

Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
169th Quarterly Commission Meeting
April 23, 2021
Zoom Meeting

- MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ms. Jeannie Taylor, Ms. Barbie Harris, Ms. Gerry Gordon-Brown, Ms. Nancy Perry, Ms. Melissa Kelly, Mr. Eddie Runyon, Mr. Thomas Evans, Ms. Amy Hatzel, Ms. Edie Ryan, Ms. Michelle Niehaus, and Ms. Joy Kiser
- MEMBERS ABSENT:** Ms. Dodie Karr, Ms. Susan Rieber and Mr. George Tunstall IV
- STAFF PRESENT:** Ms. Virginia Moore and Ms. Elise Kitchen
- PROXY:** Ms. Donna Lawlor
- COMMUNICATION FACILITATORS:** Ms. Rachel Rodgers, Ms. Rita Zirnheld-Anderson and Ms. Tracy Lundergan
- VISITORS:** None

Ms. Taylor, Chair, called the 169th Quarterly Commission meeting to order at 1:12 p.m. and noted for the record that Ms. Donna Lawlor, having been approved as proxy for Ms. Dodie Karr at a previous meeting, would be joining the meeting in her stead. Ms. Gordon-Brown, Secretary, called the roll, and after confirming there was a quorum, Ms. Taylor stated there would be a short break before “New Business,” and “Open Forum” would be moved to the end of the meeting, time permitting. She then requested that Board members review the minutes from the 168th Commission Meeting.

MS. HARRIS (Ms. Gordon-Brown) MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE 168TH QUARTERLY COMMISSION MEETING AS WRITTEN. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Ms. Taylor requested that members review the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held in March. There were no comments.

MS. GORDON-BROWN (Mr. Evans) MOVED TO ACCEPT THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES AS WRITTEN. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

REPORTS

Executive Board:

Ms. Taylor provided meeting highlights, stating that the members discussed expiring terms, Member at Large election, officer elections, and the Executive Director’s evaluation, in addition to providing study group reports. She reminded the Board that if the Governor does not make the Commission Board appointments prior to the term expiration date, members who currently hold those positions will continue to serve until such time as those appointments are made. In addition, if a Commissioner is voted into office during the upcoming elections but is not reappointed to the Board by the Governor, another election will be held to determine who will fill

that office. Ms. Taylor also requested that any members who are not reappointed please fill out and submit the KCDHH Exit Interview for Outgoing Board Members found in Appendix D of the Commission's operating policies. She reminded the Board that this exit interview was developed for the purpose of improving the Board and that feedback from outgoing Board members can provide a wealth of information that can help the Board continue to work to better the lives of the deaf and hard of hearing.

Regarding the Member at Large Election, Ms. Taylor noted that there were two candidates for Member at Large: Ms. Edie Ryan, current Member at Large, who would address the Board on her own behalf, and Ms. Brooke Montgomery, who would be represented by Ms. Niehaus. She added that the election would take place later in the meeting as it falls under the "New Business" section of the agenda.

Ms. Taylor stated that officer elections would also take place later in the meeting, at which time the Board will select a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. She reminded the Board that if the newly elected Chair does not have a hearing loss, only those candidates who are deaf or hard of hearing will be considered for Vice Chair and Secretary. Once those positions have been filled, those three Board members will meet sometime before the Executive Board meeting in June to select two Members at Large from the Commission to serve on the Executive Board. She indicated that the list of members willing to serve in that capacity will be made available to the officers after the Commission meeting.

In reference to the Executive Director's evaluation, Ms. Taylor stated that she was evaluated in five categories: Human Resources and Administration, Program Management, Partnership Development Management, Leadership, and Communication. She noted that the majority of Commissioners participated in the evaluation process, and the majority of the Executive Director's "Exceeds Requirement" and "Achieves Major Requirements" categories; however a few needs were identified that Ms. Moore is already in the process of addressing. Ms. Taylor added that no staff members chose to participate in the evaluation.

Ms. Taylor reminded the Board that they voted to change the due date for study group proposals to the June Executive Board meeting rather than the March meeting. She requested that members who wish to submit a proposal do so in time for Executive Board members to thoroughly review them prior to the meeting. She also pointed out that the Study Group Flow Chart developed by Ms. Moore is an excellent resource designed to provide a visual reminder of the goals of a study group, the process as a whole, and the responsibilities of a study group chair.

