



**STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
 COMMISSION FOR DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING  
 Tuesday, September 15, 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.

<b>Present:</b>	Mark Apodaca, Chair John Fullinwider Rosemary Gallegos	Luis Quiñonez, Secretary Johnny Robertson
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**Absent:** Austin Welborn

Eleven staff members from NMCDHH were present: Executive Director Nathan Gomme, Sam Martinez, Jason Siergey, Corina Gutierrez, Deborah Romero, Cheryl Padilla, Lori Neubauer, Luke Adams, Roger Robb, Rich Bailey and Staff Interpreter Andrea Ginn. Three other interpreters were present: Audrey Blanco, Mary Collard, and Trena Franck. Seven members of the community were in the audience.

Chair Mark Apodaca introduced Rosemary Gallegos, Superintendent of the New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD), as the newest member of the board. He added that Commissioner Welborn had a conflict and would not be able to be here.

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Chair Apodaca explained that all changes to the agenda needed to be made 72 hours before the meeting began so the agenda will stand as is.

**III. APPROVAL OF June 17, 2015 MINUTES**

Chair Apodaca asked if there were any changes to the minutes of the June 17<sup>th</sup> Board Meeting.

**16.1**  
 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 announced that for his report and the department reports, he and his staff would touch on the last quarter that was in the FY15 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Board Report, and also current information, so that the Board would be up to date on what was happening at NMCDHH. He also mentioned that Lisa Dignan, Director of Community Engagement, was not present, and Richard Bailey, Community Engagement Specialist, would be reporting in her place when it was time for the department reports.

Executive Director Gomme mentioned that when he started at NMCDHH, there were a lot of vacancies. There were not enough services in southern New Mexico. There was a lot of pressure on Sandra Williams in the Las Cruces office. He stated that now the Commission is at a point where nearly all of the positions have been filled. So the restructuring within the agency saves money, and there is better use of employees' time and efforts.

Mr. Gomme announced that he has had discussions with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and Commissioner John Fullinwider regarding the suspension of the transfer to their agency. The CFO of DVR has also been informed that the Commission is considering cutting the transfer. A meeting with the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) and the Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) has been scheduled for the following week regarding the cessation of funds to DVR.

NMCDHH has a new contract for Telecommunications Equipment Distribution (TED), which offers new equipment. Executive Director Gomme invited the commissioners to take a look at our TED room after the meeting to see all the equipment the Commission can now offer our clients. Mr. Gomme added that with all the changes, it might appear that costs would go up, but that's not the case. The Commission has reduced contracts and increased services, mostly thanks to Richard Bailey administering the RFP process.

Mr. Gomme also talked about his experience attending the HLAA National Convention. There he was able to see a variety of different perspectives on issues that NMCDHH has discussed before. Mr. Gomme stated that he felt the Commission was very fortunate to be working in collaboration with Steve Frazier on several issues to support the hard of hearing community. One major issue brought up at that convention was that when people get their hearing aids, they are often not educated about the T-Coil setting. Many are unaware that they have T-Coils on their hearing aids, in spite of the fact that T-Coils have been around for a while now. He added that our conference room is "looped" and many places in the community have loop systems installed, but people who aren't aware of their T-Coils are not able to take advantage. NMCDHH needs to reach out to the community and let them know what things they can benefit from with their hearing aids.

Another important issue brought up at the HLAA National Convention was that many veterans come back from their tours of duty with some degree of hearing loss. Executive Director Gomme would like to see NMCDHH do more to reach out to veterans.

Commissioner Rosemary Gallegos asked for more information regarding the transfer of funds to DVR. Mr. Gomme explained that DVR gets \$466,000 from the Commission through an appropriations bill. The money comes from a Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) surcharge on land line and cell phone bills, but that is decreasing due to the popularity of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) telephones and prepaid cellphone plans, which do not have a TRS surcharge. Executive Director Gomme says that soon he will meet with the Department of

Finance and Administration (DFA) and the Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) to stop the transfer with DVR's support. Commissioner John Fullinwider commented that DVR Interim Director Paul Aguilar is aware of this situation, but couldn't say much more about it at this point.

Commissioner Johnny Robertson asked if the loss of this money hurts the Commission, and Executive Director Gomme replied that it would have a big impact long term; the funds are declining. Commissioner Robertson asked how many companies pay TRS surcharge, Mr. Gomme responded that at the last Board Meeting he had said that Tax & Revenue needed to do an audit on that. NMCDHH has asked DFA to check in on Tax & Revenue so that they will have an answer.

**b. Department Reports**

**i. Community Advocacy**

Corina Gutiérrez, the Director of Community Advocacy, explained to the Board that she was in charge of the 5 people in the Albuquerque office, but also the Las Cruces office. Our advocates are called Community Advocacy Specialists. Currently John Johnson is serving in a temporary position as a Community Advocacy Specialist. This position is now being posted as a permanent full-time position. Executive Director Nathan Gomme said they already have a list of applicants with four or five knowing ASL.

