



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

*Thursday, December 12, 2019  
NMCDHH Conference Room  
505 Marquette Avenue NW, Suite 1550  
Albuquerque, NM 87102  
3:00 p.m.*

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Chair Austin Welborn called the meeting to order at 3:01 p.m. and proceeded with roll call.

Present: Austin Welborn, Chair  
Joanne Corwin, Designee for Rosemary Gallegos  
Johnny Robertson  
Concha Dunwell  
Francis Vigil

Absent: Don Johnson  
Josh Pando

Quorum was met. Chair Welborn welcomed the new board member, Francis Vigil, who fills the vacancy of a parent of a deaf or hard of hearing child.

Ten staff members from NMCDHH were present: Executive Director Nathan Gomme, Deborah Romero, Lisa Dignan, Lori Neubauer, Corina Gutiérrez, Louise Chavez-Rasgado, Roger Robb, Hector Lopez, Jason Siergey, and Andrea Ginn. Five interpreters were present, Andrea Ginn, Rachelle Clifford, Jessica Eubanks, Gabriella Cravens, and Sierra Knight. Seven members of the community were in the audience.

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chair Austin Welborn asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

**20.1**

Commissioner Johnny Robertson made a motion to approve the agenda.  
Commissioner Joanne Corwin seconded.  
Motion passed unanimously.

**III. APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 19, 2019 MINUTES**

Chair Welborn asked if there were any changes to the minutes from September 19, 2019.

**20.2**

Commissioner Johnny Robertson made the motion to accept the minutes as written.  
Commissioner Concha Dunwell seconded.  
Motion passed unanimously.

#### **IV. REPORTS**

##### ***a. Auditor Report***

Thad Porch from Porch and Associates gave a brief review of the audit for the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing. He reported that CDHH was given an unqualified opinion, which is the best opinion to have. Mr. Porch explained that there are three opinions that a business or agency can get. The unqualified or unmodified opinion means that the auditors understand the balances, and everything is correct. A qualified opinion would mean there is an area that the auditors didn't understand. An adverse opinion would indicate serious problems with the financial records.

Mr. Porch also talked about the statement of income or statement of revenue expenditures and changes in fund balances, which includes the general fund and the revenue from the telecommunications fund. For the year, those two funds combined show a loss of about \$110,000. This was because of the decrease in the telecommunications fund tax. It was his understanding that the board was aware of that, and CDHH is working with the New Mexico Taxation and Revenue Department (TRD) to determine how to shore up the tax revenues.

In conclusion, Mr. Porch said that there were no findings in last year's report and no findings in this report as well. He said that speaks to the quality of the accounting and the accounting staff. There were no issues whatsoever, and he thanked CDHH for allowing Porch and Associates do their audit again and will be back for the coming year.

##### ***b. Executive Director Report***

Executive Director Gomme began by making the point that the issues with the revenue has been discussed with the subcommittee of the Legislative Financial Committee (LFC). No decisions have been made yet, but some positions are being reclassified so we can fill vacancies and the Commission also needs an increase in our general funds to ensure that we can provide other services. There is a growing pool of Deaf-Blind Deaf Plus seniors who will need services as he included in his report. We are aware of the issue with the TRD and as we look at the needs CDHH has, this is something that maybe addressed at the next 60-day legislative session in January 2021. The FCC will be pulling some money from the intrastate funds and Executive Director Gomme will need more information before he can make any recommendations. The timing is not good for this coming 30-day legislative session that will begin in January. He has been doing a lot of review and readings and has not seen the updated forms for collections. He has also not yet seen the recommended budget from LFC of the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA), so he will get that information in January and will proceed from there.

Executive Director Gomme also talked about changes in the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program and relay services. He has mentioned before that the relay world is changing at a rapid pace. He has been showing people ASR, automatic speech recognition. One of the examples is if you have a Google Pixel device and if you want to listen to a podcast, it is captioned on that device. Chair Welborn asked about the accuracy of ASR and Executive Director Gomme replied that it is not 100% correct. For example, KOAT on Facebook was talking about Taos Ski Valley, and the ASR on the device spelled it as one word, towsky. Generally, the errors that occur are easy to identify through context, and the captioning has punctuation. It also will caption live videos on Instagram, as well as Facebook and the news, but right now it is only available on Pixel devices. ASR is computerized; no people are involved. The sound doesn't need to be on to get captions. Some members of the FCC have indicated that they would like to see this implemented in the relay world instead of having a live person, due to the high cost of IP CTS and the funding required to support it. There are concerns regarding accents and atypical speech, but it does open a world of accessibility to those with a hearing loss. ASR will also have an impact on the equipment distribution industry. We are already beginning to see it.

