



**STATE OF NEW MEXICO
COMMISSION FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
Thursday, December 3, 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 Austin Welborn called the meeting to order at 3:02 p.m.

Present: Austin Welborn, Chair Rosemary Gallegos
 John Fullinwider Johnny Robertson

Absent: Luis Quiñonez

Fifteen staff members from NMCDHH were present: Executive Director Nathan Gomme, Sam Martinez, Jason Siergey, Corina Gutierrez, Lisa Dignan, Deborah Romero, Cheryl Padilla, Lori Neubauer, Luke Adams, Roger Robb, Rich Bailey, Joyce Croker, Susana Santillan, Sandra Williams and Staff Interpreter Andrea Ginn. Four other interpreters were present: Audrey Blanco, Mary Collard, Rebecca DeSantis and Lesley Siegel. Eight members of the community were in the audience.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

16.3

Commissioner Johnny Robertson made a motion to approve the agenda.
Commissioner Rosemary Gallegos seconded.
Motion Passed unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF September 15, 2015 MINUTES

Chair Welborn asked if there were any changes to the minutes from the September meeting.

16.4

Commissioner Rosemary Gallegos made a motion to approve the minutes as presented.
Commissioner Johnny Robertson seconded.
Motion passed unanimously.

IV. REPORTS

a. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Nathan Gomme began by clarifying that Mark Apodaca resigned from the board and Commissioner Austin Welborn is now chair, and it would be a learning experience for him since this is his first meeting.

Executive Director Gomme said he would touch upon his summary that was in the FY16 First Quarter Board Report, but also wanted to talk about some current events within the agency. He said that when he wrote his summary of talking points, he mentioned that he was close to fully staffing the Community Advocacy Department. The staff has done a lot of work to make sure that the Commission is hiring the best and most appropriate people to serve our community. Corina Gutierrez will be the one to introduce the new staff. Executive Director Gomme announced that the staff from the Las Cruces office came up for the board meeting, and also a staff meeting two days earlier. The point of the staff meeting was to work on team building and developing better relationships and collaboration within the agency.

Executive Director Gomme was also happy to report that a new NMCDHH website was close to completion. He said the staff involved in that project have been working very hard. Lisa Dignan, Richard Bailey and Executive Director Gomme have been working together on this website which will be easier for people to access and easier for people to navigate.

NMCDHH has some upcoming presentations by Dr. Juliette Sterkens. Dr. Sterkens is working with HLAA and the Commission, and the reason for the presentations is to have audiologists and hearing aid dispensers learn about t-coil and loop technology. NMCDHH and HLAA are working out the logistics to have meetings in Santa Fe, Albuquerque, and Las Cruces. Executive Director Gomme introduced Steve Frazier and John Hooper in the audience who were working alongside him to help get the meetings set up.

Also HLAA and NMCDHH are working together on a draft of a legislative bill. The goal is to require hearing aid dispensers and audiologists to provide ample explanation to customers regarding the functions of the t-coils and how it works with technology such as loop systems. Executive Director Gomme is working in partnership with Mr. Frazier and HLAA Santa Fe, Las Cruces and Albuquerque Chapters to follow the legislation that's happening in Utah. Other stakeholders, audiologists, and hearing aid dispensers are invited to give their feedback on the draft of this bill. Dr. Sterkens' visit will coincide nicely with this bill which hopefully will pass this year. Executive Director Gomme said that the Commission will help hearing aid dispensers and audiologists by providing the information on t-coils and loops.

Executive Director Gomme reported that the legislative session is approaching and the Commission's plan, which is detailed in the board report, has been given to them. The Commission won't have a response from the Legislature until March.

b. Department Reports

i. Community Advocacy

The Director of Community Advocacy, Corina Gutiérrez, began by introducing the newest staff member, Susana Santillan. Ms. Santillan is a Community Advocacy Specialist in the Las Cruces office. Ms. Gutiérrez said that Ms. Santillan had over 20 years' experience working at a non-profit similar to the Commission. She has worked with deaf, hard-of-hearing and deaf-blind consumers in El Paso, and has a lot to give to our community here in New Mexico. She is not only familiar with the community in El Paso, but Las Cruces as well.

Ms. Gutiérrez said that the Commission had already spread the word on their position on VRI. She said she wanted to encourage the deaf community to share their stories about VRI, specifically in health care settings. She would like them to share both negative and positive experiences with VRI. So far she had received just a few stories and would like to receive more. Ms. Gutiérrez felt that some Deaf individuals have a hard time writing in English, so her department, along with Executive Director Gomme and Lisa Dignan, Director of Community Engagement, felt that the community should have the option to share their stories in ASL. The interpreters here at NMCDHH can interpret into English and those clients can sign and approve the written translation so that we can share their stories with the health care providers. Roger Robb and Ms. Gutiérrez have done systemic advocacy and talked to health care providers who want to hear these stories from the clients. VRI is not always successful for deaf patients and especially deaf-blind patients, who need to have an on-site interpreter.