Ms. Taylor closed her report by taking time to recognize Ms. Kiser for her service to the Commission as the Alexander Graham Bell Association's representative on the KCDHH Board as this was her final meeting before her term expires. Ms. Moore and Ms. Taylor expressed their appreciation for her service, and Ms. Kiser shared that she felt honored to be a part of the Commission and would be available to the Board should her expertise or assistance be needed at any time in the future.

THE EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Agency:

Ms. Moore began her report with legislation, stating that she worked with staff to monitor legislation that may have an impact on the deaf and hard of hearing in Kentucky. One such bill,

Bella's Bill, developed by Hands & Voices and sponsored by Senator Wise, did not make it out of committee following a cost analysis that suggested the measures the bill would put in place would be too cost prohibitive at this time. Ms. Moore added that while the bill itself did not move forward, efforts to rally support resulted in a new partnership with the Kentucky Department for Public Health to provide a speaker for the upcoming Hands & Voices CMV workshop that is currently in the development phase. The partnership will be an ongoing arrangement to help with the dissemination of educational information regarding CMV to medical providers, parents and women who are pregnant or wish to become pregnant. Ms. Moore reminded the Board that this was another budget year, since last year's budget was for one year only. She said legislative session 2022 will be yet another budget year, this time to determine the budget for the next two years, putting the state back on track to return to a biennial budget cycle.

Regarding personnel, Ms. Moore reported that she will begin interviewing for the Administrative Specialist II position now that the application window has closed. She added that the paperwork required by the state for each applicant is quite extensive, so the process takes some time to complete. Ms. Moore also indicated that she is working on getting the Executive Administrative Assistant position filled, and there has been some interest, but she may need to think creatively about reallocating some of the job duties to allow for a wider applicant pool. Ms. Harris inquired about advertising with Gallaudet, and Ms. Moore indicated she would look into it.

Ms. Moore updated the Board on the agency's efforts in the fight against COVID-19, specifically working toward ensuring that the most current information is accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing community. She also advised Board members to contact the agency if they are having a hard time finding a vaccination location. Ms. Niehaus shared that there has been a lot of discussion recently among deaf leaders in the Louisville area about how many people are afraid to get vaccinated. She advocated for a proactive push to get information out to the deaf community regarding the safety of the vaccines and suggested partnering with other organizations to offer vaccine clinics. Ms. Moore said that the Commission has been working with Public Health to interpret special presentations about the vaccines in specific areas, and the Secretary of the Cabinet for Health and Family Services would likely be open to a discussion about doing one for the deaf and hard of hearing community. Ms. Perry added that she would be willing to do a video statement to share her vaccination experience and do her part to dispel any lingering rumors about the safety of the vaccine. Ms. Harris shared an experience with a friend that indicates that lack of access to the internet or knowledge, how to make an appointment online is also a huge barrier to getting vaccinated and that communication during the vaccination process is also difficult at best without an interpreter on hand. Board members discussed ways to address these barriers to getting vaccinated, and Ms. Moore indicated she would gather short video clips from deaf leaders who were interested in sharing their vaccination experience. She said these could be posted on the KCDHH Facebook page to encourage others who may be uncertain about getting vaccinated against COVID-19.

Ms. Moore reported that KCDHH was recently contacted regarding a change in the way Kentuckians go about getting their driver's license or REAL ID. She said that they are transitioning out of the County Clerks' Offices into regional locations under the Department of Transportation (DOT), so KCDHH has scheduled a vlog explaining the new process for getting a license or REAL ID. She emphasized that this transition has not yet taken place, but when it does, it will happen fast. Ms. Taylor added that she recently got her REAL ID at a regional center in Bowling Green and discovered how important it is to have all the required documents as listed on the website (drive.ky.gov) prior to arrival as there is no leeway where those are concerned. She said they were kind but firm when she was missing a document. Ms. Gordon-Brown shared

a similar story, and noted that she was unaware that one document in particular was required. Ms. Moore indicated she would clarify with the DOT and ensure that information is clearly posted on their website. This information will also be included in the vlog.

Ms. Moore informed Board members that the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet (EWDC) is creating a leadership development program, and they have asked her to be part of their Leadership Development Team. The goal of the program is to provide a pathway for state employees in non-supervisory roles to learn and develop leadership skills that will enhance their work performance in their current role and provide the skills they need to qualify for and excel in a supervisory role. Ms. Moore stated that EWDC plans to develop a well-rounded program that could be easily adapted for use by other cabinets eventually becoming a state-wide program. She also shared her appreciation of cabinet leaders' expressed desire to ensure that recognizing and meeting access needs becomes ingrained in the leadership culture of the cabinet and ultimately the state.

