

**Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**  
**172<sup>nd</sup> Quarterly Commission Meeting**  
**January 21, 2022**  
**Zoom Meeting**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Ms. Amy Hatzel, Ms. Jeannie Taylor, Mr. Thomas Evans, Ms. Barbie Harris, Ms. Gerry Gordon-Brown, Ms. Nancy Perry, Ms. Melissa Kelly, Ms. Michelle Niehaus, Ms. Dodie Karr, Ms. Edie Ryan, Ms. Olivia Renfro, and Ms. Amy Schilling

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** Mr. Eddie Runyon, Mr. Alexander Ansley, Mr. George “Buzzy” Tunstall IV

**STAFF PRESENT:** Ms. Virginia Moore and Ms. Jayna Oakley

**COMMUNICATION FACILITATORS:** Ms. Rachel Rodgers, Ms. Rachel Morgan and Ms. Laura Kogut

**VISITORS:** Ms. Row Holloway and a student visitor

Ms. Hatzel, Chair, called the 172<sup>nd</sup> Quarterly Commission meeting to order at 1:08 p.m. Mr. Evans, Secretary, called the roll. After confirming there was a quorum, Ms. Hatzel requested that Board members review the minutes from the 171<sup>st</sup> Commission Meeting.

**MS. HARRIS (Ms. Perry) MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES OF THE 171<sup>st</sup> QUARTERLY COMMISSION MEETING AS WRITTEN. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

Ms. Hatzel requested that members review the minutes from the Executive Board meeting held in December.

**MR. NIEHAUS (Ms. Gordon-Brown) MOVED TO ACCEPT THE EXECUTIVE BOARD MINUTES. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

**REPORTS**

**Executive Board:**

Ms. Hatzel referred Board members to the minutes and indicated there have been no updates since that meeting. Ms. Hatzel added that there are four Board terms expiring and an informational flyer on each of positions is included in their packets. She also said study group proposals could be submitted and the Executive Board would review them on March 4.

**THE EXECUTIVE BOARD REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.**

**Agency:**

Ms. Moore began her report by explaining that, traditionally, the Governor presents his proposed budget to the House. It then goes to the Senate and is returned to the House for final approval. She added that this year, however, the House presented their budget prior to the Governor’s. Ms. Moore said both the House and the Governor’s proposed budgets have a 6% increase for state

employees. Major differences between the Governor's proposed budget and the House is that the House's budget leaves raises for teachers up to the individual districts and the Pre-K funding was not included.

Ms. Moore stated that the agency budget for FY2020-22 was recently submitted and included a request for an additional fifteenth position for the Access Center – Interpreter Supervisor. She explained that there is a need to monitor interpreter fees and establish a state fee for consistency, which will be a cost saving measure for the state.

Ms. Moore also reported that Kentucky Hands & Voices is working with legislators to get Bella's Bill passed. The Bill seeks universal screening for Cytomegalovirus (CMV) for newborns, in addition to efforts for public education and awareness, particularly for expectant and pregnant mothers. The Bill is named for Bella Streeval, who passed away from complications of CMV in April, 2020, two months after her third birthday.

Ms. Moore also reported that once the 2020 Census came out then Kentucky General Assembly is responsible for evaluating and redrawing the boundaries of the Commonwealth's congressional and state legislative districts, which they passed early in the January session. She stated there was much discussion and controversy and it eventually went to the Supreme Court to be decided. Ms. Moore added it is important for Board members to watch and find out who will be representing their districts.

Ms. Moore stated that the Governor merged the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet with the Kentucky Labor Cabinet, which he believes would make it easier for the state to compete for grant funding and also improve access to accurate information. She added that she is watching to see if there are any plans to reorganize but hopes KCDHH will remain under the Cabinet Secretary.

Ms. Moore informed the Board that KCDHH staff members or their family members have all suffered from COVID, which has caused a shortage of staff in the office. She added that also being three staff members short make it even more difficult. Ms. Moore reported she has interviewed candidates for the Administrative Secretary's position and was in a position to make that decision. She added she has 16 candidates for the Document Processing II position and is currently sorting through the mountain of paperwork. Ms. Moore said she has also submitted paperwork to open the Policy Specialist position.

