MEMBERS PRESENT: Ms. Amy Hatzel, Ms. Jeannie Taylor, Ms. Candee Spalding (proxy for Ms. Nancy Perry), Ms. Gerry Gordon-Brown, Ms. Holly O'Mary, Mr. Thomas Evans, Mr. George Tunstall IV, Ms. Michelle Niehaus, and Ms. Barbie Harris

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ms. Becky Cabe, Ms. Dodie Karr, Ms. Joy Kiser, and Ms. Edie Ryan

STAFF PRESENT: Ms. Virginia L. Moore, Ms. Rowena Holloway, Ms. Tashina Crowe, and Ms. Jayna Oakley

COMMUNICATION FACILITATORS: Ms. Audrey Ruiz-Lambert, Ms. Rita Zirnheld-Anderson, and Ms. Marva Johnson

Ms. Amy Hatzel, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. Ms. Hatzel noted that Ms. Nancy Perry sent a proxy to today’s meeting, Ms. Candee Spalding.

MS. HARRIS (Mr. Evans) MOVED TO ACCEPT MS. PERRY’S PROXY. THE MOTION PASSED.

Ms. Jeannie Taylor, Vice-Chair, called roll and welcomed everyone to the 155th Quarterly Commission Meeting. As there was a quorum, the meeting continued.

Board members reviewed the minutes from the 154th Commission meeting.

MS. HARRIS (Mr. Evans) MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE 154TH QUARTERLY COMMISSION MEETING AS WRITTEN. THE MOTION PASSED.

Board members reviewed the Executive Board minutes from September 1st. Ms. Harris asked for an update on the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) position and if that position cannot be filled what happens. Ms. Virginia Moore reported her plan to contact Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) again, and contact the Kentucky Association of the Deaf (KAD) for a recommendation of an individual who is also a member of AARP and would be willing to be nominated to the Governor for appointment.

MS. TAYLOR (Ms. Gordon-Brown) MOVED TO ACCEPT THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MINTUES AS WRITTEN. THE MOTION PASSED.

REPORTS

Executive Board:

Ms. Hatzel noted that the Executive board meeting minutes covered most of what has happened recently. However, she did want to thank the board for their hard work and support during her term as Chair and she hopes to continue to be a part of the board, but
will have to see what happens during spring election for Kentucky Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (KYRID) as her term as President expires in April 2018. If designated by the new President she would be happy to continue to serve as a Commissioner.

**Agency:**

Ms. Moore provided members with highlights from a budgetary exercise KCDHH recently experience within the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet. Plans were submitted for an estimated 15% and 20% cut for FY 17-18. If the agency does experience this deep of a cut the outreach completed throughout the state during FY 16-17 will have to take on in different approach for FY 17-18. Outreach is expensive because of the cost of hotel stays, interpreters, CART, and meeting locations. The outreaches held so far this year have not always produced the results desired as community members are few in attendance. Staff met with the Cabinet Budget Director and was advised that all current programs within an agency must be justified in budget predictions for FY 18-19 and 19-20, which will be addressed in the 2018 Legislative session. Ms. Moore also informed members that the retirement increase prediction will have a strong impact on the agency’s upcoming budget as well. KCDHH currently contributes 15% of each employee’s salary to their retirement, and the proposed increase to 66.68% will greatly impact the agency’s ability to fill vacancies.

The Administrative Specialist II position was filled by an internal promotion, leaving the Document Processing Specialist II position and the Interpreter I position vacant. KCDHH was asked to hold on advertising the vacancies but was assured that the positions could be filled at a later date if agency funds are available.

In drafting the budget proposal for the upcoming biennium, Ms. Moore reported that KCDHH took a bold move and proposed a possible expansion to the Access Center (AC). Currently state agencies requesting interpreter/CART services contact KCDHH and we coordinate the assignment and the interpreter used bills the state agency directly. Recently we have become aware of a variety of rates for services, especially if an independent interpreting agency is involved. These entities charge a much higher rate and often charge multiple portal to portal (travel) expenses. This leaves the contracting state agency at a loss for managing accessibility services. With the projected budget cuts proposed statewide we believe this is an inappropriate use of state funds. As a solution to streamline this process and reduce the red tape involved in providing interpreter/CART services, KCDHH proposed to take over the entire process for all state agencies. The purpose for this is tri-fold: more standardization of interpreting fees; prompt payment to interpreters; and assisting the Governor in his red tape reduction plan. As part of the justification in KCDHH’s budget proposal we requested the addition of a sixteenth (16) position, which would be self-sustained by the intake of fees from state agencies utilizing the AC to provide services. Billing would be simplified by inter-accounting procedures and KCDHH would implement Memorandum of Agreements (MOA) with participating interpreters and standard business practices would apply to all assignments. Ms. Hatzel inquired as to when this proposal might begin. Ms. Moore explained that it would depend on the approval of our expansion proposal in the upcoming biennium budget, which always takes effect with the new fiscal year, July 1, 2018. Our proposal was reviewed by Secretary Heiner and his budget staff and was assigned priority number nine, with the first five priorities focused on workforce development. This is good news as the Cabinet provided the Governor with forty-five
priorities for consideration. Mr. Evans asked if this proposal had been implemented in other states and Ms. Moore indicated it had, and gave a brief description of those programs and their success.

