



**STATE OF NEW MEXICO
COMMISSION FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING
Wednesday, June 17, 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
John Fullinwider

Ronald Stern
Johnny Robertson

Chair Apodaca said that Commissioner Austin Welborn would be in attendance, but was arriving late. Luis Quiñonez would not be attending the board meeting, but they had met quorum and would proceed. John Fullinwider would be representing DVR at this meeting.

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, Mary Collard, and Trena Franck. Eight members of the community were in the audience.

This was Commissioner Ron Stern's last meeting after serving on the board for 15 years as Superintendent of the New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD), and would be retiring as of June 30th. Dr. Stern mentioned that in the 15 years he has served on the board, the NMCDHH has never been in a better place than it is currently. He wanted to say congratulations to Executive Director Nathan Gomme and staff; he was impressed with how the Commission has evolved over time and it was a good time for him to leave since NMCDHH is doing well and in great shape.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Apodaca asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

15.10

Commissioner Stern made a motion to approve the agenda.

Commissioner Johnny Robertson seconded.

Motion passed unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF MARCH 26, 2015 MINUTES

Chair Apodaca asked for a correction of a typo in the minutes on page 7 in the third paragraph. The word "budget" was missing the "t".

15.11

Commissioner Robertson made a motion to approve the minutes with correction.

Commissioner Stern seconded.

Motion passed unanimously.

IV. REPORTS

a. Executive Director's Report

Executive Director Gomme stated that in his Executive Summary of the Board Report he had mentioned restructuring and had included a chart of that restructure. The reason for moving forward with the restructure was that NMCDHH did get approval for a full-time employee; an interpreter position which did have to go through the classification process, which is not yet fully completed. Director Gomme reminded the Board that prior to Executive Director B. J. Wood, the agency had several departments. The structure did not make sense: too many supervisors and not enough employees. Ms. Wood's thought process was on the right track to consolidate and focus more on the community. Director Gomme wanted to continue that focus on the community and what NMCDHH has now is a director of Community Engagement who is Lisa Dignan. Ms. Dignan, other than her work with the interpreting community, is also the one posting information on our Facebook page, providing information on the community at large. It made more sense to align that with one of Lisa's duties.

The work within the community, our advocacy and the telecommunications equipment distribution (TED) program are together under Community Advocacy, which is Corina Gutierrez's department.

For example, General Mills did hire a deaf person and they were not aware of the technology that they could take advantage of to work with deaf or hard of hearing people. Sam Martinez, Outreach and Telecommunications Coordinator, worked with them to influence a change in their system, and educate them that interpreters are only one solution. So the Telecommunications department fits well under Ms. Gutierrez's department. Also, Director Gomme did not want to see a separation among deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind, because NMCDHH serves the community as a whole, and that's why the name is changed to Community Advocacy. This is working well. In the past, if Ms. Gutierrez or Cheryl Padilla went to a hospital and explained that they needed to provide access, and then put in a request for Roger to provide the educational piece. Now they can just go together and provide training and advocacy at the same time.

Executive Director Gomme stated that restructuring has been a challenge, but he can already see it is working better. RFP processes are working more smoothly now. Richard Bailey is NMCDHH's

Procurement Manager and will be facilitating our RFPs from now on. Mr. Bailey did the first RFP beautifully and, although it is not quite complete, it was a very smooth process.

Executive Director Gomme explained that the Las Cruces office was now under Ms. Gutierrez and she plans to spend more time there to build a better relationship between the Albuquerque Office and the satellite office in Las Cruces. Already there have been several issues resolved. NMCDHH is also in the process of moving a full-time position to Las Cruces.

There currently is a posting for a Community Advocacy Specialist, formerly called a Service Coordinator. Interviews for that position have already been taking place and he was hoping to have the Community Advocacy department fully staffed by July.

Commissioner Robertson asked if the person in the Las Cruces office will be able to work in places like Southeastern New Mexico. Executive Director Gomme responded that the staff of the Las Cruces office are very much committed to serving all of Southern New Mexico. Mr. Robertson asked about the numbers in those regions and Mr. Gomme explained that we did have the numbers documented in the Las Cruces report. The numbers weren't high enough because there was only one staff person for a while, but currently John Johnson is there in a temporary position and NMCDHH will be able to expand services again. The plan is to transition that temporary position into a permanent position so NMCDHH can have more consistent services to meet the needs of Southern New Mexico.

There was also a question regarding El Paso residents who show up at the Las Cruces office. Corina Gutierrez explained that they could provide information, but they cannot serve them as clients because they are Texas residents.

