

Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
182nd Quarterly Commission Meeting
July 26, 2024
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet Building

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tommy Evans, Mona McCubbin, Anita Dowd, Teresa Moon-Flaherty (for Melissa Kelly), Kelly McCollum (for Sarah Roof), Alexander Ansley, Michelle Niehaus, Barbie Harris, Jeannie Taylor, John Perry, Gerry Gordon-Brown

MEMBERS ABSENT: Jason Smith, Nancy Perry, Marva Johson, Amy Hatzel, Beth Brinly

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Kimbell, Rachel Morgan, Justin Stanley

COMMUNICATION FACILITATORS: Laura Kogut, Linda Bozeman, Shannon Grider

VISITORS:

MR. EVANS CALLED THE MEETING TO ORDER AT 12:36 PM.

MS. TAYLOR MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS COMMISSION MEETING WITHOUT REVISION. MS. HARRIS SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED WITHOUT DISCUSSION.

MS. NIEHAUS MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS EXECUTIVE BOARD MEETING. MS. GORDON-BROWN SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED WITHOUT DISCUSSION.

REPORTS

Chair's Report

Mr. Evans noted that five of the 14 Commissioners had elected to receive their meeting packets in a physical format, and the remaining nine had received theirs via email. Mr. Evans then clarified that all Commissioners would receive materials via email, and those who request physical copies will receive those in addition to email.

Mr. Evans then reported that each Commissioner's report from their constituent group would be called the Commission Stakeholder Report to avoid confusion with other reports the Commission produces. He expects those reports to be available to all Commissioners

via the shared drive in the near future. Ms. Harris asked whether these reports should include upcoming large events, and Mr. Evans responded that they should.

Finally, Mr. Evans thanked Ms. Gordon-Brown and Mr. Ansley for their interim service while the Governor's office decides on new appointments for their constituency groups.

THE CHAIR'S REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Agency Report

Ms. Dowd gave the Agency Report as Executive Director.

Ms. Dowd began by pointing out that the Governor's office often takes a while to make an appointment in roles like Ms. Gordon-Brown's and Mr. Ansley's. Mr. Evans suggested that Beth Brinly may be able to explain the delays in new appointments. Ms. Dowd replied that she would bring the matter up during her weekly meeting with the Education and Labor Cabinet.

Ms. Dowd then moved to the new format of the Agency Report, which has shifted away from a granular written narrative to a more modern layout with an emphasis on infographics. She explained that the new format would be more effective at communicating large amounts of information (such as the TAP statistics) than the written narrative. Mr. Evans applauded the changes, saying that it made the information much easier to absorb and more likely to be read. Ms. Harris echoed Mr. Evan's sentiments, but asked if infographics could have a bit more context to explain what they were showing. Ms. Niehaus said that she appreciated being able to copy and paste directly from the electronic version, which makes sharing information much easier.

Ms. Taylor said that she likes the new format and wants to make sure it continues to include any important developments in the Legislature. Mr. Ansley mentioned that he would like to have more context for events that the staff attended. In response, Ms. Niehaus suggested highlighting some representative events that the staff attended that are in line with the Commission's priorities at the time of the report. This would allow a balance between providing full information about the staff's activities and not creating an undue burden on staff to report in detail. Mr. Evans suggested using links in the report so that Commissioners could still access more information if they wished while avoiding page clutter. Ms. Harris chimed in and expressed her approval for Mr. Evans' suggestion.

Ms. Niehaus suggested that staff attend Commission meetings and explain their jobs to Commissioners so that everyone would have a clearer idea of what they do from day to day. Ms. Morgan enthusiastically agreed. Ms. Dowd said that that was what she had in mind for a planned Commission retreat. Mr. Evans agreed that whatever the venue, the idea was very good.

Finally, Ms. Dowd reported that she and Blake Noland attended the National Association for State Agencies for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NASADHH) policy meeting in Chicago. It was concerned with policy changes at the federal level and what the member agencies are concentrating on. During the conference, Ms. Dowd was able to coordinate with her counterpart from North Carolina to find other states willing to take up the project of creating a training for law enforcement to interact safely with deaf individuals. It was generally agreed that the previous project, which envisioned a four-hour training curriculum to be used nationally, was a dead letter and should be abandoned.

THE AGENCY REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Old Business

Ms. Dowd opened Old Business by reporting that the partnership with Kentucky Emergency Management to distribute weather radios has advanced and KCDHH is now ready to begin distribution. KCDHH currently possesses 745 NOAA emergency radios that include a strobe light and pillow shaker. As soon as the promotional materials are approved by the Education and Labor Cabinet, the distribution will begin. In response to a question from Ms. Taylor, Ms. Dowd noted that radios will be distributed in the same manner as TAP equipment: first come, first served to anyone with a hearing loss. KYEM intends to continue purchasing the radios for distribution as long as there is a need, so the 745 units currently available represent only the first batch. Ms. Niehaus noted that using methods from implementation science may be helpful in the distribution process. She will share information about these methods with KCDHH staff.

Ms. Dowd then reported that she had met with Beth Brinly to discuss a potential change in the Commission's composition. Ms. Dowd also spoke to Jorden Jones, who is the Education and Labor Cabinet's Legislative Liaison about how changes can be made. Ms. Jones suggested that the Executive Board work out the details of a proposal and then the Cabinet can provide specific feedback.

Mr. Evans reported that the Commission Stakeholder Report surveys would soon become available to all Commissioners through the shared drive so that they could begin to distribute them to their respective constituents.

New Business

Moving on to new business, Mr. Evans noted that meeting times have been from 12:30 pm – 3:30 pm for the past year, with all meetings except the January Commission meeting being held in person.

MS. TAYLOR MOVED TO KEEP THE CURRENT MEETING SCHEDULE FOR THE COMING YEAR. MS. GORDON-BROWN SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED WITHOUT DISCUSSION.

Ms. Dowd noted that she would like to hold a Commission retreat, but that she was unsure if October was still a good time for most Commissioners. She has also considered bringing in an outside consultant to facilitate the retreat. Ms. Taylor suggested that an October date may not give sufficient time to prepare for the retreat, and Ms. Niehaus agreed. Mr. Ansley pointed out that April would also be near the end of the legislative session, which would give the Commissioners an opportunity to survey any legislative changes.

Ms. McCubbin and Mr. Ansley asked what the Commissioners could do to help with potential legislative changes. Ms. Dowd responded that she would not know how Commissioners could assist with any changes until she is able to speak with Jorden Jones.

Mr. Ansley asked about staffing levels. Ms. Morgan replied that there are currently five open positions. Job descriptions are being rewritten for those positions considering the changes within KCDHH, and when those changes are approved by the Personnel Cabinet, they will be advertised. Pay discrepancies continue to be a problem, but the Cabinet is attempting to address it.

Open Forum and Announcements

Mr. Evans announced that Kentucky is making progress in screening for infant cases of CMV and he feels hopeful that this screening will continue to improve.

Ms. McCollum thanked all Commissioners for their work.

- Hands and Voices is holding Deaf Awareness Day at the Louisville Zoo on August 17.

MR. ANSLEY MOVED TO ADJOURN. MS. HARRIS SECONDED. The meeting was adjourned at 3:27 pm.