Chair Welborn asked which health care providers they had contacted so far. Ms. Gutiérrez said they have met with University of New Mexico Hospital (UNMH), Albuquerque Health Partners and had also worked with Presbyterian. They still have Lovelace left to meet with. She added that they would like to continue building a relationship with the health care providers and then, when issues arise, we are able to inform them. She emphasized that if any of the Board or the Community come across any deaf, hard-of-hearing, or deaf-blind consumers that have had frustrations using VRI, to come forward, as it would really help the community as a whole.

Commissioner Johnny Robertson said he had heard of issues at Eye Associates. Executive Director Gomme added that when we talk to health care providers, they generally say they are having no problems with providing appropriate services. If NMCDHH gets more personal stories with the times, dates, and specific locations, we can figure out when we need to address specific problems. The Commission needs more than broad generalizations or comments that people don't like VRI as a whole.

Ms. Gutiérrez added that the Las Cruces and Albuquerque Community Advocates were doing individual advocacy as well. They are working with ADA Coordinators, Police, and the New Mexico Technology Assistance Program (NMTAP). She said that her department wants to work with health care providers and the Social Security offices, because these are both very important for NMCDHH's constituents.

Ms. Gutiérrez showed the commissioners an example of a post card that Roger Robb and Luke Adams from her department were developing. The post card summarizes NMCDHH's work with deaf consumers and is intended to provide people with information on the agency. The Commission staff can have these at booths and distribute them when they give presentations. She then asked Sam Martinez, Outreach and Telecommunications Coordinator, to talk about the new equipment and how we will advertise them.

Sam Martinez explained that the NMCDHH Facebook page would be used to have an "Item of the Month." For example, in November the "Loud and Low Smoke Detector," a lower frequency fire alarm, was featured on the Facebook page. Contact name and numbers were listed so consumers could call for more information. Mr. Martinez said that this month two neck loops that work with the t-coil will be featured, which will coincide nicely with the January HLAA meetings. Ms. Gutiérrez added that this was a wonderful idea that will help them promote the equipment so the consumers will be aware of what is available for them.

Chair Welborn asked if the equipment will be on the website as well. Executive Director Gomme said that currently they are working on a new website that will be completed at the end of December. Mr. Welborn asked what the new URL will be, and Mr. Gomme responded that the URL will be the same.

Commissioner Gallegos asked what strategies we are using to reach out to the rural areas of New Mexico, and Ms. Gutiérrez responded that the staff in the Albuquerque office work with clients in northern New Mexico, from Socorro on up. Everything south of Socorro is covered by the Las Cruces office. She added that the Albuquerque and Las Cruces offices collaborate and decide if a rural area near the cut off line is north or south.

Executive Director Gomme added that they are developing a new system to reach more rural areas. He said that currently Tom Sena is the Outreach Coordinator for Relay New Mexico, and there will be a similar position working through Teltex to reach more of New Mexico with information on our TED program. That person can explain the iPad and other equipment and how it works, and be well versed on the technology within our program. This means that soon we will have an additional person to travel all over the state.

ii. Community Engagement

Lisa Dignan, Director of Community Engagement, began with her role in Human Resources. As Executive Director Gomme alluded to earlier in the meeting, that as of January 4, 2016, NMCDHH will be fully staffed for the first time in many years. She was happy to say that they had found the ideal candidate for the Financial Services Specialist position, as that individual has over 20 years of experience working in New Mexico state government and will be ready to work at whatever Deborah Romero needs done in her department.

Since the last board meeting, NMCDHH was able to successfully hire a staff interpreter. Ms. Dignan said that Andrea Ginn was already working for the Commission as a contractor. Interviews were conducted and she was selected.

In other Human Resources news, Ms. Dignan said they are still working on reclassifying positions as needed. She said that very soon the Commission will actually have everyone in a classification that makes sense for their position with pay increases for the additional responsibilities that staff members have taken on.

Moving on to the Community Engagement department, Ms. Dignan announced that New Mexico Mentoring is wrapping up the fall 2015 session. Applications are now coming in for the spring 2016 session. The mentee applications have been coming in slowly, and possibly will get a few more before the application is due. A couple of people were revising the ASL to English curriculum which is used frequently, and that will be ready for use in the next session.

