

**Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
181st Quarterly Commission Meeting
April 26, 2024
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet Building**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tommy Evans, Melissa Kelly, Michelle Niehaus, Jason Smith, Jeannie Taylor, John Perry, Alex Ansley, Gerry Gordon-Brown, Donna Lawlor (for Nancy Perry), Barbie Harris, Sarah Roof, Marva Johnson, Edie Ryan, Amy Hatzel, Beth Brinly, Anita Dowd

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: Justin Stanley, Blake Campbell, Rachel Rodgers, Rachel Morgan

COMMUNICATION FACILITATORS: Laura Kogut, Linda Bozeman, Shannon Grider

VISITORS: ELC Secretary Jamie Link, Row Holloway

MR. EVANS CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 12:35 PM.

AFTER INTRODUCING JOHN PERRY AND ANITA DOWD, MR. EVANS RECOGNIZED JEANNIE TAYLOR AND ROW HOLLOWAY TO PRESENT AMY HATZELL WITH HER COMMISSION AS A KENTUCKY COLONEL. MR. EVANS ALSO REMINDED ALL COMMISSIONERS TO BE CAREFUL NOT TO SPEAK OVER EACH OTHER. MS. HARRIS MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES FROM THE 180TH COMMISSION MEETING. MS. GORDON-BROWN AND MS. RYAN SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED WITHOUT DISCUSSION.

MS. GORDON-BROWN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES FROM THE MARCH 8, 2024 EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING WITHOUT REVISION. MS. TAYLOR SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED WITHOUT DISCUSSION.

REPORTS

Chair's Report

Mr. Evans began by recognizing Ms. Dowd as the permanent Executive Director of KCDHH, as well as Ms. Harris's reappointment to one of the Kentucky Association of the Deaf's seats on the Commission Board. Mr. Evans noted that the Commission was still receiving

information from stakeholder groups about the seats currently held by Ms. Gordon-Brown and Mr. Ansley whose terms are set to expire.

THE CHAIR’S REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Agency Report

Ms. Dowd gave the Agency Report as Executive Director.

Ms. Dowd first noted that KCDHH had been visited by a group of deaf professionals from France as part of an exchange program. The group visited the KCDHH office in Frankfort and had a productive discussion. Ms. Dowd noted that she intends to stay in touch with them, particularly regarding their work in France to promote language acquisition for deaf/HOH children.

Next Ms. Dowd reluctantly announced that DeaFestival 2024 was being postponed until 2026 due to various factors—including a shortage of staff after recent retirements. Planning for the next DeaFestival is already underway and will include some changes to format and programming.

KCDHH staff have also met with the General Counsel of the Education and Labor Cabinet (ELC) to discuss the regulations that govern KCDHH’s Access Center. These meetings were geared toward easing the burden of finding and coordinating interpreters for state agencies considering an extremely tight labor market for interpreters nationwide.

KCDHH will be meeting with Kentucky Emergency Management (KYEM) to create a distribution plan for the deaf/HOH-friendly equipment that was purchased by KYEM. Ms. Dowd also reported that she and Mr. Campbell were in a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) seminar that showcased that agency’s efforts at producing ASL emergency notification videos that can be sent to consumer cell phones. Ms. Brinly reported that the ELC is working on a grant to improve the capacity of Kentucky’s emergency management programs. Ms. Taylor then expressed concern with recent Homeland Security bulletins suggesting that foreign states may try to sabotage U.S. infrastructure, and suggested the Commission establish a relationship with the relevant authorities in Kentucky. Secretary Link interjected that he would be happy to make any necessary introductions, as Homeland Security has an office in the Transportation Cabinet’s building.

Ms. Johnson noted that in an emergency, interpreters that live in affected areas would likely be affected themselves, and that it may be difficult for them to facilitate communication as a result. Ms. Niehaus replied that her agency can offer training for interpreters that are required to work in a traumatic situation.

Finally, Ms. Dowd noted that Emily Kimbell and Mr. Campbell have been asked to participate in the Kentucky Public Health Conference.

THE AGENCY REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Emergency Preparedness Study Group Report

Ms. Harris announced that the study group has been wound down. Her final report was delivered in writing to all Commissioners in the packets for this meeting.

Old Business

Mr. Evans announced that the shared drive for the Commission has been implemented. It will be ready for all Commissioners to use by the July Commission meeting. Mr. Evans explained the ground rules of using the shared drive and asked all Commissioners to sign a disclosure agreement to make use of the shared drive, which is a Google Workspace. Mr. Evans noted that if any Commissioner requires more in-depth training to learn the Google system, he will be happy to provide individual instruction.

