

*Approved September 13, 2024*

**Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of  
Hearing Full Commission Board Meeting  
Held at – 1313 Farnam St, Room 225, Omaha NE 68102  
June 7, 2024 Meeting Minutes**

**A. Welcome**

Chairperson Frances Beurivage called the meeting to order for the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) Full Commission Board on June 7, 2024, at 8:34 a.m. at 1313 Farnam St, Room 225, Omaha NE.

**B. Notice of Open Meeting**

Chairperson Frances Beurivage announced the notice of the meeting was duly given, posted, published, and tendered in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, and all board members received notice simultaneously by email. Publication of official notice of the meeting appeared in the May 31, 2024, edition of the Omaha World Herald, a legal newspaper of general circulation in this state, as required by the Open Meetings Act. The agenda was kept current in the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's office and on the NCDHH website. The materials generally used by the board for the meeting today are on a table in a public folder available to the general public for the purpose of this meeting in accordance with the Open Meetings Act {Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1412 (8)}. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is available for the duration of the meeting.

**C. Roll Call**

For the record, board members Ms. Frances Beurivage, Ms. Brooke Fitzpatrick, Ms. Valerie "Vali" Hitz, Ms. Diane Schutt, Ms. Sandra Shaw, Mr. Jonathan Scherling and Ms. Peggy Williams were all present for roll call. Ms. Candice Arteaga was absent. NCDHH staff members present were Ms. Kim Davis, Lead Advocacy Specialist, Ms. Jackie Novak, Business and Finance Manager, Ms. Cindy Woldt, Administrative Technician, Mr. Jeremy Daffern, Advocacy Specialist, Ms. Sakura Yodogawa - Campbell, Behavioral Health Coordinator and Ms. Gina Petersen, Administrative Specialist. Sign Language Interpreters present were Ms. Amber Tucker and Mr. Ben Sparks. Inclusive Communication Access Nebraska provided Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services.

**D. Review of Agenda**

## **E. Acceptance of Agenda**

Ms. Williams moved to accept the agenda as presented. Ms. Schutt seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Beaurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Schutt, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Arteaga was absent.

## **F. Public Comment**

No public comments

## **G. Acceptance of Minutes**

### **1. Full Commission Meeting on March 15, 2024**

Mr. Scherling moved to accept the March 15, 2024 meeting minutes as presented. Ms. Williams seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Beaurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Schutt, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Arteaga was absent.

## **H. Chairperson of the Board's Report**

### **1. Innivee Strategies Update**

Chairperson Beaurivage shared with board members the process of signing the contract took quite a while because it had to go through the Attorney General's office and added the contract was signed on May 14, 2024. The Executive Committee had a meeting with Mr. Shane Feldman and Ms. Melly Serrano of Innivee Strategies. At the first meeting, the Executive Committee received a list of NCDHH roles and responsibilities and Innivee Strategies roles and responsibilities.

Discussion ensued between the members on what is involved in the working relationship with Innivee Strategies. With the roles and responsibilities, the first item is to develop a video for dissemination sharing that NCDHH is in a working relationship with Innivee Strategies.

Chairperson Beaurivage mentioned NCDHH and Innivee Strategies will be holding several focus groups throughout the process. Discussion ensued regarding the purpose of the focus groups and all it will involve. Chairperson Beaurivage added the need to obtain input from community and stakeholders. The hope is for more than one focus group to meet throughout the state (i.e., Lincoln, Omaha, outstate).

Ms. Hitz shared we are looking at a six-month time frame, aiming to hire a new Executive Director by December 2024. Discussion ensued between board

members regarding the time frame.

## **2. Executive Director Salary**

Chairperson Beurivage highlighted the need to raise the salary for the Executive Director position based on Innivee Strategies recommendation. Conversation ensued between the members regarding what was discussed at the previous board meeting regarding the Executive Director salary. Chairperson Beurivage asked Ms. Novak, Business & Finance Manager, if the hiring range of \$90,000 - \$120,000 is feasible. Ms. Novak responded she would like some time to review the current payroll as there has been recent changes with individuals' wages.

Ms. Williams made the motion that the Executive Committee will determine the starting salary of the Executive Director within the range from \$90,000 and \$120,000. Ms. Shaw seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Schutt, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Arteaga was absent.

## **3. Temporary Salary Adjustments for the Management Staff (closed session)**

Ms. Schutt made the motion to go into closed session at 9:04 a.m. to discuss temporary salary adjustments for the management staff. Mr. Scherling seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Schutt, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Arteaga was absent.

Back in open session at 9:24 a.m.

