Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Special Full Commission Board Meeting

Held at – 4600 Valley Road, Room 4B, Lincoln, NE
August 20, 2026, Meeting Minutes (3:00 p.m.)
DRAFT 8/21/2026

A. Welcome

Chairperson John Culver called the special meeting of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) Full Commission Board to order on Thursday, August 20, 2026, at 3:10 p.m. The meeting was held in person at the NCDHH office in Lincoln, Nebraska.

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. A copy of the Open Meetings Act was available for the duration of the meeting.

C. Roll Call

Board members present:

- Ms. Candice Arteaga, Vice Chairperson
- Mr. Roy Christensen
- Dr. Kay Crabtree, Secretary
- Mr. John Culver, Chairperson
- Mr. Richard McCowin
- Ms. Diane Schutt

Board members absent:

- Ms. Julie Mruz

A quorum was established.

NCDHH staff present:

- Ms. Kim Davis

Others present:

- Elise Wiedenfeld (Nebraska Department of Administrative Services)
- Theresa Bruns (Nebraska Department of Administrative Services)
- Laverne McCowin
- Jonathan Arteaga

Sign Language Interpreters: Sharon Sinkler and Ben Sparks

CART services provided by: Don Rombach

D. Review of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed by the board.

E. Acceptance of Agenda

Mr. Christensen moved to accept the agenda as presented. Ms. Arteaga seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

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

Motion passed unanimously among members present.

F. Chairperson of the Board's Report

1. Executive Director Search – Discussion of Candidates and Selection Considerations

The board discussed the Executive Director search process and candidate selection considerations.

Closed Session:

Mr. McCowin moved to enter closed session to discuss personnel matters related to the Executive Director candidate. Ms. Arteaga seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

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

Motion passed unanimously among members present.

The board entered closed session at 3:12 p.m. to discuss personnel matters related to the Executive Director candidate.

Following discussion, Mr. Christensen moved to return to open session. Ms. Arteaga seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

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

Motion passed unanimously among members present.

The board returned to open session at 3:25 p.m.

2. Action on Executive Director Selection

Following return to open session, Ms. Arteaga moved to accept Ashli-Marie Grant as the next Executive Director of the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Ms. Schutt seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

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

Motion passed unanimously among members present.

The board discussed its commitment to supporting Ms. Grant as she transitions into the Executive Director role and noted an anticipated start date of September 1, 2026.

3. Compensation for Executive Director

Mr. Christensen moved to approve an annual salary of $82,000 for Ms. Grant. Ms. Arteaga seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

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

Motion passed unanimously among members present.

4. Onboarding Expectations (30/60/90 Days)

The board discussed onboarding expectations for the incoming Executive Director. Discussion included balancing the Executive Director’s time between the Omaha and Lincoln offices, with consideration given to maintaining a consistent presence in Omaha due to the concentration of the Deaf community and the supervisory needs of the office.

The board also discussed expectations for maintaining connections with the Commission’s Kearney and Scottsbluff offices. Members considered periodic in-person visits to the western offices while allowing flexibility based on agency needs, events, travel costs, and the Executive Director’s discretion.

Nebraska Department of Administrative Services Human Resources staff discussed development of a 30/60/90-day onboarding plan. The proposed framework would include becoming familiar with agency operations, budget, grants and the strategic plan; meeting with staff, board members, community organizations and state partners; reviewing Commission programs and processes; establishing legislative and interagency relationships; and developing longer-term goals and accountability measures.

Human Resources will provide a draft 30/60/90-day plan for further discussion with the board. The board noted that the plan is intended to serve as a roadmap for the new Executive Director and may inform longer-term goals as she becomes familiar with the agency.

No formal action was taken.

G. Public Comments

No public comments were offered.

H. Adjourn

Mr. Christensen moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Arteaga seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

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

Motion passed unanimously among members present.

The meeting adjourned at 3:57 p.m.