Ms. Johnson asked whether Commissioners could receive their packets for future meetings electronically, and Mr. Evans replied that he did not see any reason why not. Mr. Campbell spoke up and said that he would be handling the electronic packets and that it was certainly possible. Ms. Johnson then asked if historical Commission documents would be available on the shared drive. Mr. Evans said that that had not been discussed, but that he was open to the possibility.

After a short break, Mr. Evans asked Ms. Dowd to discuss the agency's Strategic Plan. Ms. Dowd drew the attention of Commissioners to the fact that the goals in the Plan were left intentionally broad to allow operational agility. Ms. Dowd is most concerned with building relationships between KCDHH and other entities to make significant changes. She also noted that there are currently five staff vacancies and emphasized the need for hiring. She concluded by saying that she will have a list of more specific goals (a "working grid") ready for the next Commission meeting. Ms. Niehaus expressed a willingness to help workshop some goals for the working grid based on her own agency's experiences. Ms. Brinly stated that the strategic goals of the plan look very promising.

MS. NIEHAUS MOVED TO ACCEPT THE STRATEGIC PLAN AS WRITTEN, WITH A DIRECTIVE TO THE COMMISSIONERS TO HELP KCDHH STAFF IDENTIFY SPECIFIC GOALS TO ADD TO THE PLAN. MR. ANSLEY SECONDED.

Ms. Taylor opened discussion on the motion by asking what the timeframe would be for the formulation of the specific goals in the working grid. After some discussion between Ms. Hatzel, Ms. Dowd, and Mr. Evans, Ms. Dowd clarified that she wanted to consult with staff before formulating specific goals for the working grid. Ms. Niehaus pointed out that rebuilding the KCDHH staff is a crucial step in the process of accomplishing the strategic plan, and subsequently amended her pending motion.

MS. NIEHAUS MOVED TO AMEND HER MOTION TO ACCEPT THE STRATEGIC PLAN AS WRITTEN, WITH THE ADDITION OF A GOAL TO INCLUDE THE REBUILDING OF STAFF CAPACITY. MS. HARRIS SECONDED THE AMENDED MOTION. THE AMENDED MOTION CARRIED WITHOUT FURTHER DISCUSSION.

New Business

Moving on to new business, Mr. Evans first noted that a survey had been conducted regarding possible changes to the Commission Board's composition. Of the 20 people who answered the survey, 70% were in favor of taking the next step in the process. He also noted that the Board's composition has not changed since its founding, which is unusual in comparable organizations. Ms. Hatzel observed that the political climate has changed since the early 2000s and is more favorable to the Commission now, so that changing regulations or the KCDHH statutes in a productive way may be possible.

MS. RYAN MOVED TO DIRECT THE EXECUTIVE BOARD TO GATHER ALL RELEVANT INFORMATION NECESSARY FOR CHANGING THE REPRESENTATIVE COMPOSITION OF THE COMMISSION BOARD (INCLUDING BUT NOT LIMITED TO KCDHH BYLAWS, ALL APPLICABLE REGULATIONS AND STATUTES, AND INPUT FROM KCDHH CONSTITUTENT GROUPS), AND TO REPORT TO THE FULL COMMISSION MEETING TO TAKE PLACE ON JULY 26, 2024.

During discussion, Mr. Ansley pointed out that requiring the Executive Board to report in July may not give sufficient time. Because there was general agreement with this point, Ms. Ryan **WITHDREW** her motion.

MR. ANSLEY MOVED TO AMEND MS. RYAN'S MOTION WITH THE EXPECTED DATE OF THE EXECUTIVE BOARD'S REPORT TO BE CHANGED FROM THE FULL COMMISSION MEETING TO TAKE PLACE ON JULY 26, 2024 TO THE FULL COMMISSION MEETING TO TAKE PLACE ON OCTOBER 25, 2024. MS. GORDON-BROWN SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED WITHOUT FURTHER DISCUSSION.

Mr. Evans then turned to the matter of vacancies. He reported that the open seats received numerous applicants, and that the Executive Board had met to narrow the field down to two candidates. First, however, he noted that Ms. Hatzel had been renominated by letter to continue to serve with Emeritus status.

MS. RYAN MOVED TO ACCEPT MS. HATZEL’S RENOMINATION. MR. SMITH SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY WITHOUT FURTHER DISCUSSION.

The remaining vacancy for an at-large member was then voted on by Commissioners via paper ballots. Mona McCubbin was elected with nine votes out of 14.

Announcements

- The next Executive Board meeting will be held on June 14, 2024 via Zoom.
- The next full Commission meeting will be held at the Transportation Cabinet on July 26, 2024.

MR. SMITH MOVED TO ADJOURN. MS. JOHNSON SECONDED. The meeting was adjourned at 3:44 pm.