

**Kentucky Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
183rd Quarterly Commission Meeting
October 25th, 2024
Kentucky Transportation Cabinet Building**

MEMBERS PRESENT: Tommy Evans, Mona McCubbin, Anita Dowd, Kimmy Clark (for Marva Johnson), Sarah Roof, Alexander Ansley, Anthony Adkins (for Michelle Niehaus), Bethany Yance (for Barbie Harris), Jeannie Taylor, John Perry, Jason Smith, Gerry Gordon-Brown, Melissa Kelly, Beth Brinly, Amy Hatzel, Nancy Perry

MEMBERS ABSENT: None

STAFF PRESENT: Emily Kimbell, Rachel Morgan, Justin Stanley

COMMUNICATION FACILITATORS: Laura Kogut, Linda Bozeman, Shannon Grider

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

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

MS. TAYLOR 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 reported that the Board Restructuring Committee had examined the survey feedback from Commissioners that was gathered in April. The Committee has also made further revisions to refine the results of the surveys. Mr. Evans expressed his thanks to all Commissioners for the work they are doing with their various constituent groups as reflected in the survey data. Mr. Evans then called on Commissioners to suggest any changes to upcoming Commission meetings they saw fit, whether in time or location. Ms. Taylor, Mr. Smith, and Ms. Gordon-Brown all expressed support for keeping the existing meeting schedule and format.

MS. TAYLOR MOVED TO ACCEPT THE MEETING TIMES AS PRESENTED IN THE AGENDA: JANUARY 24 VIA ZOOM, APRIL 25TH IN PERSON, AND JULY 25TH IN PERSON, WITH ALL MEETINGS FROM 12:30 TO 3:30 PM EASTERN. MS. BRINLY SECONDED. THE MOTION CARRIED WITHOUT FURTHER DISCUSSION.

THE CHAIR'S REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Agency Report

Ms. Dowd gave the Agency Report as Executive Director.

Ms. Dowd began by reporting that there had been no updates from the Governor's office regarding the Kentucky Association of the Deaf (KAD) and A.G. Bell Commissioner vacancies.

Next, Ms. Dowd reported that the Moore Safe Nights weather radio project had received an overwhelming response from the public following the Governor's announcement of it during his weekly update on September 26th. 700 applications were received in the week following the Governor's announcement. Ms. Dowd noted that the existing Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) receives around 700 applications in a typical year. Most applicants have no history with KCDHH and have not previously applied for TAP equipment. There have been complications due to the disconnect between KCDHH and Kentucky Emergency Management, but most pitfalls were successfully anticipated due to thorough planning prior to the program launch.

Interviews for open positions at KCDHH are under way—this includes the Executive Staff Advisor, Interpreter II, and Information Officer positions.

The Deaf Child's Bill of Rights is being drafted. There needs to be a meeting with Common Ground to ensure that the draft will be acceptable to as many parties as possible, and then Commissioners may begin gathering support for the bill.

THE AGENCY REPORT WAS ACCEPTED AS READ.

Old Business

Mr. Evans began by reporting that most Commissioners had expressed positive interest in holding a retreat in April. KCDHH staff are currently planning for that timeframe. Ms. Dowd noted that while previous retreats had been held at state parks, staff are including other locations in their search such as distilleries. The intention, Ms. Dowd said in response to a question from Mr. Smith, is to choose a location sufficiently central that will not require Commissioners to stay overnight.

Ms. Roof noted that Kentucky Hands & Voices will be holding their annual retreat near Barren River State Park in the same timeframe and suggested that the Commission consider it as a meeting location. Mr. Evans and Ms. Perry agreed, stating that involving Hands and Voices would be inspirational to Commissioners.

New Business

To begin New Business, Mr. Evans returned to the issue of board composition. He reported that the committee tasked with making recommendations for Commission composition met for the first time in the week prior to this meeting. The committee consists of Ms. Taylor, Ms. McCubbin, Mr. Evans, Ms. Dowd, Ms. Roof, Ms. Hatzel, Mr. Campbell from KCDHH, and Ms. Niehaus. The committee plans to submit its recommendations to the full Commission at the January 25th meeting. The goal is to have three meetings at which members examine the Commission's composition from different perspectives, such as geographical representation, hearing loss identity, whether one is a service provider, what type of group each Commissioner represents, and so forth. Mr. Evans emphasized that it was possible the committee would not recommend changes to the Commission at this time, and that in any event, changes would require the General Assembly to amend the relevant statute (KRS 163.506(1)(a)).

The Commissioners then engaged in a discussion about how best to conduct outreach to the public considering the large number of new applicants for the weather radio program. Ms. Dowd pointed out that many people who have a hearing loss do not think of themselves as deaf or hard of hearing, and this causes them to be unrepresented in groups like KAD or the Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA).

Mr. Evans then asked Ms. Dowd to report on a proposed redesign of the KCDHH website. Ms. Dowd began by explaining that the existing website is not as effective as it could be due to an overwhelming amount of information, some of which is also redundant. It currently contains around 250 individual pages. In the past year, 150 of those pages had fewer than five hits. Discussions have begun within KCDHH about how best to update the website, and Ms. Dowd asks that Commissioners inform her if they receive any feedback from their communities about the current site.

Mr. Evans reported that the dedicated emails and Google Suites were set up and awaiting distribution to the Commissioners.

Open Forum

At Ms. Hatzel's suggestion, Ms. Dowd informed the Commissioners about the proposed regulatory changes governing EIPA certification and licensing in Kentucky. The EIPA qualification was initially introduced to increase the number of educational interpreters in Kentucky. After a thoroughgoing discussion of the subject, Ms. Dowd told the Commissioners that KCDHH was observing the process and would make everyone aware of when the relevant legislative committee hearings took place.

Announcements

Ms. Roof noted that Hands and Voices' annual trivia night would take place on November 2nd at the Foundry in Frankfort. All Commissioners were encouraged to attend.

Finally, Mr. Evans announced that the next Executive Board meeting will take place via Zoom on December 13th, 2024 and the next full Commission meeting will take place on January 24th, also via Zoom.

MS. TAYLOR MOVED TO ADJOURN. MS. KELLY SECONDED. The meeting was adjourned at 3:19 pm.