Executive Director Gomme announced that we have been doing some vlogs and will be doing more. It is a good opportunity for each of the staff to take a turn in introducing themselves to the public, starting with the Community Advocacy department. Roger Robb has been working on that project and is reviewing and editing the vlogs and they will provide more explanation of the NMCDHH departments to the community.

At 3:19 p.m. Commissioner Austin Welborn arrived and apologized for his tardiness.

Chair Apodaca asked to hear about Deborah Romero's department. Executive Director Gomme explained that Deborah Romero was now CFO and the Director of Administrative Services. She supervises Lori Neubauer and Joyce Croker. There is a third position that has yet to be filled, however Mr. Gomme explained he wanted to focus on direct services first. Eventually another person would be added to Ms. Romero's department.

With all the changes to NMCDHH, Executive Director Gomme had Lisa Dignan working on an Employee Handbook for policies and procedures. The handbook sets up the rules for the agency, but it will be an evolving document. It will have to change to meet state policies as they change. It outlines how to use state cars, disciplinary procedures, etc. Chair Apodaca asked if it is necessary to provide a copy to the State Personnel Office (SPO). Ms. Dignan replied that they do require a copy and that had been done. Executive Director Gomme added that the handbook is aligned with SPO policies and procedures, but due to the unique nature of NMCDHH, it was best to reflect rules within our own handbook. Formerly the Commission did not follow rules and procedures well, however now there are clear boundaries.

As mentioned before, Richard Bailey is our Procurement Manager. The Commission needed an unbiased person to work on RFP processes, so that issue has been resolved. Mr. Gomme added that this will improve our work in the community and meet the needs of the constituents much better.

Budget issues are still a concern with the Commission and Executive Director Gomme will meet with DVR and Tax and Revenue on those issues. DVR is open to discussing changes in the budget transfers, and they would like to have a meeting and the Legislative Finance Committee is open to that as well. Commissioner Robertson asked with budgeting issues, how are we meeting the needs of the Community now? Executive Director Gomme replied that it was our wonderful CFO, Deborah Romero, who has asked for cuts in contracts and transfers to agencies. The Commission staff can do presentations through teleconferencing using equipment like the television in the conference room, and can interact with people in a way that is more conducive to the staff's schedule. Having a staff interpreter will also be good instead of relying on contractors.

There was some discussion as to whether NMCDHH had a contract with NMSD for transition services. It was made clear that, other than a lease for office space for Joyce Croker, there were no financial ties to NMSD. Chair Apodaca, who is the Financial Director for NMSD confirmed there was no transfer of funds from NMCDHH to NMSD for transition serves or otherwise.

Commissioner Stern asked if there was a strategic plan in place for NMCDHH. Mr. Gomme said there was no plan in place currently, since the focus has been on fixing the areas of need, especially financial stability. He also mentioned that one of the good things about the move to the current building; we don't have to rent a space for board meetings. However the meetings with Tax & Revenue and DVR must take place before developing a strategic plan.

Chair Apodaca questioned how expenses are being covered, and CFO Deborah Romero explained that we get an average of \$2.5 million from the TRS and \$299,000 from the general fund. NMCDHH also had savings on contracts and vacancy savings. Ms. Romero added that since it is never known exactly what NMCDHH will get monthly from TRS, strong internal controls and watching the budget very closely are important to keep the agency running.

Executive Director Gomme clarified that the TRS funds come from a surcharge on traditional land lines and cell phone providers, also. However, there is an issue collecting anything from pay-by-the-minute phones, and IP address (VoIP) phones don't collect revenue. With new technology, the rules don't apply. An audit might help determine if all the TRS funds are being collected.

Commissioner Stern recommended a retreat for the commissioners to share information with the new commissioners once there is a full board again. Chair Apodaca and Executive Director Gomme were in agreement with that idea.

b. Department Reports

i. Community Advocacy

Corina Gutierrez, Director of Community Advocacy, began by talking about Roger Robb's work with the Social Security Offices. He has been to Farmington, Hobbs, Las Cruces and Rio Rancho and has a few left to do, however his presentations have been very successful. The Albuquerque Social Security Office is using VRI, and when other agencies learn of this option, they are very excited since it is difficult in rural areas to find an on-site interpreter.