Ms. Moore continued her report by discussing recent Vlogs posted to the website; including an informational series developed in partnership with the Protection and Advocacy (P&A) Cabinet, a discussion with the Ombudsman for nursing homes, and an introduction of the new principal at the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD). As predicted there was some backlash from the deaf community on social media about KSD hiring a hearing administrator that does not use sign language fluently. The dialogue was beneficial in understanding the community’s concerns and emphasizing to the administration that they need to focus on the educational needs of the students at KSD. Various grassroots individuals have become more involved in activities at the school and the Principal has a full-time interpreter and is learning to sign quickly. Another Vlog posted, that went viral and was used by a variety of other state agencies, regarded the Solar Eclipse and the importance of wearing appropriate protective eyewear. Ms. Niehaus suggested that a Vlog be done on open enrollment for health insurance (Medicaid/Obamacare) due to the short enrollment period this year. Some vendors do cover charges for interpreters while others do not, and the deaf community needs to be aware of this before locking into a provider for 2018.

Ms. Moore reported the collaborative efforts the K-12 study group has had with a representative from the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) to update their interpreter handbook for those who work in the mainstream public schools.

KCDHH had a new office phone system installed in August that is accessible to all employees, not only hearing staff, due to the video capabilities of the system, and the handsets are cordless allowing for more mobility of hearing staff answering voice calls.

The Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) is short staffed with the current staff vacancies and outreach and training had to be suspended to allow for timely processing of incoming applications and requests. TAP has seen a rise in applications due to the Community Connect project and staff in the Information, Referral and Advocacy department continues to reach out to individuals needing equipment when they do outreach. The AC has experienced a 76% increase during FY 16 and an 87% increase in FY 17 and desperately needs additional staff to cover the workload.

Hands and Voices had their first fundraising event, held at the Louisville Zoo. Although the day was cold and rainy it was a success and KCDHH plans to continue partnering with their endeavors. Hands and Voices will participate in the first Walk4Hearing fundraiser in November and several staff will participate in the walk to raise awareness to hearing loss.

Ms. Moore continued by stating that the TAP report to the Legislative Research Commission (LRC) was submitted in July, documenting the number of pieces of equipment provided and to whom, financial information and our proposed changes for the upcoming year. The report is on the KCDHH website. Ms. Moore also advised that after attending the Telecommunications Equipment Distribution Program Administrators (TEDPA) conference this year TAP staff had recommendations for additions to the program. Once the Finance Cabinet approves the additions they will be made available to applicants. Additions include the newest TeliTalk Emote phone that includes an electrolarynx that allows the user more...
inflection, tone and pitch in their voice for easier communication. An amplified phone that slows down the speech of a caller that leaves a voice mail message should provide better service to some hard of hearing seniors. Mr. Evans questioned if there has ever been an issue with funds for the TAP Program. Ms. Moore advised that since implementation in 1997 the program has had waiting lists, and requested allotment increases during a spike in applications when wireless devices were added, but has never ran out of funds to provide equipment. Also, we have been advised that the Relay fund is flush and that the Public Service Commission is considering reducing the surcharge by one cent for the Relay program. TAP funds would not be affected by this reduction.

THE AGENCY REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Finance:

The Financial report was reviewed by members and Ms. Moore explained that the agency balanced as of June 30, and is now in the next fiscal year, the last of this biennial budget. As previously discussed the agency is anticipating a 17% cut in this year’s funding per the Governor’s request and therefore funds are being monitored closely. No supplies have been ordered and expenditures are being held to a minimum until the amount of the budget cut is confirmed. General Fund expenditures are primarily personnel driven. Restricted funds are allotted for the purchase of telecommunications equipment and administration of the TAP. Funds for FY 17-18 are still on track.

THE FINANCE REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

K-12 Education Study Group:

Ms. Hatzel reported that Ms. Dowd and Ms. Moore met with the Lexington Hearing and Speech Center to discuss the goals of the study group in reference to (LEAD K) and Common Ground. They seemed receptive and also gave feedback. A phone conference with Heuser Hearing Institute is scheduled soon, to request their involvement as part of the core group. Being inclusive of all the various communication modes, a meeting will also be held with representatives from KSD, to bring the pieces of the puzzle together. As a group we can help improve education for all children, identify stakeholders and partnerships needed to get the ball rolling on establishing Common Ground in Kentucky. Identifying the differences in this core group, as well as what we have in common, will allow us to function together to pursue legislation that would benefit all groups that serve deaf and hard of hearing children in the educational system.