MS. Moore shared that staff responded to a request from an elementary school to provide a self-advocacy class for their second grade students. She said she worked with the Information Coordinators for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to develop a curriculum, then the two of them presented to three different classes. The students were attentive and asked great questions, making the sessions very successful. Ms. Moore indicated that they hope to have more opportunities to work with children in that age group to help them develop those skills early on. Ms. Ryan added that deaf advocacy skills are often included on deaf students' Individualized Educational Plans (IEP), as these soft skills become more and more important as they get older.

THE AGENCY REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Finance:

Ms. Moore reminded the Board that the Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) contracts expired in June and the program is currently operating through emergency contract extensions tied to COVID-19. Once those extensions were in place, TAP was able to complete all the orders that were pending July through December, wiping out the entire waiting list for 2020. Ms. Moore indicated that TAP will be placing orders for January through March 2021 soon, which will put the program back on track. She shared that this would most likely have exhausted the TAP budget, but when the new 2021 budget was approved, it included a one-time increase probably intended to assist in recovering some of the unanticipated costs associated with the new database. She indicated that the amount should be sufficient to cover equipment costs for the remainder of the fiscal year; however that will not be able to be ascertained for sure until closer to the end of the fiscal year. Ms. Moore stated that general fund expenditures are on target since the projected budget cuts were not implemented and added that no budget cuts are anticipated for next year either based on economic forecasts at this point.

THE FINANCE REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Early Childhood Language Access and Acquisition:

Ms. Hatzel reported that members of the study group met with Secretary Friedlander and his Chief of Staff regarding First Steps, which was followed by a meeting with the Common Ground group to provide updates on the group's progress. She stated that members of the group would like to change the name of the group to a task force rather than a study group as they are taking steps to get some things done rather than just doing research, but she pointed out that if their

scope of work is transitioning to more of a task force role, then perhaps they may not need to continue as a study group. She indicated that more discussion was needed before a decision could be made.

Ms. Hatzel stated that Secretary Friedlander tasked the group with collecting supporting data to bring back to a follow-up meeting, and members of the Common Ground group divided up that information into categories which each member or pair of members then took back to their organization to find answers. She said she worked with the study group staff liaison and Hands & Voices personnel to develop a presentation with that data, which was presented to several high level representatives of Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EHDI), First Steps and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS). Action items requested focused on ensuring that First Steps uses qualified providers and removing the stipulation that hearing loss in the better ear must be 25 decibels or greater. Ms. Hatzel reported that they did get an email response from that group indicating that they are working with the Office for Children with Special Healthcare Needs (OCSHCN) to address the gaps shared in the presentation.

Ms. Hatzel shared that Heuser Hearing Institute (HHI) has offered to become a central hub for deaf and hard of hearing educators who want to become First Steps providers to take care of the administrative details such as billing and taxes that make this such a daunting proposition for these educators. Ms. Niehaus expressed concern with that partnership in regard to language modality, as HHI has historically been biased in favor of oral training as opposed to sign language. Ms. Hatzel indicated that she initially has some of the same concerns, but she pointed out that it's the deaf educators who have been trained across the spectrum that will be working with the children, not HHI staff. She said there doesn't seem to be any real affiliation with HHI other than in an administrative role solely for the purpose of managing the payroll and other paperwork for the deaf educators, so that those educators' primary focus can be the provision of services. Ms. Moore added that the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) has already contacted HHI to provide those same services for their outreach program. Ms. Ryan and Ms. Lawlor also expressed similar concerns. Ms. Hatzel stated that the goal is to clear a path for people who are trained to work with deaf and hard of hearing children to fill the gaps in First Steps services so that those children won't fall through the cracks, especially early on when the effects of hearing loss aren't obvious to someone who does not work with deaf and hard of hearing children. She emphasized that the Common Ground group all came to the table under the overarching principle that all language modalities would be respected, and the ultimate goal is to put that authority back in the parents' hands by ensuring those parents are educated and informed about what the options are.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD LANGUAGE ACCESS AND ACQUISITION STUDY GROUP REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Kentucky Deaf-Blind Community:

Ms. Taylor reported the study group met in March and since then a final draft of the Deaf-Blind Resource Guide has been completed and will be sent out to the study group members and the Deaf-Blind Interagency Team to provide feedback. She added that the subcommittee will make the necessary revisions based on that feedback and present it in its final form for approval at the June meeting.