Chair Apodaca asked what other groups Mr. Robb would be working with. Ms. Gutierrez responded that they had talked about doing presentations for Human Services, ISD, and hospitals. Chair Apodaca wondered if they would be doing trainings with Work Force Solutions. Executive Director Gomme explained that Work Force Solutions is part of the transition group that Richard Bailey from our office is involved in. Mr. Bailey has worked with them and is in talks about developing training on Deaf and Hard of Hearing people.

Ms. Gutierrez said that Mr. Robb is presenting trainings on deaf sensitivity, communication access, providing interpreters and other deaf-related topics. She also informed the board that Rich Bailey is now in Ms. Dignan's department and when the vacant position is filled for a Community Advocacy Specialist, they will be able to provide more services to more clients. Executive Director Gomme added that NMCDHH wants to work more with the Hard-of-Hearing community and Sam Martinez has been handling a good number of clients who have issues that are more related to Hard of Hearing access.

ii. Community Engagement

Lisa Dignan, Director of Community Engagement, said that Sam Martinez quietly reminded her that the Board Reports the Commissioners were looking at were from the third quarter of the year and the Commission's old titles and departments were on that. She added that reporting on the quarter that ended nearly three months ago was like giving you old news; much has happened since those reports were written.

Ms. Dignan reported that the New Mexico Mentoring Program continues to run well. There was a small group in the session that was recently completed, and it looks like a larger session will get started in August. Exciting things happened with Interpreter Professional Development including having Trudy Suggs in Albuquerque as part of a Street Leverage event which was well attended. It was great to see a number of Interpreters and members of the Deaf community turn out for that event. Ms. Gutierrez is doing great work with the Language Access Advisory Committee and Ms. Dignan now serves in a different capacity as the chair of one of the subcommittees.

Ms. Dignan is also serving as Vice-Chair of the Council for Purchasing from Persons with Disabilities; the council that runs the State Use Act, which encourages state agencies to contract with individuals with disabilities when they are seeking services. Chair Apodaca asked if this was the program headed by Larry Maxwell. Ms. Dignan replied that, yes, Mr. Maxwell is Chair, she is Vice-Chair and Mr. Greg Trapp from the Commission for the Blind is secretary of that body.

Ms. Dignan also announced that she is on the Rules Committee for the Signed Language Interpreting Practices Board and they are revising the rules. Dr. Barbara Shaffer is one of her co-members on that committee, as well as Commissioner Robertson, and they are making great progress at making sure the rules are cleaned up and as effective as possible.

In Human Resources, Ms. Dignan reiterated that John Johnson is a temporary employee in the Las Cruces office, but they are in the process of moving a vacant position from the Albuquerque office down to Las Cruces, and once that position gets moved, the position will be posted. It will be a competitive process through the State system, because it is a full-time permanent position with the State.

Ms. Dignan added that they are working hard for the classification for signed language interpreters and that has taken a great deal of her time, but she was happy to say it is coming along well and that she

would be in Santa Fe Friday morning and the State Personnel Board will hopefully give their final approval on that classification. She clarified that this classification was not just for NMCDHH, but for any State agency that wishes to hire a full time staff signed language interpreter.

Ms. Dignan added that they were working hard to reclassify NMCDHH employees so they are classified properly and receiving competitive pay compensation. The SHARE system used for finance and human capital management is complicated, but she is continuing to learn.

Lastly, Ms. Dignan mentioned some exciting changes to the library, but would hold that for the next board meeting. Lori Neubauer is doing a great job running the library.

Commissioner Johnny Robertson said that many people in the Deaf Community have approached him about VRI versus on-site interpreting. Many hospitals use this type of technology and tell their Deaf patients they have to use it. He asked how they can file a grievance. Ms. Dignan responded that people with that concern would be referred to Community Advocacy, Corina Gutierrez's department. Also, as several of the commissioners are aware, NMRID, NMCDHH, and NMAD have been working together on developing a position paper that will be published by NMRID. The NMRID board is waiting for the full NMRID membership to vote on the paper before it is released. It would be helpful for anyone who hears a complaint, to send them to NMCDHH. Ms. Gutierrez clarified that the person who experienced that situation should be the one to contact her department, because privacy is an issue, but do encourage the individuals who have had a negative experience with VRI to contact the Commission. Executive Director Gomme added that if these individuals are not encouraged to approach us with the issue, we lose that data. Without having the details and data about the situation, we cannot approach this situation. The numbers of people that are affected are not counted as statistics if someone speaks on the behalf of others, and the details of their experiences. Dr. Stern added that people need to be self-advocates. Mr. Gomme and Ms. Gutierrez definitely want to provide trainings on self-advocacy and more vlogs to clarify misconceptions about what our agency does and what other agencies, like COPD, do.

