

Please Note: This is not an approved copy of the minutes for the 2/15/23 meeting of the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

## Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

### February 15, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

**Commissioners Attending:** *Kimberly Marthers, Tim Riker, Bunmi Osho, Betsy Beach, David Mallowney, Rainer Randall, Caroline Obrecht*

**Commissioner not Attending:** *None*

**Staff Attending:** *Charlotte Spinkston, Bethany Lenk, Michael Baer, Alex Laferriere*

**Public Attending:** *Earnest Covington III, Aimee Slezak, Heather Anderson, Jen Alleman*

**Communication Accommodations:** *Interpreters: Joan Wattman, Arkady Belozovsky, Amy Corey  
CART service: remote*

**Location:** *Cafeteria, RI School for the Deaf*

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Kimberly Marthers, Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:24 pm. The roll call was conducted and the quorum was met with 7 commissioners in attendance. Kimberly Marthers read RICDHH's Mission Statement, Vision, and Guiding Principles.

**Review of 12/21/22 Meeting Minutes:** Tim Riker made a motion to approve the 12/21/22 meeting minutes as written. Bunmi Osho seconded the motion. The motion passed, five in favor, two abstaining (5-0-2).

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** Earnest Covington III, former RICDHH Executive Director, stated "I wish you the best of luck in hiring the best choice for the new Executive Director."

#### **INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT:**

- Charlotte "Dee" Spinkston, Interim Executive Director, reported that Michael Baer has been working with IT to create a new RICDHH website. Bethany Lenk has also been involved in this process.
- Brent Tracy, the interpreter referral services/CART consultant, has done a fairly comprehensive assessment of the service and has made strong and concrete recommendations. The most substantial recommendation is to switch to a new software system, one that is less complicated and can be used and accessed by clients, community members, interpreters, and all of our partners in a way that's

much simpler. There will also be substantial savings. RICDHH is developing training plans so that all will know how to use the system.

- The position of office support contractor has been filled by Shante Golding.
- Legislative hearings on the budget will take place the last two weeks of March. Interim Executive Director Spinkston would like to have Mike Baer give part of the presentation as well as Pam Zellner and one of the commissioners. This presentation will share information about the commission, about our priorities and perspectives, and about the needs of the community.
- Interim Executive Director Spinkston and Pam Zellner recently spoke with the RI Deaf Senior Citizens group and talked to them about advocacy strategies.
- RICDHH consumer office hours are now 8:30 am to 4:00 pm Monday through Friday.

#### **OPEN BUSINESS:**

- Kellynette Gomez of Innivee Strategies reported on the search process for the next Executive Director of RICDHH. On February 25, 2023 the RICDHH Executive Board will meet to accept the search committee's recommendations. On March 1, 2023 there will be a training for the Commissioners on interviewing. On March 6, 2023 the finalists will visit RI. On March 8, 2023 the Board of Commissioners will make the final decision on who will be offered the position of Executive Director of RICDHH.

#### **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

- There were no committee reports. The Tech Access/Relay Service Committee will meet in March 2023.
- There was discussion about how to oversee the continuing HSTP Project.

Chairperson Marthers called a break at 7:25 pm. She called the meeting back to order at 7:34 pm.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

- If and when a legislative bill about the cost of hearing aids is submitted this year, then RICDHH will be open to discussing supporting this bill or not.
- Rainer Randall made a motion to extend the Interim Executive Director contract to April 30, 2023. Bunmi Osho seconded the motion. The motion passed, seven in favor, (7-0-0).
- Betsy Beach made a motion to transition to new Interpreter and CART Referral Service software. Caroline Obrecht seconded the motion. The motion passed, seven in favor, (7-0-0).

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Heather Anderson stated the need for a public report on the findings and recommendations for the new Interpreter and CART Referral Service software. Tim Riker stated that he is working with RI Senator Kallman on setting up some kind of fund or system so that if a deaf person were to attend anything related to politics or open meetings, it would be easier to get interpreters.

Chairperson Marthers adjourned the meeting at 8:00 pm.