



**STATE OF NEW MEXICO
COMMISSION FOR DEAF & HARD OF HEARING**

*Quarterly Board Meeting
Thursday, September 10, 2020
3:00 p.m.*

*The meeting was held remotely via zoom and the public could view the meeting
livestream on YouTube with interpreting and captioning at
https://youtu.be/J6rp_c89laE*

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Concha Dunwell called the meeting to order at 3:04 p.m. Lori Neubauer, Administrative Operations Specialist, called roll call.

Present: Ms. Concha Dunwell
Ms. Joanne Corwin, designee for NMSD Superintendent
Dr. Michael O'Brien
Mr. Francis Vigil
Mr. Johnny Robertson
Mr. John Hooper

Quorum was met.

Six staff members from NMCDHH were present via Zoom: Executive Director Nathan Gomme, Deborah Romero, Lisa Dignan, Corina Gutiérrez, Lori Neubauer, and Jessica Eubank. Jessica Eubank interpreted the meeting along with Andrea Ginn, Ashley Wachter, and Rachelle Clifford. Assistant Attorney General Delilah Tenorio was also present. Lenore Schatz provided CART transcription.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Chair Concha Dunwell asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

21.1

Commissioner Michael O'Brien made a motion to approve the agenda.

Commissioner Francis Vigil seconded.

Ms. Neubauer took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Dunwell – Yes

Commissioner Corwin – Yes

Commissioner O'Brien – Yes

Commissioner Vigil – Yes

Commissioner Robertson – Yes

Commissioner Hooper – Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF JUNE 11, 2020 MINUTES

Chair Dunwell asked if there were any changes to the minutes from June 11, 2020.

21.2

Commissioner Joanne Corwin made the motion to accept the minutes as written.

Commissioner John Hooper seconded.

Ms. Neubauer took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Dunwell – Yes

Commissioner Corwin – Yes

Commissioner O'Brien – Yes

Commissioner Vigil -Yes

Commissioner Hooper – Yes

Commissioner Johnny Robertson was not present during vote due to technical issues.

Motion passed with majority vote.

IV. REPORTS

a. Executive Director Report

Executive Director Nathan Gomme reported that the pandemic is still in full force. New Mexico is in a positive trend as there are lower numbers, but nationally we are still on shaky ground. The health of the community is important to CDHH; we want to host events and participate in booths, but we cannot due to the restrictions of the number of people who gather and our current public health orders. This means that we must re-invent our approach to our work.

Executive Director Gomme said that one of the biggest challenges still is that the entire state does not have accessible internet services, making it a challenge to provide events and booths to the community who needs them. We have started developing a plan working with our vendors Hamilton and Teltex.

Hamilton has the capability of hosting virtual vendor conferences and we have been in communication with them about how to accomplish that. They also have the capability of providing Continuing Education Units (CEUs), so we are collaborating on that as well.

We also are discussing what we can do in person and what that would look like. We have purchased Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including shields that would allow us to interact with people face to face. There is a problem with masks as Deaf and Hard of Hearing cannot see the mouth when spoken to. Clear masks are available, but there are concerns about the efficiency in preventing the spread of the virus. We are continuing to research a variety of different tools and resources.

Our vendor, Teltex, has created a video that shows all the equipment we provide in our Telecommunication Equipment Distribution (TED) program and it doesn't require internet access. The video can be installed directly on an iPad and the iPad does have 4G internet access. We can send our constituents the iPad and when it is received, they can look at the different options and select the equipment that is right for them. We would have a video conference that would be set up before hand and we will have an audiologist on the call to discuss the specifics of that individual's hearing loss. Since many people do not feel safe going to an audiologist appointment right now to get their audiogram, we would be able to have communication with the audiologist using that platform. When all is done, they will send the iPad back to Teltex who will wipe it clean and sanitize it so it can be sent to the next person.

The next big challenge is the budget. State funding is on the decline and we have already seen reductions to the general fund, and we will most likely see more. We have already expressed our concerns to the legislature, and they have told us that the Taxation and Revenue Department is understaffed, so they are not able to do the audit process that they need to do for us. The pandemic has made that situation worse. We are still constantly in contact with them about this issue.

