

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Full Commission Board Meeting
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Held at – 4600 Valley Road, Room 4B, Lincoln, NE
September 11, 2026, Meeting Minutes
DRAFT 9.16.2026

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 1:15 p.m.

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. The agenda was kept current at the NCDHH office and on the Commission's website. Materials used by the board were made available in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. A copy of the Act was available for the duration of the meeting.

C. Roll Call

Board members present:

- Ms. Candice Arteaga
- Mr. Roy Christensen
- Mr. John Culver, Chairperson
- Mr. Richard McCowin
- Ms. Julie Mruz
- Ms. Diane Schutt

Board member absent:

- Dr. Kay Crabtree

A quorum was established.

NCDHH Staff Present: Ashli-Marie Grant, Kim Davis, Vali Hitz, Sakura Yodogawa-Campbell

Interpreters: Sharon Sinkler, Ben Sparks

D. Review of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed.

E. Acceptance of Agenda

Ms. Arteaga moved to approve the agenda. Mr. Christensen seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Yes

Crabtree – Absent

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

F. Acceptance of Minutes

The board reviewed the minutes of the June 12, 2026 and August 20, 2026 meetings.

Mr. Christensen moved to approve both sets of meeting minutes. Mr. McCowin seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Yes

Crabtree – Absent

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

G. Chairperson of the Board's Report

1. Welcome NCDHH Executive Director, Ashli-Marie Grant

Mr. Culver welcomed Ashli-Marie Grant as NCDHH's new Executive Director. Board members and staff discussed the leadership transition and expressed appreciation to Kim Davis for her service as Interim Executive Director.

2. Collection Agencies on Moving Expenses of Kyle Miers, Previous Executive Director

The board resumed discussion regarding recovery of moving expenses owed by former Executive Director Kyle Miers. The item had been tabled at the June 12, 2026 meeting while staff researched collection agencies, associated fees, and available options for debt recovery.

Jackie Novak presented collection agency options and recommended AR Solutions Collection Agency. The board discussed the collection process, potential recovery of the funds, fees associated with collection services, and the Commission's responsibility to pursue repayment.

Mr. McCowin moved to approve Ms. Novak's recommendation to use AR Solutions Collection Agency to pursue recovery of the moving expenses owed by Mr. Miers. Mr. Christensen seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Yes

Crabtree – Absent

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

3. State Audit Attestation Report

The board reviewed and discussed the State Audit Attestation Report. Discussion focused on findings identified through the audit, including expenditures, procurement related to the previous Executive Director search, Open Meetings Act requirements, and payroll review.

Staff and board members discussed corrective actions and procedures intended to address the audit findings and prevent similar issues in the future. Discussion also included requirements related to closed sessions, meeting documentation, procurement procedures, and the board's responsibility to ensure compliance moving forward.

No action was taken.

4. Interpreter Review Board (IRB) Appointments

Ms. Arteaga moved to enter closed session to discuss personnel matters related to Interpreter Review Board appointments. Mr. Christensen seconded the motion.

The board entered closed session at 2:00 p.m.

The board returned to open session at 2:33 p.m. No action was taken during closed session.

Mr. Culver moved to appoint Abigail “Abby” Giambattista as the Interpreter Representative on the Interpreter Review Board. Mr. Christensen seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Yes

Crabtree – Absent

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

Ms. Arteaga moved to appoint Vicki Steinhauer Campbell to a second term on the Interpreter Review Board as the Local Government Representative. Ms. Mruz seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Yes

Crabtree – Absent

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

5. Mental Health Advisory Committee (MHAC) Appointments

Ms. Mruz moved to enter closed session to discuss personnel matters related to Mental Health Advisory Committee appointments. Mr. Christensen seconded the motion.

The board entered closed session at 2:36 p.m.

The board returned to open session at 2:40 p.m. No action was taken during closed session.

Ms. Arteaga moved to approve the appointments of Cody McEvoy and Brenda Lewis to the Mental Health Advisory Committee. Mr. Christensen seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Yes

Crabtree – Absent

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

H. NCDHH Report

Staff reports were presented.

