



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

*Thursday, September 19, 2019  
NMCDHH Conference Room  
505 Marquette Avenue NW, Suite 1550  
Albuquerque, NM 87102  
3:00 p.m.*

*This meeting was preceded by a board training by Assistant District Attorney Delilah Tenorio from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Present were board members Concha Dunwell, Rosemary Gallegos, Johnny Robertson, Josh Pando, and Don Johnson. Chair Austin Welborn was not in attendance.*

**I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Vice-Chair Concha Dunwell called the meeting to order at 3:20 p.m. and proceeded with roll call.

Present: Concha Dunwell, Vice-Chair  
Rosemary Gallegos  
Johnny Robertson  
Josh Pando  
Don Johnson

Absent: Austin Welborn

Quorum was met.

Nine staff members from NMCDHH were present: Executive Director Nathan Gomme, Deborah Romero, Lisa Dignan, Lori Neubauer, Corina Gutiérrez, Louise Chavez-Rasgado, Roger Robb, Jason Siergey, and Andrea Ginn. Five interpreters were present, Andrea Ginn, Rachelle Clifford, Jessica Eubank, Gabriella Rivera, and Sierra Knight. Three members of the community were in the audience.

**II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Vice-Chair Dunwell asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

**20.1**

Commissioner Johnny Robertson made a motion to approve the agenda.  
Commissioner Josh Pando seconded.  
Motion passed unanimously.

**III. APPROVAL OF JUNE 6, 2019 MINUTES**

Vice-Chair Dunwell asked if the commissioners accepted the minutes as written.

## 20.2

Commissioner Johnny Robertson made the motion to accept the minutes as written.  
Commissioner Rosemary Gallegos seconded.  
Motion passed unanimously.

## IV. REPORTS

### a. *Executive Director's Report*

Executive Director, Nathan Gomme announced that the board had just had a wonderful training from our general counsel from the Office of the New Mexico Attorney General, Delilah Tenorio, to make sure we are following procedures.

Executive Director Gomme stated that he had been attending several conferences related to telecommunications, relay services, and equipment distribution. As those who just attended the training are aware, the Commission for Deaf and Hard of Hearing's primary focus is on relay service administration and telecommunication equipment distribution, which is a mandate from the federal government.

At one of the conferences Executive Director Gomme attended, there was discussion about access for the senior citizen community and understanding their needs. The National Association for the Deaf (NAD) and the National Association for State Agencies for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NASADHH) came together in a town hall on a national level with Deaf seniors. They had an in-depth discussion of what the community needs are and how the states can improve. Some receive food and medicines, but with no communication. There isn't training for caregivers who are Deaf to provide those services, and most hearing caregivers are unaware of what a person with hearing loss needs.

One woman, Marina, in New York City established her own Deaf-owned company to provide long-term care services and hires Deaf staff or people who sign fluently and are familiar with deafness and hearing loss. They currently have 80-100 staff members. NASADHH will be working with Marina and gather information from her for the best models for all states. Executive Director Gomme will personally reach out to her to discuss her work.

The other part of the discussion with seniors was how to ensure that they have access to telecommunications throughout the various levels or stages they are in, whether they are at home, in assisted living, at a medical center or in hospice. There are four main video relay service companies: Sorenson, ZVRS, Convo and Global VRS. Global doesn't have as much of a presence but it is one of the companies. Sorenson has videos about their products, but the question is are they talking about critical issues to the senior community, for example, long-term care and health insurance. The same is true for ZVRS and Convo, and we were wondering if they could take the lead in education. We had a discussion with the VRS providers and are working on coming up with a plan. We also talked to Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS) providers and relay providers to determine whether they have effective communication when a person is in long-term care facilities and if they visit senior centers or if they even work with them at their homes. What we found was that there are many issues with internet access and that the level of complexity in working with these centers can make it challenging for those companies to address it, so there is a lot of work to do when it comes to telecommunications in facilities. There is also the matter of long-term care needs be addressed earlier and encouraging people not to wait until people are in their 60's and 70's. There needs to be more exposure to these topics.