Ms. Dignan talked about a few improvements in the building that the Albuquerque office is housed in. Major improvements were underway including a \$300,000 project to improve the efficiency of the HVAC system. Some accessibility issues are fixed or will soon be fixed. The lip at one of the doors that was a tripping hazard has been repaired. Two additional van accessible parking spaces have been added in the parking lot, which brings them into compliance on that issue. Soon they will be installing visual alarms in the elevator lobbies, like the ones in the Commission's suite.

The apprentice program within Ms. Dignan's department is going well. Two of the three apprentices were in the audience at the board meeting. A mini-workshop where the deaf staff from Ms. Gutiérrez's department are meeting with the apprentices for an afternoon and giving them information in areas they are experts in. Ms. Dignan reported that the apprentices love the involvement with the deaf staff.

In the Albuquerque office, the library that Lori Neubauer has been working on has seen an increase in usage. Because there hasn't been sufficient staff in the Las Cruces office until recently, that library has been somewhat neglected. Now a contractor in the Las Cruces office

will be entering all of that collection in the data base, and that will help the Commission in serving clients statewide in that area.

Ms. Dignan said the Deaf-Blind/Deaf-Plus services contract will expire at the end of the fiscal year. Richard Bailey is working on developing that RFP and his goal is to have that submitted to State Purchasing next week. Mr. Bailey has been doing a lot of transition trainings, and was not at the board meeting since he was returning from a training in Las Cruces.

Mr. Bailey will be attending the Pepnet 2 summit in Atlanta in February, and Pepnet is paying for him to attend. Ms. Dignan has been asked to present at the Colorado RID conference in April and they will be paying her expenses for that. Andrea Ginn will be attending an ADARA conference in Colorado Springs in March. Ms. Dignan was excited that each person in her department was able to do some professional development in the coming quarter.

iii. Administrative Services

Deborah Romero, Director of Administrative Services and CFO/CPO for NMCDHH, began her report by saying that the Commission was right on track with spending 23% of the FY16 budget in the first quarter. As of November, 35% of the budget has been spent. The budget for FY17 was submitted with a request for a flat budget, but it also included to cut the \$466,000 to DVR. It was confirmed that DVR submitted their request for FY17 to have that transfer taken out. Ms. Romero said that no one will know if those are approved until March.

Ms. Romero reported that everything is going well in the Administrative Services department and deadlines are being met. The FY15 audit started in the first quarter, and was completed in October. It was submitted to the state auditor and Ms. Romero is waiting to hear if it has been approved. The operating transfer for FY16 to DVR for the \$466,000 was posted and also the \$25,000 for RLD back in September and are completed for FY16.

Ms. Romero announced that Joyce Croker, Business Operations Specialist, would be retiring in March. Ms. Croker has been with state government for 25 years and would be missed by her and the NMCDHH staff.

Commissioner Robertson asked John Fullinwider about the cut to DVR of the \$466,000. Commissioner Fullinwider said that he spoke with the interim director, Paul Aguilar, and in the proposed budget they requested an increase in general funds from the legislature. Like NMCDHH, DVR will have to wait until March to see if that is approved.

V. ACTION ITEMS & VI. NEW BUSINESS

Chair Welborn stated if there were no action items or new business at this time, they would go into Executive Session.

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

16.5

Chair Austin Welborn called for a Roll Call Vote to go into Executive Session

Commissioner Rosemary Gallegos: Yes

Commissioner John Fullinwider: Yes

Commissioner Johnny Robertson: Yes

Commissioner Austin Welborn: Yes

Chair Welborn asked that Lisa Dignan and Deborah Romero join them in Executive Session. All other attendees were excused.

16.6

Chair Welborn asked for a Roll Call Vote to end Executive Session.

Commissioner Rosemary Gallegos: Yes

Commissioner John Fullinwider: Yes

Commissioner Johnny Robertson: Yes

Commissioner Austin Welborn: Yes

The Board Meeting reconvened at 4:55 p.m. Chair Welborn stated that no action was taken in Executive Session; there was only discussion on the compensation package for the Executive Director.

16.7

Commissioner Rosemary Gallegos made a motion that in order to bring the Executive Director of the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing into a reasonable placement on the state pay band and to bring him into a competitive compensation level with other executive directors of commissions, she would like to propose to the governor a 35% increase to Mr. Nathan Gomme's pay. Additionally she proposed that this pay be retroactive to July 1, 2015.

Commissioner Johnny Robertson seconded.

There were three affirmative votes from Commissioners Welborn, Gallegos and Robertson.

Commissioner Fullinwider abstained.

Motion Passed.

VIII. Adjournment

Chair Welborn closed the meeting at 4:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lori G. Neubauer

Administrative Operations Specialist



Austin Welborn, Board Chair