THE K-12 EDUCATIONAL STUDY GROUP REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Services for Seniors Study Group

Ms. Niehaus stated that the group had its first event for FY17 in conjunction with KCDHH’s 35th Anniversary celebration, where thirty five people attended a workshop on long-term care insurance and estate planning. The study group added a member who is developing a Facebook page to reach out and provide information to deaf and hard of hearings seniors and caregivers. The group is also working to establish a 501(c)(3) and is gathering information regarding senior’s locations, their ability to assist others, and their own needs during their senior years. Surveys have been collected from some groups, and discussion about adding a request page to the KCDHH website to collect data is being considered.
Adult guardianship staff will be contacted to see if deaf and hard of hearing individuals they are involved with can be identified and shared with the group. Goals for FY18 include establishing videophone/telephone trees and possibly delivering meals or scheduling visits to isolated seniors. Aging in place is a huge concern for most seniors, but especially for our population which is concerned about accessible communication. The study group is working to establish partnerships with in-home care programs to provide some basic training for the caregivers and interpreters assisting deaf and hard of hearing seniors who are now aging in place. Additional workshops are being planned to keep the groups momentum going.

THE SERVICE FOR SENIORS STUDY GROUP REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Patient’s Bill of Rights Study Group

The representative that was to chair this group is no longer a Commissioner and the group has lost momentum. The board agreed that it would be best to end this study group until more interest and leadership can become a reality.

MS. GORDON-BROWN (Ms. Taylor) MOVED TO DISBAND THE PATIENT’S BILL OF RIGHTS STUDY GROUP.

OPEN FORUM

Mr. Tunstall brought forth his concerns about House Bill 620, asking what it would mean for deaf employees needing access to interpreting services in the workplace, as the proposed bill would revamp how services are provided and delay them quite a bit. Staff clarified that HB 620 is federal legislation that Congress is proposing as they attempt to reauthorize the American’s with Disabilities Act (ADA), and in that process it seems Congress is attempting to water down the ADA and its requirements. Ms. Moore emphasized that staff is keeping a close eye on this bill, and advised that consumers should contact the National Association of the Deaf (NAD) as they are on the forefront of monitoring legislation, especially the ADA. The group agreed that a Vlog might be beneficial to educate our community on how they can contact their congressmen, including instructions and a web link, when they want to express concern, support or discontent with federal legislation. Mr. Evans indicated that the American Speech-Language and Hearing Association has an excellent “take action” website that KCDHH might want to mirror, or link consumers to, for this purpose.

Ms. Hatzel spoke to the success of the recent Kentucky Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (KyRID) conference, but was most eager to announce a new approach for next year’s spring conference. Three Kentucky interpreters attended the national Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (RID) conference and came back with a skill set for eliciting new ideas and diversity in an organization and are planning a workshop for KyRID’s spring conference. We all need to be cognizant of how to improve the organizations we are involved with and fostering inclusion and progress.

Ms. Taylor announced that the Hearing Loss Association of America, Kentucky Chapters, is hosting their first Walk4Hearing in Louisville at Beckley Park on Saturday, November 4 and invited everyone to join a team and participate for this worthy cause that educates the public on the causes of hearing loss and resources available to someone with a hearing loss.
Ms. Niehaus received a notification that seemed to indicate that Humana and TruHearing would soon be covering hearing aids for anyone with a hearing loss if the coverage is selected during the Open Enrollment period (Nov.1-Dec.15). Additional details were unavailable, but she indicated that she would research it further and provide an update.

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Ms. Hatzel reiterated that the Governor appointments for the two current vacancies on the Board (KAD and AARP) are still pending because we cannot complete the required three nominations. Members were asked to refer names of anyone belonging to one of these organizations that would be interested in serving on the board to Ms. Moore.

**NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Hatzel briefly touched on the discussion had this morning regarding the Strategic Plan and indicated that the feedback received would be incorporated and goal five would be added and the board members would see the updated version again to approve. She also indicated that the board seemed to have enjoyed having the KCDHH staff join the working session and provide information about their roles as an employee and give feedback regarding the plan’s development for 2018-2020. Other board members also commented that today’s session was informational and productive and staff form an amazing team that continues to strive to improve the lives of deaf and hard of hearing individuals in Kentucky.

Ms. Hatzel led the board members through the process of electing officers for the upcoming two years. Members indicated their interest in the positions of Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary. After short presentations by the interested parties and voting by the board members, the new officers are Ms. Jeannie Taylor as Chair, Ms. Holly O’Mary as Vice Chair and Ms. Barbie Harris as Secretary. Those officers meet briefly and elected Ms. Amy Hatzel and Ms. Michelle Niehaus as the remaining members of the Executive Board. The gentlemen members indicated that they felt they needed a bit more experience as a Commissioner, as both were recently elected/appointed, before they serve as officers.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- The next Executive Board meeting will be held at KCDHH on Friday, December 8, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- The 156th Quarterly Commission meeting will be held Friday, January 26, 2018 from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m., location TBA.

**MS. GORDON-BROWN (Mr. Tunstall) MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. THE MOTION PASSED** and the meeting was adjourned at 4:34 p.m.