Executive Director Gomme mentioned that there are already five pieces of equipment in our Telecommunication Equipment Distribution catalog that have been discontinued. In January we will see

even more discontinued items. We reached out to manufacturers to find out the cause of this. Due to tariffs on imported goods, they cannot create cost effective ways to manufacture and provide this equipment, so he will be looking at other ideas for equipment. Other companies are looking at apps based off of the ASR program and creating a new app. They see that people are transitioning to mobile phones with apps, this is fine, but our concern is that some of the older community members don't have access to internet and can't afford \$1,000 equipment and we will not leave them out. We will continue to research alternatives. The catalog for the equipment will be revised and Corina Gutiérrez is working on having it translated into Spanish.

There was discussion about smart phones and how they do not share technology. The captioning Executive Director Gomme shared on the Pixel 3 is not available on an iPhone. Commissioner Vigil asked if it was even possible for the FCC to mandate that ASR would be available on all devices. Executive Director Gomme said the FCC does allow for public comment and that he does file comments to the FCC. The FCC and he spoke recently about the possibility of doing a town hall in New Mexico at the end of January. Telecommunications for the Deaf Incorporated (TDI) and other organizations are in dialogue with the FCC, sharing their concerns about the economy for the Deaf community and ASR. Its important to realize that TRS operators feed the Deaf economy, and when they lose their jobs, that has an impact, and some of the services have Deaf owners and employees that are Deaf, Deaf-Blind or hard of hearing who also lose their jobs. Although this isn't the responsibility of the FCC, they need to be aware of the direct impact on the communities. He added that a one size fits all doesn't really work for everyone, and until broadband is universally accessible anywhere, we can't say that mobile devices are a solution.

Commissioner Dunwell mentioned a cell phone program could maybe replace the iPads. The cost is high, but Ms. Dunwell thought perhaps maybe a credit could be applied for an amount to go towards the purchase of a cell phone. Executive Director Gomme said that would not be feasible at this time. Our vendor provides very specific equipment. Another vendor provides other specific types of equipment. Historically, Apple was ahead of the game to make their products accessible. Now Android is improving, like the Pixel device he just demonstrated. All of it should be available, but it would mean partnering with Motorola, Samsung, One Plus, Apple devices, LG devices, Google devices, and that would not be possible at this time. Also, it makes more sense to look towards the apps that will be developed by TED equipment manufacturers that he mentioned and utilize them instead of trying to figure out which single device provides the necessary accessibility features.

### **c. Department Reports**

#### **i. Community Advocacy**

Corina Gutiérrez, Director of Community Advocacy, announced to the board that there are still two advocacy positions vacant in her department. The Commission posted for a position and we had an applicant selected, but that didn't work out. The Commission will post that position again and interviews will be scheduled for the second week of January.

Ms. Gutiérrez said that, with the two vacancies, a lot of responsibility has fallen on her and Roger Robb, the Community Education Specialist, and there are other projects they are working on as well. They are trying to keep up with everything and she really appreciates the hard work done in her department. In Las Cruces, Sandra Williams has taken up a lot of advocate responsibilities for the southern part of the state while Mr. Robb and Ms. Gutiérrez focus on the northern part of the state.

Mr. Robb and Ms. Gutiérrez have also been reviewing the advocacy case files and feel like the system is not working as well as they would like, so her department will be putting a new system in place that was Mr. Robb's suggestion. The new advocacy positions will be using this new system and it should work much better.

The Department of Community Advocacy has also been working on having video phones set up in public libraries around the state. We have another one set up in Santa Fe, and had one set up yesterday in Alamogordo. Hopefully we will get a picture and post it on Facebook to inform the community.