Ms. Moore also asked Board members to make sure any deaf or hard of hearing individual they know who suffered loss during the western Kentucky tornadoes need to complete their FEMA paperwork before February 11. She said that the State had also raised \$43 million to help tornado victims but tornado victims will not be able to take advantage of this money if they don't complete their FEMA paperwork. Ms. Ryan added that FEMA offices are not open every day in western Kentucky and those seeking help need to contact FEMA to make sure they are available to see them.

Ms. Moore informed the Board that she and Ms. Morgan made a trip to western Kentucky to help interpret when the President of the United States (POTUS) made his visit. She added they were told they were not needed because POTUS had their own interpreters. However, it was discovered afterwards that it wasn't in real time. As this is unacceptable Ms. Moore reached out to the National Association of the Deaf's (NAD) CEO, Mr. Howard Rosenblum and asked him to file a discrimination suit against the White House. Ms. Moore added she thinks a study group on emergency management would help with this issue.

Ms. Moore stated that the new database still has issues but it is getting close to being complete. She added that staff is working with COT (Commonwealth Office of Technology) on a daily basis to resolve the issues.

Ms. Moore attended the ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Residences of Courtyard Crossing in Independence, Kentucky, which is the long-awaited accessible housing for seniors named after Betty Timon. She reported that she recently received a phone call and said they still had a few apartments available and was quite pleased that they had reached out to KCDHH first to fill those vacancies.

Regarding DeaFestival, Ms. Moore indicated that the plans are to partner with the Kentucky School for the Deaf (KSD) on their 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. She added an agreement has been reached to host DeaFestival at Centre College in Danville. She also stated that the Pre-Show will most likely be at Pioneer Playhouse, also in Danville. Ms. Perry asked about parking on campus. Ms. Moore answered that staff would be meeting next week with Centre College and Norton Center for the Arts personnel to work out logistics and signage. Ms. Moore stated that for the first time DeaFestival will add a job fair component. This is because there will be new businesses bringing 1,800+ new high paying jobs to Kentucky, KCDHH is partnering with Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) and the Office of Employer & Apprenticeship Services to host the job fair for deaf and hard or hearing individuals who attend DeaFestival.

Ms. Moore informed the Board she has been assisting with the Emerging Leaders Program (ELP) which Ms. Smith, TAP Program Coordinator, has been attending. She said that Ms. Smith is leading a project with Vocational Rehabilitation to develop a manual that will be a how-to resource guide in hiring deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Several Board members discussed their experiences with Vocational Rehabilitation and hopes their statewide inconsistency to provide services improves.

#### **THE AGENCY REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.**

#### **Finance:**

Ms. Moore stated that it appears that the state has a surplus of money and no cuts impacting KCDHH. She added that she hopes the 6% cost of living raise for state employees is accepted in the proposed budget, as employees have not had a raise in over ten years. Ms. Moore added that she is proposing a fifteenth position that would help set the rate for scheduling interpreters, as well as provide billing services for state agencies. Ms. Moore reported the TAP recently placed an order for equipment for applications approved and the vendors are working on getting the backlog of iPhone and iPad out. The problem appears to be that the Vendors are still waiting on the arrival of equipment, the delay is due to a chip shortage. The expenditure is reflected in the report. She indicated that because KCDHH has not been able to do outreach, there has been a drop in TAP applications and staff will be doing an electronic outreach.

#### **THE FINANCE REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.**

#### **Early Childhood Language Access and Acquisition:**

Ms. Hatzel told the Board that she would have a short report as there seems to continuously political barriers delaying answers to the group's concerns and recommendations. She reported that Ms. Moore had reached out to Mr. Rocky Adkins, Senior Advisor to the Governor, and he had

put her in touch with the Commissioner of the Kentucky Department of Education (KDE), Dr. Jason Glass, with whom she will schedule a meeting. Ms. Hatzell added that the group had made numerous contacts and have received no feedback.

Ms. Moore also explained that because KDE has so much legislation, the Cabinet has ask that KCDHH not submit any legislation concerning KDE and they will focus on our needs it internally. Ms. Moore reminded the Board that four years ago, KDE asked KCDHH sponsors to pull out of their support and we lost the opportunity to move legislation. Ms. Hatzell said the group would have to “widen its net” to get other individuals and groups to support their efforts.

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

### **Kentucky Deaf-Blind Community:**

Ms. Taylor thanked Ms. Hatzel for allowing her group to report first and introduced members of the group in attendance: Ms. Perry, Ms. Holloway, and Ms. Oakley. Ms. Taylor reported the study group held its final meeting on December 7 and that she hoped it would not be the final actions taken with the community. Ms. Moore assured her it would not. She also named Ms. Danielle Burton as another member, who was unable to attend but someone she considered a very influential member, representing the National Federation of the Blind.

