



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

*Quarterly Board Meeting
Thursday, June 10, 2021.
3:00pm*

*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/hs6AiEOEL-Q>

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Concha Dunwell called the meeting to order at 3:06pm. Trevor Brennan, Administrative Operations Specialist, called roll call.

Present: Mrs. Concha Dunwell
Dr. Rosemary Gallegos
Dr. Dan Drury
Mr. Francis Vigil
Dr. Ronald Stern
Mr. John Hooper

Quorum was met.

Six staff members from NMCDHH were present via Zoom: Executive Director Nathan Gomme, Deborah Romero, Lisa Dignan, Corina Gutierrez, Trevor Brennan 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 from ACS provided CART transcription.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

21.14

Commissioner Stern made a motion to approve the agenda.

Commissioner Vigil seconded.

Mr. Brennan took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Dunwell – Yes

Commissioner Drury – Yes

Commissioner Stern – Yes

Commissioner Gallegos – Yes

Commissioner Vigil – Yes

Commissioner Hooper – Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

III. APPROVAL OF March 11, 2021 Minutes

Chair Dunwell asked if there were any changes to the minutes from March 11, 2021. Commissioner Stern pointed out that the “vulnerable positions” wording on page 3 of the minutes should be corrected to read “vulnerable populations”. The board accepted this change, and Chair Dunwell asked for a motion to approve the minutes as amended.

21.15

Commissioner Hooper made the motion to accept the minutes as amended.

Commissioner Vigil seconded.

Mr. Brennan took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Dunwell – Yes

Commissioner Gallegos – Yes

Commissioner Drury – Yes

Commissioner Vigil – Yes

Commissioner Stern – Yes

Commissioner Hooper – Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

IV. REPORTS

a. Executive Director Report

Executive Director Gomme reviewed some of the contents of the ADA kit mentioned in his report with the board. The ADA kits will start arriving the week of July 13th, and there are a total of 25 kits, with 25 more expected to be ordered in the next fiscal year. The kits contain various items that help a variety of individuals with disabilities, such as: a magnifying glass, a tape measure (to measure space for wheelchairs and equipment), a Wi-Fi hotspot, a portable T-coil loop, and an iPad with various accessibility apps. These kits will be distributed throughout the state. These kits are not only for vaccine events, they can also be used in the event of mass evacuations (such as those required due to a natural disaster), or other emergency situations.

The Commission continues to work with other organizations to ensure that vulnerable populations have access to the vaccine. One of the ways that this is being addressed is through collaborative town hall meetings. One town hall meeting has already occurred, and the second will be this evening, June 10. During the first town hall on April 20, a Deaf physician named Lorne Farovitch, who has been studying the coronavirus, presented and was able to explain important information to the community. Dr. Farovitch is also a person of color and was able to work with and address the concerns of the BIPOC community. After this town hall, an increase in the number of registrations to receive the vaccine was noted.

Additionally, there were two recent vaccination events hosted collaboratively with the Community Outreach Program for the Deaf (COPD) and other organizations for Deaf, DeafBlind, Deaf Plus, and Deaf senior citizens. These events were held at the Berna Facio Professional Development Center in Albuquerque. In southern New Mexico, there was an issue regarding interpreting services and the Commission was able to work with the Department of Health (DOH) to have these issues fixed. Overall, New Mexico has been one of the best states in regard to vaccine rollout.

Chair Dunwell asked if there has been additional guidance regarding the possibility of a 3rd (booster) shot. Executive Director Gomme responded that nothing has been finalized at this time, but current guidance suggests it will be a process very similar to receiving the flu shot annually.

Work continues on text to 911 services. The state has signed a contract with a provider for SMS text services, the text will be displayed on a computer so that a 911 dispatcher can respond to a text within their Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). Work continues on funding sources. Currently, the state is on track to have the system in place and ready to go by 2025. More information about Text to 911 will be distributed to New Mexico residents through a variety of social media and news outlets, and will benefit all populations, not just the Deaf and Hard of Hearing communities.

In regard to the legislative session, some very important bills passed. House Bill 10 and Senate Bill 93 are important acts to bolster New Mexico's internet accessibility, which currently ranks 49th in the United States, above Alaska. Implementation of these bills is currently a work in progress. The Commission saw some reduction in the general fund funding, but this was expected, and the Commission will be able to continue offering services effectively. TRS funding continues to decline, so talks with legislative members to address changes in TRS funding language are ongoing. House Bill 237, which impacted Deaf Education, did not make it out of committee.