Mr. Robb met with the Chief General Counsel of Children, Youth and Families Department (CYFD), Kate Girard, and discussed communication access with them for the Deaf community all over New Mexico. CDHH will start training with a Hearing Loss Sensitivity presentation, first with the management staff and then with the front-line people. CYFD has a high turnover rate, so a one-time presentation will not be enough. CDHH will provide ongoing trainings. The same is true with the police department, it's never a one-time thing. Once finished with all the departments, it will be time to start over.

Mr. Robb is taking more responsibility for booth events as well. Susana Santillan from the Las Cruces office is covering booth events in Southern New Mexico. Ms. Santillan informs people about the TED program and many people from southern New Mexico are applying. She also informs people about the advocacy program and she has been doing a great job.

Roger Robb presented about his experience at the NAD Leadership Training Conference (NTLC) in Little Rock, Arkansas in October. Representatives from almost every state were in attendance. It was great to see that CDHH is not alone in having issues and in some cases, doing better than other states. For example, California does not have a licensure requirement for interpreters. They are experiencing frustration with the quality of interpreters there. There was a wide variety of issues discussed and Mr. Robb said he learned a great deal at the conference.

Mr. Robb also talked about the vlogs he is doing for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA). He is doing vlogs on a variety of topics such as wildfires, tornadoes, flooding and severe thunderstorms. There are seven disasters that will be discussed that are all specific to the State of New Mexico. Four are finished and three more will be done next week. They wanted to have a hearing person speak at the same time he was signing, so he needed to explain that the pace of the script would not be the same, so two separate videos will be done: one presenting in spoken English and one in ASL. These will appear on the National Weather Service's New Mexico website.

## **ii. Community Engagement**

Lisa Dignan, Director of Community Engagement, stated that a massive rapid hire event for the State of New Mexico was currently happening at the fairgrounds. They are trying to fill thousands of state jobs. As part of her role as human resources manager for CDHH, she was asked about accessibility for people with hearing loss, which, unfortunately, had not been considered. With some good advocacy work between CDHH and DVR, they were able to resolve that issue. DVR gave a large amount of money to provide interpreting services for this event. Ms. Dignan mentioned that CDHH's open positions are not part of the rapid hire event due to the timing, but the Commission was happy that it was accessible, and she was going to go to the event the next day to discuss those issues. The four-day event concludes Saturday.

Ms. Dignan also told the board the great news that the Interpreter Licensure Board was able to have a meeting in November. She had told the board in previous meetings that they were unable to meet because they did not have a quorum. The Governor appointed members and the new chair of the board is Mr. Mark Apodaca. In the November meeting they were able to catch up on a lot of business and the next meeting will be in January.

Ms. Dignan had previously let the board know about the video phones at the Sunport. One had been installed and another was going to be installed after some construction was done. Then the one installed was to be moved and they decided to have it wall-mounted instead of mounted on a counter, but one of the pieces needed to get power to the iPads was on back order. She is in constant communication with

the contact person at the airport and as soon as they get that part they will be installed. Ms. Dignan will make sure to take photos and get the word out to the community that there will be two video phones at the Sunport: one near baggage claim and the other past the TSA checkpoint.

New Mexico Mentoring is moving along well with the Fall 2019 session wrapping up and applications for the Spring 2020 session are due on Monday. A good number of people requested applications.

As for Human Resources, Ms. Dignan was thrilled to let the board know that CDHH did hire an individual that was present, but she would wait and let Deborah Romero introduce him. Ms. Gutiérrez mentioned that the Commission had interviewed for the advocate position. There was a fantastic candidate selected, but unfortunately the Commission was unable to offer a salary that was satisfactory to the candidate. The position is reposted and as Ms. Gutiérrez said, they will interview in January. The other positions open will wait until the revenue situation resolved. Ms. Dignan said that she would also let Deborah Romero expand on this, but an individual will be retiring at the end of this year. That will create another vacant position.

Ms. Dignan said that Communication Development Specialist, Andrea Ginn, has been busy handling a lot of interpreting requests and working with the apprentices. She is working with Albuquerque Little Theatre to create some interpreted performances for select shows. The Commission has five apprentice interpreters who Ms. Ginn works with; three are in the audience. She is participating in the Interpreting Institute for Reflection-in-Action and Supervision (IIRAS) program which is a distance based mentoring training program. She can apply the information as she is working with the apprentice interpreters. They get to benefit from what Ms. Ginn is learning and help them get closer to national certification. The success of the apprentice program is evident today as the four interpreters, along with Ms. Ginn, who are interpreting the board meeting are all individuals who have completed the apprentice program.

