

Please Note: This is not an approved copy of the minutes for the 5/9/23 meeting of the Rhode Island Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

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

### May 9, 2023 MEETING MINUTES

**Commissioners Attending:** *Caroline Obrecht, Betsy Beach, Tim Riker, David Mallowney, Rainer Randell*

**Commissioners Not Attending:** *Kimberly Marthers, Bunmi Osho*

**Staff Attending:** *Michael Baer, Bethany Lenk*

**Public Attending:** *Heather Anderson*  
*On Zoom: Shane Feldman, Danielle Loughlin, Bonnie Kaplan, Karina*

**Communication Accommodations:** *Interpreters: Tina Nelson, Amy Corey*  
*CART service: Remote*

**Location:** *Conference Room, RI School for the Deaf*

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Caroline Obrecht, Vice Chairperson, called the meeting to order at 6:11 pm. The roll call was conducted. The quorum was met with 5 commissioners in attendance. Caroline Obrecht read RICDHH's Mission Statement, Vision, and Guiding Principles.

#### **INTERIM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT:**

- Michael Baer represented Charlotte Spinkston at this meeting. He reported that the Interpreter and CART Referral Services will be presenting a full report at the May 17<sup>th</sup> RICDHH meeting.

#### **ELECTION OF TEMPORARY CHAIRPERSON AND CO-CHAIRPERSON:**

- Tim Riker made a motion to nominate Caroline Obrecht to take over as Chairperson for a temporary time period. David Mallowney seconded the motion. The motion passed, five in favor (5-0-0).
- Betsy Beach made a motion to nominate David Mallowney to take over as Vice Chairperson for a temporary time period. Rainer Randell seconded the motion. The motion passed, five in favor (5-0-0).

### **INNIVEE STRATEGIES CONTRACT:**

- Shane Feldman of Innivee Strategies wrote a letter asking for compensation for an additional thirty-three hours of time on their contract. RICDHH requested him to provide a detailed accounting of these hours.

Temporary Chairperson Obrecht called a break at 6:55 pm. The meeting resumed at 7:06 pm.

### **FY 2023 LEGISLATIVE BILLS:**

- Tim Riker explained that before the legislature starts to introduce a bill, they already have collaboration and have been developing language. The stakeholders are ready and have the information. It is ready to pass, but sometimes something will come up, such as a stakeholder forgets to include something or disagrees with something. Then the committee tends to listen to the feedback, and if that issue is resolved, then the bill can be changed. This tends to happen early, though, in March and April. In May is the time when everything starts to settle down and the legislature gets ready to prioritize which bills will be moving forward to committee to be heard and voted on, or which items will be considered dead in committee.
- Mike Baer stated that one of the Senator's offices reached out to Pam Zellner at RICDHH two or three weeks ago about Senate bill 0567 concerning increasing insurance coverage on hearing aids and making this coverage standard regardless of age. They asked what the commission's position was on this particular bill. Mike Baer then stated that this bill is not active currently.
- Tim Riker talked about another bill that came across this week that was amended through an open meeting. The bill would allow the use of Zoom or videoconferencing in meetings. Some parts of the bill are in direct conflict with how the Deaf community would run meetings. For instance, it states that everyone must have their cameras on. This would be in direct conflict with how the Deaf community would run a meeting. Knowing this, RICDHH could potentially reach out and initiate a better discussion or even present a separate bill in addition to the one presented.

### **UPDATES REGARDING THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH:**

- Temporary Chairperson Obrecht stated that RICDHH is waiting for HR to do the various steps that they require in order to move our candidate through the final stages of the process.

Temporary Chairperson Obrecht adjourned the meeting at 7:54 pm.