

**Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**

**Full Commission Board Meeting**

**1:00 pm – 4:00 pm**

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

**June 12, 2026, Meeting Minutes**

**DRAFT**

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**A. Welcome**

Chairperson John Culver called the meeting of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) Full Commission Board to order at 1:08 p.m.

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**B. Notice of Open Meeting**

Mr. Culver 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.

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**C. Roll Call**

**Board members present:**

- Ms. Candice Arteaga
- Dr. Kay Crabtree
- Mr. John Culver, Chairperson
- Mr. Richard McCowin, Vice Chairperson
- Ms. Julie Mruz
- Ms. Diane Schutt, Secretary (arrived at 1:48 p.m.)

**Board members absent:**

- Mr. Roy Christensen

**NCDHH staff present:**

- Ms. Kim Davis, Interim Executive Director / Community Services Manager
- Ms. Jackie Novak, Business Manager
- Ms. Vali Hitz, Events & Programs Coordinator
- Ms. Kendall Couture, Marketing & Communications Specialist
- Mr. Michael Brummer, Education, Youth & Family Liaison (attended via Zoom)

**Others present:**

- Theresa Bruns
- Linsay Darnell Jr.
- Diane Meyer
- Karen P.
- Laverne McCowin

**Sign Language Interpreters:** Sharon Sinkler and Ben Sparks

**CART services provided by:** Don Rombach

Quorum was not established at the start of the meeting. The board proceeded with informational discussion and staff reports until Ms. Schutt arrived at 1:48 p.m., at which time quorum was established and action items were considered.

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**D. Review of Agenda**

The agenda was reviewed.

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**E. Acceptance of Agenda**

Following establishment of quorum, Ms. Mruz moved to approve the agenda. Mr. McCowin seconded the motion.

**Roll call vote:**

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes  
Schutt – Yes

**Motion passed.**

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## **F. Acceptance of Minutes**

The board reviewed the minutes of the March 13, 2026 and May 11, 2026 meetings.

Ms. Arteaga moved to approve both sets of meeting minutes. Dr. Crabtree seconded the motion.

### **Roll call vote:**

Arteaga – Yes  
Christensen – Absent  
Crabtree – Yes  
Culver – Yes  
McCowin – Yes  
Mruz – Yes  
Schutt – Yes

**Motion passed.**

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

### **1. Action on Executive Director Selection**

Mr. Culver reported that offers had been extended to two Executive Director candidates. Both candidates declined the position. The Executive Director position has been reposted and recruitment efforts will continue. The board discussed maintaining the current search committee while additional applications are received and reviewed.

### **2. Compensation for Executive Director Selection**

Discussion occurred in conjunction with the Executive Director recruitment update. No action was taken.

### **3. Moving Expenses of Kyle Miers, Previous Executive Director**

The board discussed outstanding moving expense reimbursement owed by former Executive Director Kyle Miers. Staff provided information regarding collection options, including the use of a collection agency and potential debt recovery procedures.

Board members discussed accountability, potential costs associated with collection services, and the likelihood of recovery. Staff were directed to research collection agencies, associated fees, and available options for debt recovery.

This item was tabled until the September 11, 2026 board meeting pending additional information.

#### **4. Approval for Missouri and Utah Sign Language Interpreter Certifications**

Ms. Davis presented recommendations from the Interpreter Review Board regarding recognition of interpreter certifications from Missouri and Utah. The Interpreter Review Board reviewed the certifications and determined which certifications met Nebraska's licensing standards and requirements. The IRB recommended approving the certifications for VRI business licensing purposes and maintaining a record of those approved certifications for future reference in licensing matters.

Mr. McCowin moved to approve the Interpreter Review Board's recommendation regarding Missouri and Utah interpreter certifications. Ms. Mruz seconded the motion.

#### **Roll call vote:**

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

#### **Motion passed.**

#### **5. Election of Board Officers**

##### **Chairperson**

Ms. Arteaga nominated Mr. Culver to continue serving as Chairperson.

#### **Roll call vote:**

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes  
Culver – Yes  
McCowin – Yes  
Mruz – Yes  
Schutt – Yes

**Motion passed.**

Mr. Culver was elected Chairperson.

**Vice Chairperson**

Mr. McCowin nominated Ms. Arteaga to serve as Vice Chairperson.