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Commissioner Vigil had a question regarding the goals for Community Advocacy and Community Engagement for strategic planning for the coming fiscal year. Executive Director Gomme explained that they meet with local organizations and their national counterparts in the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA), National Association of the Deaf (NAD) and Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) and have a lot of stakeholder discussions. So CDHH reaches out to the community to see what issues there are, such as the captioning issue. The police issue is a pattern that has been seen around the country and in New Mexico so CDHH took on that issue immediately. Also, CDHH is a leader nationally in relay equipment distribution. He said CDHH's involvement at a national level informs our movement at a state level and vice versa. In many areas we are ahead of the game, such as in interpreter licensure, early childhood education, hearing aid bill regarding education of telecoils and assistive listening devices, and the captioning ordinance. Executive Director Gomme stated that he is involved in local events to figure out what the next steps would be for our state. He very much wanted to have more of a discussion with Commissioner Vigil regarding the Deaf and hard of hearing native communities as well as other local communities.

### **iii. Administrative Services**

Deborah Romero, Director of Administrative Services and CFO, introduced Hector Lopez who started with CDHH last week as Financial Operations Specialist. He comes from the Gaming Control Board and has experience in everything the Commission needs him to do. She announced that Louise Chavez-Rasgado was retiring from the Commission at the end of the year. She has been with CDHH for close to four years and the department couldn't have completed what was done without her. Ms. Romero said all the operations done by her department, which is a small group, and were fully staffed for a short amount of time. Ms. Romero wanted to thank Ms. Chavez-Rasgado for everything she has done for the Commission and wish her luck on her new adventures.

Ms. Romero told the board that she was carefully watching the spending, making sure the operation costs are covered and not overspending the decreasing TRS revenue. Executive Director Gomme already mentioned they are working with TRD, LFC and DFA, so all are aware of this situation. The Commission did ask for supplemental funds for FY21 because CDHH will not have enough to cover the budget. This will be discussed again in January during the Commission's hearing with the Legislature, but they won't know what is approved until around April.

As was stated in the auditor's report, CDHH had a great audit for FY19 with no findings. No issues were found with the internal controls and the law is being followed in all processes.

**V. ACTION ITEMS**

**a. Adoption of Revised OMA Resolution**

Chair Welborn announced that there were a few action items on the agenda, starting off with the adoption of the OMA. Lisa Dignan clarified that it is required of all boards and commissions to annually adopt the Open Meetings Act (OMA) Resolution. This year there are no changes apart from the dates. The OMA resolution spells out clearly what the responsibilities are to send out public notices about any meeting that the Board may have so that they are properly noticed and in compliance.

Chair Welborn called for a vote to accept the OMA Resolution.

**20.3**

Commissioner Vigil made a motion to adopt the OMA Resolution.  
Commissioner Robertson seconded.  
The motion passed unanimously.

**Election of Officers**

**20.4**

Commissioner Robertson nominated Commissioner Dunwell as Chair.  
Commissioner Dunwell accepted.  
Chair Wellborn seconded.  
Commissioner Dunwell is named Chair by acclamation.

**20.5**

Commissioner Dunwell nominated Commissioner Vigil as Vice-Chair.  
Commissioner Vigil accepted.  
Commissioner Vigil is named Vice-Chair by acclamation.

**20.6**

Chair Welborn nominated Rosemary Gallegos as Secretary.  
NMSD Designee Joanne Corwin accepted on Dr. Gallegos' behalf.  
Commissioner Gallegos is named Secretary by acclamation.

**b. Set Dates for 2020 Board Meetings**

Dates for the 2020 board meetings were set as follows:

- Thursday, March 19, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.
- Thursday, June 11, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.
- Thursday, September 10, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.
- Thursday, December 10, 2020 at 3:00 p.m.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Before adjourning, Commissioner Robertson thanked Chair Welborn for his service as Chair for the last few years

**20.7**

Commissioner Robertson made a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Dunwell seconded.

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori G. Neubauer

Lori G. Neubauer  
Administrative Operations Specialist