iii. Administrative Services

Deborah Romero, Director of Administrative Services and CFO, said the report on page 15 was old information from the third quarter and earlier in the meeting there was already discussion on numbers closer to the end of the fiscal year which would be nine working days away. Ms. Romero said that we started FY15 with a fund balance of \$1.3 million, of which \$200,000 will be used in FY15. TRS revenue that NMCDHH has received so far is \$2.5 million and that is the transfer from Tax & Revenue which the Commission receives on a monthly basis. Ms. Romero reminded the Board that she can only project what the Commission will get in TRS funds, because the exact amount is not known until after it is received. An example she gave was that in the middle of July she will get a report giving her the true amounts that came in for June. Also the Commission has \$299,000 from the General Fund. The total for FY15 projection was about \$3 million, with the total obligations about \$2.8 million, and therefore there were sufficient funds to cover the fiscal year. Ms. Romero said that at this time she has an unused budget of \$912,000, and added that she hoped this cleared up any questions or confusion from the previous conversation on the budget.

Commissioner Stern asked about the revenue, because it had declined in January and then increased in February. Ms. Romero said she had asked the same question to the person she works with at Tax & Revenue. A really low amount came in January of \$110,000, but then in February, we saw an increase of \$312,000, so it is offset. The average is about \$200,000 a month.

iv. Telecommunications

Sam Martinez, Outreach and Telecommunications Coordinator, explained that with the changes mentioned about the organization, he still worked with the TED program, iPads and Relay Contracts. The numbers for iPads are slightly increased with the last quarter because of the outreach that was done in Northern New Mexico. NMCDHH Outreach was at the Roundhouse for Senior Day and Native American Day, as well as several wellness fairs throughout Albuquerque, Sandia Pueblo, and Sandoval County. This was good exposure for the TED Program and the iPad Program, and they hope to eventually cover the whole state.

Mr. Martinez said the Telecommunications Relay Service has had steady usage. It seems that CapTel phone calls are increasing and the traditional relay services are decreasing, but an average of 9,000 calls per month are coming in from Hamilton's reports. Executive Director Gomme added that captioned telephones are on the increase and the TTY is becoming more antiquated. People want to talk to their family using their own voice and want point-to-point communication with other people instead of having to go through a Communication Assistant because it is more personal. Technology needs are shifting.

Mr. Gomme went on to say that once TTY's were the new thing, but now we have Smart Phones, and people can text or place calls and iPhones have iPhone ready hearing aids that are already compatible. We need to stay ahead of the trends. The iPad Program is wonderful, but trends shift. The new fancy technology is the watches. Mr. Gomme stated he had been in talks with Apple about the watches, but he needs to see actual real-life application of the product. So he has been in talks with the company about what's new and what these technologies can look like, and Mr. Martinez and Ms. Gutierrez are talking about appropriate application of these new technologies as well as things that target the different levels of hearing loss. Someone with high-frequency hearing loss or low frequency hearing loss would want something that is addressed to their specific needs. The iPhone, for example, can connect with Starkey Hearing Aids and about 25 different hearing aid manufacturers. There are about 300 different apps for hearing loss, and over 100,000 different apps that can be used by the disability community. The app from Starkey allows people to modify their hearing aid in the middle of the room to match their environment. So what the Commission will need to address in the future is how to educate the community on the technology that is available.

c. Employee Handbook

Lisa Dignan was happy to announce that the employee handbook is finished and distributed. The Commission had a great staff meeting in which it took almost all day to go through it. During that meeting some issues were found with it so the first revision came out a week after it was released, and the second revision came out less than a month after that. This will be an evolving document that we will continue to work on, improve, and keep current. Ms. Dignan explained that is why the commissioners were given a previous version and then an updated version, because the changes happened that quickly.

Chair Apodaca suggested that the commissioners review this on their own time and if they come up with questions they can be asked at the next meeting.

Mr. Apodaca wanted to congratulate Mr. Gomme on a wonderful work done in his first fiscal year as director. He also congratulated the Commission staff for a wonderful job through all the changes. Mr. Apodaca also said that he was hoping to see more changes and see everything continuously improving for the community.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Before adjourning, Executive Director Gomme wanted to thank Dr. Stern for his service to the New Mexico community at large and for his service on the board.

Chairman Mark Apodaca announced meeting was adjourned at 4:30 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lori G. Neubauer

Administrative Operations Specialist



Austin Welborn, Board Chair