Executive Director Gomme also attended training from the FCC and was able to discuss what the FCC is doing and what projections they had for the future of telecommunications. One big topic is that Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR) is here and the FCC wants that to be a part of relay services. He attended a presentation from a professor who was an expert in ASR and the prediction is that ASR won't be close to perfect for at least ten years, so he was advised against the use of ASR until it is perfected. However,

the FCC has received advice from the companies saying they are ready to go now, so this is a concern. Executive Director Gomme said he wanted to see it in operation, so he saw ASR being used by Google which was impressive. He also saw a live presentation of Google Meet. They used slides and there was ASR captioning at the bottom and CART was streamed at the top. The ASR was fast and had appropriate punctuation. It wasn't perfect, but it was impressive. It's definitely a viable technology for the future, that the companies are testing and using it now.

ASR uses a system called "machine learning". Everything is uploaded into a server which breaks down speech to better learn how to recognize vocal intonation, speech, and the nuances. Even the Spanish vernacular that we use in New Mexico can be learned and adapted to. The word choice may be off, but it will learn to correct that over time. The FCC has shown that they want it now, since the use of ASR and its increase it will decrease the rate of IP CTS costs.

The FCC also brought up for discussion the use of ten-digit numbers software conference calls like Skype and Zoom. This could allow an individual to place a call to 911 using those devices and also access interpreter services. It makes sense to have and use whatever resource is available to make that call. There were also discussions about how most Deaf or hard of hearing people have 20 separate phone numbers for their personal phone number and don't want that, for example Sorenson, Convo, ZVRS, etc. They have all of these numbers because they aren't interoperable. The Deaf and hard of hearing want to use the tools they have and just give the one number like everyone else so they can just tell someone to call them at their number and have it work no matter what they are using.

Executive Director Gomme added that as mentioned before traditional telecommunications relay service (TRS) is separate from IP CTS. The FCC announced it will be making a revision to the rules related to TRS. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Communications and Video Access Act is a federal mandate passed in 2010. All the new technology must have language that will fit that mandate so the TRS rules may need to be revised to comply. At this point Executive Director Gomme does not know how this will impact our Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program.

**b. Department Reports**

**i. Community Advocacy**

Corina Gutiérrez, Director of Community Advocacy, informed the Board that Community Advocacy Specialist, Cheryl Padilla, has left the agency. There are now two vacant Community Advocate positions. Ms. Gutiérrez wanted to thank Roger Robb and the Las Cruces Staff, Sandra Williams and Susana Santillan, for taking over Ms. Padilla's responsibilities.

At the last meeting, staff talked about the goal of having video phones in libraries all over the state. Recently one was set up in the Roswell library. The community is very excited about using it. CDHH is still trying to get video phones in other cities.

The United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) will have a workshop tomorrow night sponsored by CDHH partnering with Amy Gomme from COPD at the USCIS building. Susana Santillan from the Las Cruces office will be representing CDHH.

Ms. Gutiérrez introduced Roger Robb, Community Education Specialist, who informed the Board about the success of the latest "Coffee with a Cop" event. Mr. Robb announced that the event took place on August 31<sup>st</sup> at the Albuquerque Police Academy with over-90 people in attendance. There were about 14 police officers at the event and members from the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind communities. All were able to interact with the police officers. This time there was a simulation of a traffic stop so that community members would know what to expect if they ever are pulled over by a police officer. CDHH hopes to have more events like this in the future and expand to other cities like Las Cruces, Roswell, and Santa Fe.

Commissioner Robertson mentioned he was there as a Support Service Provider (SSP) with a Deaf-Blind client. He was impressed with the officers interacting with the Deaf and Deaf-Blind people there.

Executive Director Gomme added that there was a team of interpreters, CART, and Loop was set up to accommodate everyone.

Mr. Robb mentioned that the channel 4 news came and as part of their report, they filmed the placards. The Commission has been explaining to interested individuals that we are still in the process of training officers before the placards are distributed. Executive Director Gomme added that we don't want to distribute them before law enforcement officers and users know exactly how to use them.