Executive Director Gomme said that with the challenge of the declining revenue there has been an increase in the need for Traditional Relay Services (TRS). One of the TRS services CTS has had a 36% increase as of July and the increased numbers didn't stop there. There is a continual increase in usage moving through August, and if we are in the midst of this pandemic, we are going to see those numbers climb. He said he has heard stories about people using Relay for academic course work, and people using Relay to access their mental health providers, so what would have been a five minute call has become hours and hours of Relay service minutes being used.

Executive Director Gomme said that on a positive note, CDHH did receive an increase in funding for the Deaf-Blind Deaf Plus Program. We want to have discussions about how to address the pandemic for those in that community. We are very grateful money is there for those who need it.

Back to the concern of masks, those who are Deaf-Blind and are in need of communication, masks present a unique challenge, as well as Hard of Hearing and a large portion of our Senior population. We are working with the Disability Access and Functional Needs (DAFN) group. The Department of Health, Children Youth and Families Department (CYFD), the Attorney General's office, the Commission for the Blind, the Developmental Disabilities Planning Council (DDPC), and DVR are all involved in the DAFN. DAFN meets on a weekly basis, and CDHH's new commissioner, John Hooper, was able to participate in one of the recent meetings. Everyone was attentive and aware of the challenges that exist, but the bottom line is that masks are an issue and they are also here to stay. We are working on providing training for people about best practices regarding the use of masks, and the Department of Health is looking at the potential of buying more transparent masks.

Executive Director Gomme had new information regarding an Android phone, specifically the Google Pixel phone, which now has Live Transcribe. It will caption a phone call in real time. All Pixel devices will have the capability of doing that now as well as Android devices level 10 or more recent.

Another issue we've had in the past is interacting with our New Mexico Legislature. We spoke with them about captioning their sessions, and they stated they will provide captioning and are determining how to provide that now. One of the committees, the Committee for Health and Human Services, provides interpreters for their committee meetings. The pandemic has created some access to interpreters and captioners that were not previously provided.

Executive Director Gomme said that one of his goals this year is to emphasize the need for more broadband access throughout the state of New Mexico. There are places in areas of the state that have no internet access, which means that individuals in those communities are not able to get the resources they need. CDHH has been pushing that we would like to see more broadband access in rural areas, and we will be supporting the push for that in the next legislative session. This is related to Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals needs for access to education, medical and health services, as well as other needs that our community is facing.

Chair Concha Dunwell asked if there was some way, despite the issues with funds, that the schools could provide hot spots for those families that don't have internet. Executive Director Gomme replied that the Public Education Department has worked with the DAFN and have talked about the need for internet access, and the New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD) has provided many hot spots already. However, he had heard that some families have tried to use those hot spots and still were unable to get internet access. Some areas have been provided buses that create mobile hot spots that they can use while traveling from location to location, the result have been mixed so far due to coverage. That is why there is a push for a widespread broadband across the state. It's unacceptable that some of our children cannot access their education, and it's unacceptable that the community is not able to access services.

b. Department Reports Q & A

There were no questions on the Community Advocacy or Community Engagement reports. Commissioner Hooper had a question about the expenditures being higher than the revenue. Deborah Romero, CFO, explained that what he was seeing on the report was the General Fund that was allocated for FY20 and what was collected in the TRS for FY20. She explained that we also have a special supplemental revenue of \$400,000. There was sufficient revenue to cover the budget.

Executive Director Gomme said we don't exceed what is in our budget, but there are concerns about receiving enough revenue to satisfy what our budgetary needs are. Therefore Ms. Romero and the Executive Director have ongoing discussions with Taxation and Revenue to discuss the need to fix and improve our TRS revenue.

V. ACTION ITEMS

There were no action items.

VI. NEW BUSINESS

There was no new business.

VII. ADJOURNMENT

21.3

Commissioner Johnny Robertson made a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner John Hooper seconded.

Ms. Neubauer took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Dunwell – Yes

Commissioner Corwin – Yes

Commissioner O'Brien – Yes

Commissioner Vigil - Yes

Commissioner Robertson – Yes

Commissioner Hooper - Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori G. Neubauer

Lori G. Neubauer
Administrative Operations Specialist