms. Gutierrez, Rebecca DeSantis, Commissioner Robertson and others working together and figure out the best approach to this.

Commissioner Welborn asked about regulations for VRI and Ms. Dignan responded that currently VRI is not well controlled anywhere, but NAD and RID on it, and that means State Commissions for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing will have some influence.

In the Public Policy and Advocacy Department, besides working with individual clients, Cheryl Padilla has been working with the airport for some time and she was informed that they have established some accommodations. There were a lot of big projects that the department is working on together and Ms. Gutierrez was very proud of her department.

Chair Apodaca asked about encouraging large companies to hire deaf people and was told Roger Robb was working with the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD) to provide trainings for places of employment and Mr. Robb also gives presentations about Deaf sensitivity, how to use interpreters, and how to work with Deaf, Deaf-Blind and Hard of Hearing consumers.

Lisa Dignan, Director of Communication Access and Development, is continuing to provide mentoring services. They run contracts with other outside entities to provide additional professional development services for interpreters and are seeing real success in those programs. A new collaborative group is working together including the Commission, NMRID, and NMSD and are doing great things together and Ms. Dignan said she was happy with their progress and was looking forward to continuing on with that group.

Ms. Dignan stated she had served a long time on the LAAC with the courts, but her 8-year term expired and now she was happy that the Supreme Court had appointed Corina Gutierrez as her replacement. Ms. Dignan was now Chair of one of their subcommittees working on literacy challenges. This subcommittee will work on making court forms accessible to individuals who, for a variety of reasons, cannot read them.

Ms. Dignan also had been appointed to the Council on Purchasing for Persons with Disabilities and his heavily involved with the State Use Act. She is making great connections for the Commission on that council and seeing a lot of positive benefits on many fronts.

Additionally, the interpreter apprentice program at NMCDHH was recently revamped. Previous apprentices have transitioned out and Rachelle Clifford is the Commission's newest apprentice. She will be working closely with Andrea Ginn who will bring the apprentices to certification and continue to grow the pool of qualified interpreters within the community. As Mr. Gomme mentioned, the Commission will have a staff interpreter position approved if the governor signs the current budget as it stands. Currently we have blocked schedules for some of the contract interpreters, such as Ms. Ginn, so they are in the office for the peak periods of time.

Also Ms. Dignan mentioned she was doing a lot of work with the Signed Language Interpreter Practices Board and she had been reappointed to the rules committee as they look at rule changes to clean things up again within licensure and all is moving along well there.

Ms. Dignan added that she is also now Human Resources Director and she is enjoying learning that since she has never done that before. She attended several trainings offered by the state.

Assuming the budget will be signed as is, she will help to develop a classification for signed language interpreters since the state does not have one. There is a classification for interpreter/translator that was created a long time ago and focused on spoken language interpreters. This would benefit a lot of state agencies if they were to look at bringing on a staff interpreter position.

Ms. Dignan spoke briefly about the building that CDHH was now housed in. The project took almost four years to come to fruition. She complemented the staff for their hard work getting ready to move and clearing out things that were no longer needed. NMCDHH received four proposals and received tours of the buildings, but the current space was not only the most cost-effective, but also met all the criteria. The space was completely torn down to bare walls and concrete and designed with an architect to specifically meet the needs of the Commission. Additionally, the Commission will have a significant cost savings by having meetings here rather than rent hotel conference rooms or the rooms at the State Bar. Storage is on site and there is no longer a storage unit to store other supplies that we use for booths and events. There is more effective space, and as Deborah Romero mentioned earlier, the landlord paid for all moving expenses. Ms. Dignan also mentioned that there is secure parking for the state vehicles as well as staff vehicles. At the previous location, there a couple incidents of the state where the state vehicles were vandalized, so secure parking is necessary.

Ms. Dignan offered to show board members and visitors the office at the conclusion of the meeting. She explained that there are 3 smaller conference rooms, a library, Telephone Equipment testing room, a lobby area, and a secure area for the administrative assistant. Signs are almost ready for the elevator lobby and our front door, and the restrooms have been renovated and are ADA compliant. Building maintenance responds to concerns quickly. Other improvements will be happening soon: The visitor parking area will be resurfaced and they will add another accessible parking space to be ADA compliant, fix uneven pavement at another entrance, upgrade the lighting in the parking garage, and add visual fire alarms to the elevator lobbies. Ms. Dignan added that Roger will be providing training for the building staff on communication access and deaf sensitivity.

Commissioner Robertson said he enjoyed the vlog regarding all the different parking spots. Ms. Dignan stated that Mr. Robb will be doing a lot more work on the video blogs in the future.

Commissioner Robertson took a minute to say that Lisa Dignan always shows up for the Signed Language Interpreter Board Meetings, and that they are grateful for the time she puts into that.

Sam Martinez, Interim Director for Telecommunications and Technical Assistance, began his report by saying that his department will continue to distribute iPads and iPad Mini's because those devices provide security. They are in the process of a new RFP for the equipment distribution program and will add new technology. He said he received some input from the Hard of Hearing community that different fire alarm systems with deeper tones would be preferred since many individuals cannot hear a high pitch sound. Furthermore, they will add more amplified equipment from different manufacturers.

Chair Apodaca asked if there would be any new products for the Hard of Hearing Community. Mr. Martinez said they are going to carry a product where the clients could wear a band or necklace that will dial emergency numbers as needed. Also the signaling systems will expand to up to ten units if a client has a large home they can have different receivers in each room.

Executive Director Gomme added that Mr. Martinez was researching more equipment to meet the needs of New Mexico residents better. Currently the equipment distributed is somewhat limited and they would like to meet the needs of the residents better and in a more customized way. Commissioner Robertson asked about the loop system in the conference room, and Mr. Gomme explained that it had been installed under the carpet while the construction was going on. Mike Langner worked with NMCDHH to install the loop system, which is another way the Commission is becoming more accessible to the Hard of Hearing Community.

V. ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Chairman Mark Apodaca announced it was time to vote for officers.

15.6

Commissioner Robertson made a motion to have Mark Apodaca continue as Chair.
Commissioner Apodaca accepted.
Commissioner Welborn seconded.
Motion passed unanimously.

Chair Apodaca asked for nominations for Vice-Chair. Commissioner Welborn said he would be willing to take the Vice-Chair position.

15.7

Commissioner Robertson made a motion to elect Austin Welborn as Vice-Chair.
Commissioner Johnson seconded.
Motion passed unanimously.

15.8

Commissioner Welborn made a motion to elect Luis Quiñonez as Secretary.
Commissioner Johnson seconded
Motioned passed unanimously.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

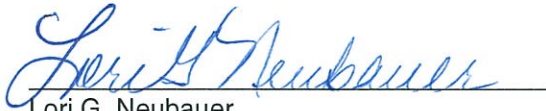
Chair Apodaca announced there was nothing to discuss in an Executive Session, so he called for a motion to adjourn.

15.9

Commissioner Johnson made a motion to adjourn.
Commissioner Quiñonez seconded.
Motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lori G. Neubauer
Administrative Operations Specialist



Mark Apodaca, Board Chair

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