Commissioner Stern asked if anything was being done regarding the accessibility rules for both the House and Senate chambers at the State Capitol. Executive Director Gomme briefly explained that many of the processes and rules are very different for both chambers. Conversations were held with both groups, and Executive Director Gomme shares the frustrations that people with disabilities have faced in regard to equal access. These conversations will be continuing this summer, and Executive Director Gomme is working to ensure that accessibility improves before the next legislative session.

Commissioner Stern asked if there were any other bills that did not pass that would have impacted New Mexico residents with disabilities. Executive Director Gomme responded that a bill related to Division of Vocational Rehabilitation did not pass, though it is unclear why.

Commissioner Vigil expressed concern regarding ongoing accessibility issues such as public captioning of events and on televisions located in public places and asked if anything could be done outside of the legislative process, such as through Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) advocacy. Executive Director Gomme pointed out that the ADA does not cover the majority of today's technology, which was invented after the ADA was written. Some of these items are covered under the Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010, but not all. For example, the captioning of social media content, such as on TikTok or Facebook Live, are not covered by this act. ADA accessibility language is also very broad, for example most Deaf community members prefer Open Caption at movie theaters, however under the ADA, captioning glasses are a reasonable accommodation. Unfortunately, the law-making process on both the National and State level is not rapid. Work has been ongoing for over 20 years to have Hearing Aids labeled as a medical device, but this has still not been resolved.

Commissioner Vigil asked what groups are in New Mexico advocating at a state level. Executive Director Gomme responded that in addition to the Commission, The New Mexico Association for the Deaf (NMAD), The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) New Mexico Chapters, the New Mexico School for the Deaf (NMSD), and the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) continue to advocate for New Mexico's Deaf and Hard of Hearing populations.

Chair Dunwell commented that the accessibility situation seems even worse in southern New Mexico, as most advocacy efforts begin in the northern metropolitan areas. Executive Director Gomme acknowledged that he had heard of this issue before, and pointed out that a southern New Mexican Deaf resident, JoJo Lopez, would be presenting in the town hall meeting this evening. The Commission continues to make efforts to connect with southern New Mexicans to discuss the issues facing Deaf and Hard of Hearing residents. However, these discussions require participation and involvement from those residents. Executive Director Gomme reiterated that we strongly encourage southern New Mexico

residents to contact us if they have any concerns or ideas for improvement. Chair Dunwell will encourage people to contact the Commission as she is able.

The Commissioners and Executive Director Gomme held a brief discussion about the importance of advocacy and communication in improving the lives of New Mexico residents. There are multiple programs around the state working to address these issues, such as Jr. NAD training, Deaf Self-Advocacy Training that Corina Gutierrez is trained as a facilitator and instructor for, and NMAD's partnership with the National Association for the Deaf (NAD) for advocacy training, some of which will occur at this fall's NMAD conference. Commissioner Stern shared that NMAD is working to become more politically active in the state, and strongly encourages more Deaf and Hard of Hearing residents to become involved with the organization. A recent NMAD town hall meeting had low attendance. Low participation and lack of effective communication continue to be challenges for many organizations. The Commission is actively working to improve communication and awareness across a variety of channels, such as through VLOGs and partnerships with other organizations such as the Department of Health, which allows us to broaden our communication abilities and reach more residents. The Commission recently launched a revamped website that is more accessible, and lists many tools and resources.

b. Department Reports Q & A

There were no questions regarding the Community Advocacy, Community Engagement, or Administration & Finance reports.

V. Action Items

There were no action items for this meeting. At the next meeting on September 9th, the Commission will need to elect a new Vice-Chair to replace former Commissioner O'Brien. The board will also welcome a new ex-officio member, Dr. Jennifer Herbold, who will be replacing Commissioner Gallegos as she is retiring as the Superintendent of NMSD. Dr. Jennifer Herbold was recently selected by the NMSD Board, and is the first Deaf woman Superintendent in NMSD history. Executive Director Gomme and the Commissioners thanked Commissioner Gallegos for her many years of work, engagement, and service to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community, and especially with New Mexican Deaf and Hard of Hearing children.

Chair Dunwell asked if the next Commission Board meeting would be in person. Executive Director Gomme responded that at this time, there are no anticipated changes to meeting structure. The next Board meeting on September 9th will occur in the same format, hosted on Zoom and livestreamed on YouTube. There was no further discussion.

V. ADJOURNMENT

21.16

Commissioner Vigil made a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Hooper seconded.

Mr. Brennan took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Dunwell – Yes

Commissioner Drury – Yes

Commissioner Stern – Yes

Commissioner Gallegos – Yes

Commissioner Vigil – Yes

Commissioner Hooper – Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:39pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Trevor M. Brennan

Trevor Brennan
Administrative Operations Specialist