Ms. Williams made the motion to offer a temporary salary bump for Ms. Kelsey Cruz and Ms. Kim Davis retroactively from January 2024 until a new executive director is hired at a 7% increase. Ms. Shaw seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Schutt, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Arteaga was absent.

### **I. Management Team Report**

#### **1. LB1031 Nebraska Specialized Telecommunications Equipment Program (NSTEP) Updates**

Chairperson Beurivage invited Ms. Davis to share the management team report.

Ms. Davis thanked the board for their support of her and Kelsey Cruz.

Ms. Davis gave the board members a recap of LB1031 and the changes to the NSTEP program. The changes do not go into effect until 90 days after the bill is signed by the Governor. NSTEP currently has five criteria for eligibility, two of those will change with this bill. Citizens of Nebraska will be allowed two devices per household, and they can apply once every three years. The official date the bill takes effect is July 18, 2024.

Conversation ensued between the members and Ms. Davis regarding the changes.

## **2. Behavioral Health Coordinator Update**

Ms. Davis introduced Ms. Sakura Yodogawa – Campbell as the new Behavioral Health Coordinator who started with the agency on June 3, 2024. Ms. Yodogawa – Campbell came forward and shared with the members a bit about herself and her certifications. Ms. Yodogawa – Campbell shared how excited that she is to be in this position. All the board members welcomed her to the Commission, noting that we are excited to have her be a part of our team. Ms. Yodogawa – Campbell was asked about her vision for her time at NCDHH. Ms. Yodogawa responded with the following: First, increase the public’s awareness of the need for access, the need for interpreters, American Sign Language (ASL) certified therapists and psychologists. She added she wants to focus on education in her roles, providing education on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Ms. Yodogawa – Campbell would like to do more research on emotional support animals versus service animals. She also noted she wants to be able to share with the Deaf and hard of hearing communities that it is OK to ask for help, to break the stigma.

### **a. Mental Health Advisory Committee (MHAC) Appointment**

Ms. Davis shared with the board members the MHAC application for a Mr. Scott Loder that was included in their board packets. Ms. Davis commented on her working relationship with Mr. Loder and how he would be a great addition to our MHAC.

Ms. Williams asked Ms. Davis about the projects the MHAC is currently working on. Discussion ensued regarding the previous survey that was completed, and what can be done to expand outreach more effectively, instead of just distributing an email. Ms. Williams requested for Ms. Davis share a copy of the survey with Ms. Yodogawa – Campbell.

Ms. Williams made the motion to approve Mr. Scott Loder’s application to the Mental Health Advisory Committee. Ms. Schutt seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms.

Beaurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Schutt, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Arteaga was absent.

A ten-minute break was taken, back at 9:56 a.m.

### **3. Staff Interpreter Position Update**

Ms. Davis shared the previous Interpreter Program Coordinator retired in March 2024; the position has been vacant since then. Ms. Davis noted the Commission currently has four deaf staff members, so we must do a significant amount of contracting with outside sign language interpreters. Ms. Davis added she and Ms. Cruz are requesting the board's approval to proceed with hiring a staff interpreter. Discussion ensued between the members regarding the position and its FTE. The decision was made for Mr. Cruz and Ms Davis to proceed with advertising for the staff interpreter position.

Conversation ensued regarding the shortage of qualified sign language interpreters. It was noted that the board should add to the September 2024 board meeting agenda the topic of posting on our website the interpreter contact information.

### **4. Budget Report**

Ms. Novak referenced the handout in the board packets regarding the current budget status of the agency. Discussion ensued between the members and Ms. Novak regarding the numbers listed on the handout.

Chairperson Beaurivage asked Ms. Novak to confirm the salary the agency can afford for the new Executive Director salary.

Discussion ensued regarding the status of the current vacant positions and if the agency is going to be able to keep these or if the Governor is going to eliminate them. Chairperson Beaurivage requested Ms. Novak to ask Department Administrative Services (DAS) about these positions and provide the board with an update.

### **5. Advocacy Specialist Monthly Report**

Ms. Davis highlighted the monthly reports. Ms. Davis noted this outline how agency staff are interacting with the public. Discussion ensued between the members regarding the different outreach activities place within the agency.

Ms. Williams made the motion to accept the management team report as

presented. Ms. Schutt seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Schutt, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Arteaga was absent.

**J. Old Business**

Nothing to report.

**K. New Business**

Nothing to report.

**L. Public Comment**

No public comments.

**M. Adjourn**

Ms. Schutt moved to adjourn the meeting at 10:35 a.m. Ms. Shaw seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Schutt, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Arteaga was absent.

**Next Meeting Dates:**

- September 13, 2024 - Lincoln
- December 13, 2024 - Lincoln