Commissioner Robertson asked what area the Las Cruces Community Advocates in Las Cruces cover. Ms. Gutiérrez replied that it would cover Socorro down from Arizona to Texas. Cheryl Padilla and Luke Adams cover northern New Mexico.

Ms. Gutiérrez took the opportunity to introduce Luke Adams to the board. She was excited to have him on her team because of his high energy, motivation, passion for the professions, and great ideas. One of the ideas Mr. Adams piloted was to contact news channels and have them interview staff during Deaf Awareness Week. He is also participating on a panel for disabilities in October where he will represent the Deaf community. Ms. Gutiérrez said she would really like to see an increase in the amount of clients, and exposure to the Commission and education as to what the Commission does well help.

Roger Robb, the Community Education Specialist in the Department of Community Advocacy, has been making vlogs with staff so the public knows more about NMCDHH. Currently Roger is working on a vlog that will inform the Deaf community about video phones in comparison to voice plans. Many Deaf people have contacted our department asking about this. The phone companies are calling voice plans "VP's" so many clients think they have to pay for their video phones. The vlog will clarify the two to the Deaf community.

Mr. Robb also does systemic advocacy and is currently working with Cheryl Padilla at the Sunport so that they have better access for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Deaf-Blind passengers. Mr. Robb is also training Social Security Offices to become more Deaf-friendly. Ms. Gutiérrez stated that this will be an ongoing training due to the turnover at Social Security.

Ms. Gutiérrez stated that her department is still working with the hospitals, which is also a continuing effort. Commissioner Robertson mentioned that a woman broke her leg and she needed an interpreter, it was very frustrating writing back and forth. He wondered why hospitals didn't have a full time interpreter. Executive Director Gomme responded that there is a cost issue regarding having an interpreter full time. The ADA says to make accommodations and it is important to have an interpreter there during critical times, but to just change a bedpan, it isn't reasonable. Mr. Gomme stated that this is why VRI is so popular at hospitals.

Ms. Gutiérrez added that Cheryl Padilla would be going to different regions and training hospitals on how to use the ADA kit. Ms. Padilla said that when Deaf people arrive at hospitals, the trained staff would be more prepared. She is also going to be training statewide for shelters, senior citizen centers, and law enforcement. Roger Robb is currently providing training for the state police. All the trainings would be ongoing.

Executive Director Gomme asked if any of the commissioners have seen the video logs on the NMCDHH website. He stated that if they looked at it recently there were vlogs about the departments and the people in those departments. The specialists each talk more in-depth about the services they provide and he encouraged the commissioners to take a look.

Commissioner Robertson said that one of his concerns was employment, because there was a high percentage of unemployed deaf people. Mr. Gomme replied that was in a contract NMCDHH awarded; the contract has a requirement to do a survey for the State of New Mexico to find out where the gaps are in services. The Commission will be working with DVR, COPD, and Workforce Solutions. There is also a task force and the Commission is working in collaboration with multiple agencies. Mr. Gomme added that this is a complicated issue and the survey would not be just a one-time thing; it would be ongoing.

## **ii. Community Engagement**

Richard Bailey, Community Engagement Specialist, began the report with a Human Resources update. NMCDHH had hired a full-time staff interpreter, Andrea Ginn, who recently returned from Alabama where she completed her Mental Health Interpreting Training, she has also developed a curriculum for apprentice interpreters. As mentioned before, NMCDHH will also soon hire a full-time Community Advocacy Specialist in the Las Cruces office.

As mentioned before, NMCDHH recently awarded the Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program contract to Teltex. Mr. Bailey said Sam Martinez will have more about that in his report.

NMCDHH staff recently completed First Aid and CPR training. Mr. Bailey went to a Deaf Advocacy Conference and was able to collaborate with some national organizations to discuss how to improve issues concerning Black Deaf not only in New Mexico, but nationwide. Lisa Dignan, Director of Community Engagement, recently attended the RID Conference. While attending the RID Conference, Ms. Dignan learned of the RID moratorium for performance testing starting January 1, 2016. Interpreters wanting to take their performance test must sign up by October 1, 2015 to schedule before December 31, 2015.

Commissioner Robertson expressed that he was very upset with RID and wondered if NAD could assist in some way. Chair Apodaca also mentioned that Texas has a BEI certification and if that could be adopted in New Mexico. Executive Director Gomme stated that NM Licensure paralleled RID's credentials and does not approve the BEI, and says he does not see a simple answer at this time.

## **iii. Administrative Services**

Deborah Romero, Director of Administrative Services, CPO/CFO, reviewed the budgets for FY15, FY16 & FY17. On page 15 of the report, the expenditures should be 2.8 million and there was an unspent budget of \$957,000. Part of the unspent budget was from vacancy savings and contract savings during FY15. Moving forward to FY16, the budget is 3.7 million and for FY17 our request is flat. Ms. Romero stated that if NMCDHH does not get approval to cut the transfer to DVR by FY18, the agency will no longer have a fund balance. The TRS funds continue to decline by about \$200,000 a year. Ms. Romero said that FY15 is closed out and ready for audit.