Ms. Taylor reported the group’s areas of focus were to raise awareness, promote and conduct outreach, and advocate for improved access to community resources, and support self-advocacy. She asked them to review the final report and actions taken and to concentrate on the further development section. Ms. Taylor reported that data collected from the Deaf-Blind Questionnaire asked that the following be developed: a Support Service Provider (SSP) in Kentucky; equal access to transportation services, information, and communication; identify gaps in support networks across the state and ways to remedy the gaps resulting in equal access to educational, vocational, economic, social, and political opportunities; reducing and eliminating barriers to communication; increasing opportunities for socialization; encouraging KCDHH to increase its focus on the deaf-blind community and to learn more about the subcultures of the deaf-blind community; and supporting the deaf-blind community’s desire to lead productive and independent lives.

Following Ms. Taylor’s report, study group members explained their roles and experiences serving on the group. Several Commissioners expressed their appreciation for the work, wealth of information, and resources pertaining to deaf-blindness that was developed. Ms. Taylor asked Commissioners to look at areas in which they have influence in the state and to take action that will help improve conditions for the deaf-blind community. Ms. Harris commented to the group that she conducted her own research with local utilities after the tornado went through Danville this year. Because she was unaware of the tornado, she wanted to find out how she could assist other deaf, hard of hearing, deaf-blind access to resources during emergencies. Ms. Perry, too, commented that she had been reaching out to deaf-blind individuals during COVID. Ms. Taylor added that, as a Commission, KCDHH needs to review its emergency preparedness documents and information on the website. Ms. Moore stated that KCDHH could reach out to contacts with emergency management to develop plans. She also added that deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind individuals must also make preparations for themselves.

Ms. Hatzel thanked Ms. Taylor and her group for their work and the lasting effect they have made on Kentucky.

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

### **BOARD OPEN FORUM**

Ms. Hatzel announced that if there was nothing pressing, she would like to go right in to unfinished business and discuss the strategic plan.

### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Ms. Hatzel asked Board members if they had time to review the strategic plan that was submitted. Ms. Moore explained to the Board that the strategic plan was a “breathing document” with a checklist saying what mandate was met for each item reported on in the Agency Report. Ms. Niehaus said she thought the strategic plan was “good broad strokes” but that she would like to see KCDHH move towards using “smart goals” that are more observable and measureable. Ms. Taylor added that she was concerned that, after comparing the new strategic plan with the old one, there was very little change. Ms. Moore explained that the Board’s copy of the strategic plan only painted the broad strokes of the Agency’s work and that the internal plan specifically lists how the Agency and staff complete those goals. She added that the Agency Report serves as a resource for the Board as it reports what goals are met every three months in this report. Ms. Taylor asked the Board members to put the two documents side-by-side and compare. Ms. Moore asked the Board to review the strategic plan again and make recommendations by sending her an email with their additions.

## **MS. RYAN (Mr. Evans) MOVED TO TABLE APPROVAL OF THE STRATEGIC PLAN UNTIL THE NEXT MEETING, APRIL 22. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.**

### **NEW BUSINESS**

Ms. Hatzel informed the Board that four Board members terms will expire: Service Provider Representative, Hearing Loss Association of American, Kentucky Speech-Language-Hearing Association, and Kentucky Association of the Deaf. Ms. Hatzel explained that if Board members were not going to reapply, they needed to complete an exit interview. Also, she added an informational flyer was available for the new positions.

Ms. Hatzel announced it was time to solicit new study group proposals. She added there had been much discussion during the meeting about possible study groups and asked that Board members to consider making submissions. Ms. Harris said she would like to submit a proposal on emergency preparedness for the deaf, hard of hearing, and deaf-blind individuals. Ms. Karr asked if there was still a study group on senior citizens because they were still having trouble with phones and VPs in nursing homes. Ms. Moore explained that staff had been working with individuals in nursing homes and solving issues is different at each nursing home.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- The next Executive Board meeting will be held virtual, March 4, 1:00 p.m. – 3:00 p.m.
- The 173<sup>rd</sup> Quarterly Commission meeting will be held virtual, April 22, 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**MR. TAYLOR (Mr. Evans) MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. THE MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY,** and the meeting was adjourned at 4:14 p.m.