Next Mr. Robb talked about working with Lisa McNiven on the emergency preparedness training for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Deaf-Blind communities in September. Ms. Padilla had resigned at that point, so Mr. Robb took over. There were about 20 people in attendance, and it was well received. The training will be expanded to different organizations such as NMSD.

## **ii. Community Engagement**

Lisa Dignan, Director of Community Engagement, reported that the fall 2019 session of New Mexico Mentoring was underway. There is a small group this time, but it is going well.

Ms. Dignan has been working with the governor's office to appoint members to the licensure board so they will once again have a quorum and be able to meet. It's not done yet, but they are working hard and making good progress.

The video phone that was installed at the Sunport was put away temporarily while the information desk was being moved. Although it is not available now, it will be wall mounted which will be better. Also, a second VP is also going to be installed and Ms. Dignan hopes both will be operational by autumn.

Andrea Ginn has again attended the Mental Health Interpreting Training Alumni Session in Montgomery, Alabama and returned with more wonderful resources for New Mexico.

Ms. Ginn is currently working with five new apprentices who were selected for FY20. She provided a five-part workshop on the Demand Control Schema. One of the apprentices, Sara Eaves, is in the audience and other apprentices will be here at future meetings so that the commissioners can meet them.

Ms. Dignan said that Human Resources has kept her very busy. As Ms. Gutiérrez mentioned, Cheryl Padilla left the agency which means that in an agency of 16, there are five vacancies, which is impacting our ability to continue our services effectively. Two positions have been posted and are now closed. Qualified applicants have applied, and interviews are scheduled. After that, we will be working on the three remaining positions.

Commissioner Robertson asked about the vacant positions. Ms. Dignan replied that two are advocates for Ms. Gutiérrez's department, one is a finance position in Deborah Romero's department, one is the Community Engagement Specialist that Rich Bailey left vacant in her own department, and the last one is the also in Ms. Gutiérrez's department which is the position that Sam Martinez vacated a while ago. There will be some significant reworking to that position, so there isn't a title on that position yet. The person in that position will hopefully be able to work with the technical things that Executive Director Gomme talks about. That specialist will take some of the pressure off him and the Commission will have a better division of duties.

Commissioner Dunwell asked why interviews for the other three positions have not yet been set. Executive Director Gomme explained that because our revenue has been dropping, CDHH has been using the vacancy savings to continue agency operations. This is and has been a problem since we can't hire someone we cannot pay. As we are working on fixing our revenue issues, the hiring process must be slow and gradual. We are waiting on a response from the Taxation and Revenue Department (TRD)

which found some things that were not in compliance. Deborah Romero has been working with them tirelessly to get these issues fixed so that we will see more revenue.

**iii. Finance and Administration**

Deborah Romero, Director of Administrative Services and CFO, stated that she had more information regarding the TRS revenue. For FY19, \$1.6 million was collected. So far in FY20, a little more than \$200,000 has been collected. She is projecting \$1.5 million in revenue FY20, which is not enough to cover expenses. Ms. Romero said that we did have a little more of general fund, but we know that we are going to have to do another special appropriation request which she would start working on in the next couple of weeks. Both our Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) and Department of Finance and Administration (DFA) analysts are aware what is happening and are working with the Commission to work with TRD in researching what is happening and where we need to move forward. Nothing has been disclosed to us regarding what companies are not submitting what was collected or the amounts collected. Ms. Romero said she would pass on the information when she knows more.

For FY19, the Commission expended 63% of the budget. We closed out the fiscal year and met all deadlines and opened the new fiscal year with no problems. Everything, with the exception of the revenue, is moving smoothly.

**V. ACTION ITEMS**

There were no action items.

**VI. NEW BUSINESS**

There was no new business.

**VII. ADJOURNMENT**

Vice-Chair Dunwell called for a motion to adjourn.

**20.3**

Commissioner Robertson made a motion to adjourn.  
Commissioner Gallegos seconded.  
Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lori G. Neubauer

Lori G. Neubauer  
Administrative Operations Specialist