**Roll call vote:**

Arteaga – Yes  
Christensen – Absent  
Crabtree – Yes  
Culver – Yes  
McCowin – Yes  
Mruz – Yes  
Schutt – Yes

**Motion passed.**

Ms. Arteaga was elected Vice Chairperson.

**Secretary**

Mr. Culver nominated Dr. Crabtree to serve as Secretary.

**Roll call vote:**

Arteaga – Yes  
Christensen – Absent  
Crabtree – Yes  
Culver – Yes  
McCowin – Yes  
Mruz – Yes  
Schutt – Yes

**Motion passed.**

Dr. Crabtree was elected Secretary.

The board discussed current vacancies and upcoming term expirations. Members expressed the importance of recruiting qualified applicants and encouraging appointments through the Governor's Office to ensure the board maintains sufficient membership to conduct business.

### **6. Approval for Kim Davis In-Grade Assignment Extension**

The board discussed extending Ms. Kim Davis' in-grade assignment as Interim Executive Director while the Executive Director search continues.

Mr. McCowin moved to extend Ms. Davis' in-grade assignment for an additional six months. Ms. Arteaga seconded the motion.

#### **Roll call vote:**

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

#### **Motion passed.**

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## **H. NCDHH Report**

Staff reports were presented.

**Kim Davis, Interim Executive Director / Community Services Manager**, provided updates on agency operations, stakeholder engagement efforts, staff performance evaluations, strategic planning activities, and recruitment efforts for vacant Outreach Liaison positions.

**Jackie Novak, Business Manager**, provided a budget update and discussed the agency's ongoing state audit process.

**Michael Brummer, Education, Youth & Family Liaison**, reported on outreach activities, partnerships with educational organizations, school presentations, community events, and upcoming conference presentations.

**Vali Hitz, Events & Programs Coordinator**, provided updates regarding Coffee, Culture, Conversation events, National ASL Day activities, the Accessing the Good Life

Communication Leadership Summit, and community engagement efforts occurring throughout the state.

**Kendall Couture, Marketing & Communications Specialist**, reported on the agency's partnership with Hamilton Relay and the Public Service Commission, upcoming Community Spotlight content, social media growth, and ongoing public awareness efforts.

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

**Roll call vote:**

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Absent

Crabtree – Yes

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

**Motion passed.**

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**I. Committee Reports**

No committee reports were presented.

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**J. Old Business**

**1. Composition of the Committees**

The board discussed previous proposals to reorganize standing committees. Discussion included committee purpose, stakeholder engagement, and whether committee restructuring should occur before a new Executive Director is hired.

Dr. Crabtree moved to remove the Committee Reports section from the board agenda until a new Executive Director is hired and has an opportunity to review the committee restructuring proposal and make recommendations to the board. Ms. Mruz 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**

The board revisited the \$4,000 funding request previously presented by Deaf-Centric Hospital. Discussion included financial considerations and the agency's available resources, including Ms. Jackie Novak's recommendation to offer \$2,500.

Dr. Crabtree moved to approve funding in the amount of \$2,500. Ms. Arteaga seconded the motion.

**Roll call vote:**

Arteaga – Yes  
Christensen – Absent  
Crabtree – Yes  
Culver – Yes  
McCowin – Yes  
Mruz – Yes  
Schutt – Yes

**Motion passed.**

Board members discussed the possibility of revisiting the remaining \$1,500 funding request after the Fiscal Year 2027 budget is established. No action was taken regarding additional funding at this time.

## **3. Update on Designated Use of 2026 Grant Funds for 2026 Activities**

Ms. Davis provided an update regarding grant funding received through the Omaha Community Foundation.

The board was informed that NCDHH was unable to fully expend the awarded grant funds from the previous grant cycle. As a result, NCDHH was required to return the remaining unspent balance to the Omaha Community Foundation.

The board was further notified that the previously awarded \$10,000 grant for 2026 was rescinded. NCDHH will not be eligible to reapply for funding through this grant program until the 2028 grant cycle.

No action was taken.

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#### **K. New Business**

No new business was presented.

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#### **L. Public Comment**

Public comment was opened.

No public comments were offered.

Public comment was closed.

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#### **M. Adjourn**

Ms. Mruz moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Arteaga 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 3:23 p.m.