Ms. Taylor stated the group has a strong focus on making KCDHH's website accessible, and there's been a lot of work going on behind the scenes. She explained that the Program

Coordinator for the KATS Network and the National Federation of the Blind of Kentucky Technology Assistance Division Program Manager are providing feedback and some technical assistance with that process. Ms. Moore added that KCDHH has purchased software that will help make the website more accessible, but it will take one to two months to complete the process. Ms. Harris had questions about applying this software to mobile devices such as the iPhone, and Ms. Perry suggested that KCDHH provide a brief workshop for deaf-blind individuals to help them have a clear understanding of how to access various technology designed to help Deaf-Blind individuals access digital information. Ms. Taylor referred them to the Kentucky Deaf-Blind Specialist for the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) Southeast Region who is the contact person for iCanConnect, which is the National Deaf-Blind Equipment Distribution Program operated by HKNC.

Ms. Taylor said the study group plans to request a six-month extension at the Executive Board meeting in June as their work is not quite finished yet. She noted that during that time period the group will continue to develop the landing page for the Deaf-Blind community and work on communication cards. In addition she shared that the group will soon be developing a questionnaire to send across the state of Kentucky so that our Deaf-Blind individuals' families, providers and other professionals who work with the Deaf-Blind can get a clearer picture of their needs. She added that the questionnaire will also provide data that can be presented to people who make decisions about those services, so that we can help advocate for the Deaf-Blind community.

THE KENTUCKY DEAF-BLIND COMMUNITY STUDY GROUP REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

BOARD OPEN FORUM

Ms. Taylor announced that due to time constraints, there would be no Open Forum.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Ms. Taylor reminded the Board that that the Governor has not yet appointed anyone to fill the Kentucky Association of the Deaf seat or the Alexander Graham Bell Association, and stated that she would keep the Board apprised of any updates. Ms. Taylor announced that there were two applicants for the Member at Large position on the full Board: Ms. Edie Ryan, who is the incumbent, and Ms. Brooke Montgomery.

NEW BUSINESS

Before calling for a vote, Ms. Taylor gave Ms. Ryan an opportunity to address the Board regarding her qualifications for the Member at Large position, and Ms. Niehaus spoke on behalf of Ms. Montgomery. Following the vote, Ms. Taylor announced that Ms. Ryan was selected for the Member at Large position for another three years.

Moving forward with officer elections, Ms. Taylor announced that there was only one nomination for Chair and called for additional nominations from the floor. As there were none, Ms. Hatzel was elected as the new Chair by acclamation. Ms. Taylor announced that there were three nominees for Vice Chair and opened the floor for additional nominations. As there were none, the polls were opened, and Ms. Taylor was elected as the new Vice Chair. She then announced that there were four nominees for Secretary, and when no additional nominations were

submitted, she opened the polls for voting. Mr. Evans was elected Secretary. After congratulating the new officers, Ms. Taylor announced that they would meet via Zoom prior to the next Executive Board meeting in June to select two new Executive Board Members at Large to serve as liaisons to the full Board.

Ms. Taylor addressed the final item under New Business, stating that the request for a date change for the 170th quarterly Commission meeting is simply a matter of managing deadlines. She explained that deadline for closing the budget for the fiscal year, sending the annual TAP report to the Legislative Research Commission (LRC), and wrapping up the quarter to put together the Agency Report Packet two weeks prior to the Commission meeting all happen at the same time, which places an unnecessary burden on agency staff. Changing the Commission meeting date to July 23rd leaves enough room to complete each of those tasks and get the packet out on time. Ms. Taylor then called for a motion from the floor.

MR. RUNYON (Ms. Kiser) MOVED TO CHANGE THE DATE OF THE 170TH QUARTERLY COMMISSION MEETING FROM JULY 16TH TO JULY 23RD, 2021. THE MOTION PASSED.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The next Executive Board meeting will be held June 4, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- TAP Advisory Board meeting will be held October 14, 2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- The 170th Quarterly Commission meeting will be held July 23, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
- The TAP Advisory Board has three vacancies for consumers: one speech-impaired, one hard of hearing, and one deaf.
- Many, many thanks to the outgoing Chair for her service and support.

MS. LAWLOR (Ms. Harris) MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY, and the meeting was adjourned at 3:47 p.m.