



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

*Quarterly Board Meeting
Thursday, September 9, 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/3ussAPYYHTs>*

I. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Concha Dunwell called the meeting to order at 3:04pm. Trevor Brennan, Administrative Operations Specialist, called roll call.

Present: Mrs. Concha Dunwell
Dr. Jennifer Herbold
Dr. Dan Drury
Mr. Francis Vigil
Mr. John Hooper

Absent: Dr. Ronald Stern

Quorum was met.

Six staff members from NMCDHH were present via Zoom: Executive Director Nathan Gomme, Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Deborah Romero, Community Engagement Director Lisa Dignan, Director of Community Advocacy Corina Gutierrez, Community Engagement Specialist Jessica Eubank, and Trevor Brennan. Jessica Eubank interpreted the meeting along with Andrea Ginn and Ashley Wachter. Assistant Attorney General Delilah Tenorio was also present. Lenore Schatz from ACS provided CART transcription.

II. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Before Chair Dunwell held a vote to approve the agenda, Executive Director Gomme asked that the agenda be modified to have the board training by Assistant Attorney General Delilah Tenorio take place during the December Board Meeting, or at another meeting to be scheduled. This change is due to only having 3 ASL interpreters instead of the usual 4, and the absence of the NMAD representative.

Chair Dunwell asked for a motion to approve the agenda as amended.

21.17

Commissioner Hooper made a motion to approve the agenda as amended.
Commissioner Drury seconded.
Mr. Brennan took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Dunwell – Yes
Commissioner Drury – Yes

Commissioner Herbold – Yes
Commissioner Vigil – Yes

Commissioner Hooper – Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

III. **APPROVAL OF June 10, 2021 MINUTES**

Chair Dunwell asked if there were any changes to the minutes from June 10, 2021. There were no comments or changes. Chair Dunwell asked for a motion to approve the minutes as written.

21.18

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

Commissioner Herbold seconded.

Mr. Brennan took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Dunwell – Yes

Commissioner Herbold – Yes

Commissioner Drury – Yes

Commissioner Vigil – Yes

Commissioner Hooper – Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

IV. **REPORTS**

a. Executive Director Report

Executive Director Gomme shared that we saw the highest number of relay minutes in years during the pandemic, and then as the state began to reopen, the minutes dropped significantly. As the COVID Delta variant is currently spreading rapidly, we are again seeing an increase in the number of minutes, as people are staying home again. We are currently in the last year of our agreement with Hamilton Relay, and this means the highest per minute cost. This will need be addressed with a Request for Proposal (RFP) in the coming fiscal year. We have also seen a 33% increase in captioned telephone services (CTS), and we have also seen an increase in Traditional Relay Services (TRS) usage as well. If concerns about COVID variants continues to be high, we anticipate a continued increase in minutes, and therefore cost.

With the upcoming RFP, it is anticipated that the cost for relay services for the next agreement will be almost double based on national data. This is something that will have to be monitored as revenues continue to decrease. The future of relay usage will also heavily depend on the reopening of the state, and continued work on internet infrastructure. Even as reopening progresses, we anticipate many services around the state will be permanently tele based which will impact relay.

The ADA kits we helped to develop and distribute have proven to be successful, and they are very much in use. One situation where the ADA kit will be used is at a mass vaccination event in Santa Fe. The city of Santa Fe is currently looking into purchasing ADA kits of their own, and we have had discussions with them regarding their use. We are also aware of other areas and agencies in the state that are interested in having ADA kits of their own to improve their accommodation abilities. These ADA kits have been a very positive outcome during COVID, and if a third vaccine booster shot is needed, we anticipate them being in use heavily at booster shot events.

With regards to the pandemic, the State of New Mexico was able to re-open during the summer, and for a time was able to reduce its mask mandates. As the Delta variant began to spread, mask mandates have

been re-instated, and this creates a communication barrier for Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The Access and Functional Needs (AFN) coalition had been meeting less as COVID case numbers decreased, but meetings are now occurring more frequently as we begin to plan for booster shot events and deal with communication barriers. Currently there are no firm plans for the booster, and we continue to work the Department of Health to distribute the vaccine to those with disabilities and access needs with additional barriers such as transportation issues. We are also working to address barriers encountered with COVID testing, both on site and at home. We are currently waiting on guidance from the Federal Government on many of the issues related to the booster.

The Commission has re-opened via appointment only, and all visitors must complete a health screening and contact tracing form to help keep everyone safe. We also have policies in place for testing and quarantining in the event of an exposure. So far, things have been going well and due to our well-developed policies and procedures and our high departmental vaccination rate, some of our staff have returned to working in the office full time. There is now a vaccine mandate (with some exceptions) for all state employees, and we continue to use appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as needed.

b. Department Reports Q & A

Executive Director Gomme highlighted the great success that we had at the Berna Facio mass vaccination event as described in Lisa Dignan's Community Engagement report. Mrs. Dignan, Executive Director Gomme, and several interpreters were on site for the event and were able to work with the community to overcome initial hesitations, and highlight the accessibility equipment that we are able to offer. This was the first time we were able to demo the captioning tablets to community members, and we also saw an increase in Telecommunication Equipment Distribution Program (TEDP) requests as a result.

Commissioner Vigil asked for more information regarding the conversations that the Commission has had with New Mexico Tribal communities. Executive Director Gomme, Ms. Gutierrez, and Thomas Sena from Hamilton have had several meetings with a Rebecca Baca, who is the Tribal Liaison with ALTSD Office of Indian Elder Affairs, on how to address better work with the various communities and address communication access, technological challenges, and how to inform various Tribal entities about the services the Commission offers.

Commissioners Vigil, Herbold, Chair Dunwell, and Executive Director Gomme discussed the importance of working with all members of Tribal communities, and the importance of dissemination of information in a variety of ways and through interagency collaboration. Chair Dunwell asked if there was any data on the number of Deaf and Hard of Hearing individuals within the indigenous community in New Mexico. Collecting data has been difficult and we have not seen any official data available, but the Commission has made efforts to work with a variety of individuals from a diverse number of Tribes over the years to collect said data. Data collection is an ongoing issue, and is a frequent topic of discussion when working with other agencies. Another barrier that can affect information dissemination is the low number of potential interpreters who are fluent in a Tribal language, this is also true of Spanish, Russian and other spoken languages. Addressing communication barriers with Tribal communities is an ongoing, complex discussion, one that the Commission is looking forward to being part of going forward.

V. ACTION ITEMS

a. Election of Vice-Chair

Due to the departure of Dr. O' Brien, a new Vice-Chair needed be elected. Chair Dunwell asked for nominations for Vice-Chair from the other commissioners. Hearing none, Chair Dunwell nominated Commissioner Hooper, who accepted. There were no other nominations for Vice-Chair.

21.19

Chair Dunwell asked for a vote to elect Commissioner Hooper as Vice-Chair.

Mr. Brennan took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Dunwell – Yes

Commissioner Drury – Yes

Commissioner Hooper – N/A

Commissioner Herbold – Yes

Commissioner Vigil – Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hooper thanked his fellow commissioners for their trust in him, and looks forward to working with them.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

21.20

Commissioner Vigil made a motion to adjourn.

Commissioner Hooper seconded.

Mr. Brennan took a roll call vote:

Commissioner Dunwell – Yes

Commissioner Drury – Yes

Commissioner Hooper – Yes

Commissioner Herbold – Yes

Commissioner Vigil – Yes

Motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:58pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Trevor M. Brennan

Trevor Brennan
Administrative Operations Specialist