**iv. Outreach & Telecommunications**

Sam Martinez, Outreach & Telecommunications Coordinator, said, as Mr. Bailey had previously announced, that the RFP for Telecommunications was awarded to Teltex. With this contract, new equipment and new services will be available. An outreach contact will be established to help at events, give basic training for new clients for iPads, to help them learn to navigate and get help for technical difficulties, and to do surveys to help the Commission to improve their services across the state. Some of the new phones have Bluetooth technology so that people can use their cell phone service to use their amplified phone at home. He had the opportunity to have a booth at the State Fair and people approached him and said they no longer had land line phones. He explained the Bluetooth technology and many were interested and wanted to apply for those phones. There are also new iPad indicators so that while they are out of the room they flash so they know a call is coming in.

Mr. Martinez also talked about Outreach events where they could show the equipment to the public. One of the biggest ones was the Southwest Conference on Disability coming up the first week in October. There he will be able to show off the new equipment that the Commission can provide.

Mr. Martinez said he will soon be attending the National Association for State Relay Administration (NASRA) conference back to back with the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Programs Administration (TEDPA) Conference. He hoped to come back with ideas on how to improve relay numbers and information of new equipment coming next year. He would be on the iPad panel to discuss the downfalls and improvements as Colorado, Kentucky, Oregon, and New Mexico are in their third year of distributing iPads. He expects to be on a Social Media panel as well.

Nathan Gomme added that with the new Teltex contract, NMCDHH will have a large variety of equipment for people who have different frequencies of hearing loss. With the Bluetooth, there are some issues with calling 911, but we have different items that immediately call 911 or an emergency number if needed. The brochure for the TED program has improved as well as the application to apply for the equipment.

At the upcoming Southwest Conference on Disability, Mr. Gomme informed the Commissioners that the keynote speaker would be Haben Girma, a Deaf-Blind attorney for disability rights awareness. She recently met President Obama at the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the ADA celebration. The Commission will work with her at the conference to educate lawyers within New Mexico and address disability issues specific to deaf, deaf-blind, and hard of hearing needs. Sam Martinez would be working with Teltex to support that. Teltex will also be presenting on the iAccessibility, website at that conference.

Executive Director Gomme also wanted to address the year end Outreach data. He explained that for much of FY15, Sandra Williams took on responsibility for all of the Las Cruces office, which limited her ability to provide outreach at that time. With John Johnson becoming a temporary employee, that has lightened the load on Sandy and on Sam, so they are able to do more outreach. Jason Siergey is also taking on more outreach events. He said NMCDHH staff would be utilized in the best way possible and items within the Teltex contract will also address that issue. Mr. Gomme stated that it was his firm belief that numbers would go up this fiscal year.

After the close of department reports, Rosemary Gallegos asked for more information about the \$466,000 transferred to DVR and if this was for Deaf only. Executive Director Gomme said it came about as an MOU focusing on services for the Deaf. John Fullinwider also clarified that there hadn't always been a transfer of money from the Commission to DVR, but it has been that way for a long time. Historically the money was used for Deaf and Hard of Hearing clientele.

## **V. ACTION ITEMS**

### **a. Discussion and Voting on Meetings for Strategic Planning**

Executive Director Nathan Gomme asked for discussion and voting to have meetings regarding issues that had been addressed to the board in the past. He wanted to request General Funds to support the following: Mental Health Services and Veterans Services. As for Mental Health services, there was a study done in 2000 that is outdated. Mr. Gomme wanted to see another study done and take action on what will be discovered in that study. For Veterans, he wanted the Commission to help with their reintegration when they come home, since many veterans return from their tours of duty with some degree of hearing loss. Mr. Gomme explained that he can't ask to establish these meetings without the Board's approval. If the Board chooses to support these initiatives, we will come together and create the five-year strategic plan.

### **16.2**

Johnny Robertson made a motion to approve that CDHH have meetings to create a 5 year strategic plan.

Luiz Quiñonez seconded.

Motion passed unanimously.

## **VI. NEW BUSINESS**

Chair Mark Apodaca asked if there was new business. No new business was brought up.

## **VII. ADJOURNMENT**

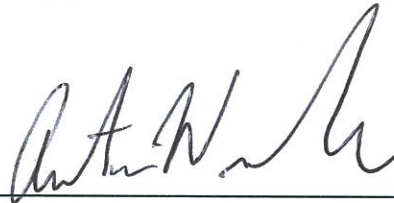
Chair Mark Apodaca called the meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,



Lori G. Neubauer

Administrative Operations Specialist



Austin Welborn, Board Chair