

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Full Commission Board Meeting

Held at – 4600 Valley Road, Room 4B, Lincoln, NE

March 13, 2026, Meeting Minutes (1:00 p.m.)

Approved 6/12/2026

A. Welcome

Due to the delayed arrival of Chairperson John Culver, Vice Chairperson Richard McCowin called the meeting of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) Full Commission Board to order at **1:45 p.m.**

Chairperson Culver arrived at approximately **1:50 p.m.** and assumed facilitation of the meeting.

B. Notice of Open Meeting

Mr. McCowin announced that notice of the meeting was duly given, posted, published, and tendered in compliance with the Open Meetings Act. All board members received notice simultaneously by email. The agenda was kept current at the NCDHH office and on the Commission's website. Materials used by the board were made available in a public folder for this meeting in accordance with the Open Meetings Act {Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1412 (8)}. A copy of the Act was available for the duration of the meeting.

C. Roll Call

Board members present:

- Ms. Candice Arteaga
- Dr. Kay Crabtree
- Mr. John Culver, Chairperson (arrived at 1:50 p.m.)
- Mr. Richard McCowin, Vice Chairperson
- Ms. Julie Mruz
- Ms. Diane Schutt, Secretary

Board members absent:

- Mr. Roy Christensen (ill)

NCDHH staff present:

- Ms. Kim Davis, Interim Executive Director / Community Services Manager
- Ms. Jackie Novak, Business Manager
- Ms. Kendall Couture, Marketing & Communications Specialist
- Ms. Sakura Yodogawa-Campbell, Behavioral Health Liaison (attended via Zoom)
- Jeremy Daffern, Outreach Liaison (attended via Zoom)
- Tiffany Stone, Outreach Liaison (attended via Zoom)
- Aaron Rothenberger, Outreach Liaison (attended via Zoom)
- Tabitha Johnson, Administrative Specialist (attended via zoom)

Others present:

- Theresa Bruns, Nebraska Department of Administrative Services
- Ronda Rankin, Representative from Deaf-Centric Hospital
- Jonathan Arteaga
- Rikki Poynter
- Laverne McCowin
- Linsay Darnell Jr.

Sign Language Interpreters: Sharon Sinkler and Meghann Cassidy

CART services provided by Don Rombach

D. Review of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed. Due to the initial lack of quorum, the board began with staff reports for discussion purposes only. All action items were deferred until quorum was established.

E. Acceptance of Agenda

No motion to accept the agenda was recorded.

F. Acceptance of Minutes

The board reviewed the minutes of the January 23, 2026 meeting.

Dr. Crabtree moved to approve the minutes with a correction to reflect her role as Acting Secretary. Ms. Mruz seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

G. Chairperson of the Board's Report

1. 2026 Meeting Dates, Time, and Location

The board discussed scheduling for the remaining 2026 meetings, including time, location, and format.

Ms. Arteaga moved to approve the remaining 2026 meetings to be held in Lincoln from **1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.** Ms. Mruz seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

Discussion regarding hybrid and livestream options was tabled pending further research.

2. Video Remote Interpreter (VRI) Business License Reinstatement

Ms. Davis presented the reinstatement request. The Interpreter Review Board recommended approval.

Mr. McCowin moved to approve the reinstatement. Ms. Schutt seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

3. Interpreter Review Board Appointment

Ms. Davis presented the appointment of Mr. Shawn Shannon to serve a full term on the Interpreter Review Board following completion of a partial term.

Ms. Arteaga moved to approve the appointment. Mr. McCowin seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

4. Mental Health Advisory Committee Appointment

Ms. Sakura Yodogawa-Campbell presented the appointment request for Ms. Erika Ziemann to move into a voting position on the Mental Health Advisory Committee.

Mr. McCowin moved to approve the appointment. Dr. Crabtree seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

5. Executive Director Search

The board discussed options for conducting the Executive Director search, including utilizing Department of Administrative Services (DAS) recruitment services versus contracting with Innivee, a third-party firm. Discussion included cost considerations, recruitment scope, and prior experience. DAS representatives provided information regarding available recruitment services at no additional cost.

Dr. Crabtree moved that NCDHH utilize Department of Administrative Services (DAS) services to conduct the Executive Director search. Ms. Mruz seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

Ms. Arteaga moved to set the Executive Director salary posting range between **\$80,000 and \$90,000**. Ms. Mruz seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

6. Election of Board Officers

No discussion or action was recorded. Tabled until the June 12, 2026 meeting.

H. NCDHH Report

Staff reports were presented.

- **Kim Davis (Interim Executive Director):** Provided a general update on agency operations.
- **Jackie Novak (Business Manager):** Reported that the agency is currently holding approximately 8% in voluntary budget reductions and discussed budget limitations impacting future initiatives.
- **Sakura Yodogawa-Campbell (Behavioral Health):** Provided updates on recruitment efforts for the Mental Health Advisory Committee.
- **Vali Hitz (Events & Programs Coordinator):** Report delivered by Kendall Couture; highlighted the launch of the “3Cs: Coffee, Culture, Conversation” program, with 34 participants statewide.
- **Kendall Couture (Communications & Marketing):** Reported on the launch of the Community Spotlight series, updates to the “How to Find an Interpreter” webpage, and educational content recognizing Black ASL during Black History Month.

Ms. Arteaga moved to accept the NCDHH staff reports. Dr. Crabtree seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

I. Committee Reports

No committee reports were presented.

J. Old Business

Committee composition discussions were tabled to the June 12, 2026 meeting.

K. New Business

1. NCDHH 2025 Annual Report

Ms. Mruz motioned to approve the 2025 Annual Report. Ms. Arteaga seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

2. Deaf-Centric Hospital Funding

Ms. Ronda Rankin from Deaf-Centric Hospital addressed the board regarding a request for a **\$4,000 donation** to support upcoming program planning.

The board discussed the request, including financial considerations presented by Ms. Jackie Novak.

Following discussion, the board considered offering a reduced contribution of **\$2,500**. The board agreed to table a final decision until the **June 12, 2026** board meeting.

L. Public Comment

Public comment was opened.

No public comments were offered.

Public comment was closed.

M. Adjourn

Mr. McCowin motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Mruz seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 4:02 pm.