Ashli-Marie Grant, Executive Director, participated in discussion regarding the transition of Executive Director responsibilities and agency priorities as she begins her role.

Kim Davis, Community Services Manager, provided updates regarding the transition of duties from her time as Interim Executive Director and community outreach activities. Ms. Davis reported that the vacant Outreach Liaison positions in Lincoln and Omaha had been filled and that the new staff members were continuing onboarding and beginning outreach activities. She also discussed continued outreach throughout the state and the impact of the statewide hiring freeze on future vacancies.

Ms. Davis discussed work completed during her time as Interim Executive Director, including the state audit and implementation of recommendations intended to improve agency operations. Board members expressed appreciation for her service during the transition.

Jackie Novak, Business Manager, provided an administrative and budget update. The board discussed the statewide requirement for agencies to identify budget savings and NCDHH's progress toward meeting that requirement. Ms. Novak reported that the agency's budget remained on track. Staff also reported that visual fire alarm equipment had been purchased to improve accessibility within NCDHH offices.

Sakura Yodogawa-Campbell, Behavioral Health Liaison, provided updates regarding Deaf Awareness Month, Recovery Month, and Suicide Prevention Month activities. Upcoming programming included a September 22 webinar for behavioral health professionals and a September 29 community behavioral health event at Omaha Public

Library's Central Library. Ms. Yodogawa-Campbell also discussed continued work to strengthen the Mental Health Advisory Committee and incorporate community experiences into behavioral health initiatives.

Michael Brummer, Education, Youth & Family Liaison, was unable to attend. An update was provided regarding his work supporting families with IEP-related questions, building partnerships with educational and community organizations, attending outreach events, participating in professional committees, and preparing for upcoming student and professional presentations.

Vali Hitz, Events & Programs Coordinator, provided updates regarding community engagement activities and events held throughout Nebraska. Ms. Hitz discussed feedback gathered from community members, including interest in understanding the role of the Full Commission Board and NCDHH staff and requests for expanded communication access throughout the state. She also highlighted recent Deaf Awareness activities, Coffee, Culture & Conversation events, and an interpreter CEU workshop.

Kendall Couture, Marketing & Communications Specialist, was unable to attend. An update was provided regarding implementation of the new Activity Request Form process, ongoing website navigation and redesign work, and communications surrounding the Executive Director transition.

a. Website Redesign Approval Process

The board was informed that no action was needed regarding the website redesign approval process at this time. Staff will continue reviewing the approval process with Executive Director Grant before determining whether board action is necessary.

No action was taken.

Ms. Arteaga moved to accept the NCDHH staff reports. Mr. McCowin seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Yes

Crabtree – Absent

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

I. Old Business

No old business was presented.

J. New Business

Executive Director Grant presented a request related to attendance at the Deaf Organization Executive Summit (DOES) and the National Association of State Agencies of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NASADHH) meeting. Ms. Grant explained that the meetings would provide opportunities to connect with other state and national leaders and participate in discussions relevant to NCDHH.

Ms. Grant requested that NCDHH cover registration expenses for the two conferences and stated that she would cover her own travel expenses.

Mr. Christensen moved to approve \$1,150 for Ms. Grant's registration expenses for the two conferences. Ms. Arteaga seconded the motion.

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Yes

Crabtree – Absent

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

K. Public Comments

Public comment was opened.

Lindsay Darnell Jr. commented on his observations from attending recent Full Commission Board meetings. He expressed support for the work being completed by NCDHH staff and encouraged board members to increase their visibility and engagement with Deaf and Hard of Hearing community members throughout Nebraska. He discussed community interest in understanding the role of the board and encouraged members to attend community events and interact directly with constituents.

Jonathan Arteaga, President of the Nebraska Association of the Deaf, expressed support for NCDHH and the new Executive Director and stated that the Nebraska Association of the Deaf looked forward to continuing its relationship with the Commission.

Public comment was closed.

The next Full Commission Board meeting is scheduled for December 11, 2026, at 4600 Valley Road, Room 4B, Lincoln, Nebraska.

L. Adjourn

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

Roll call vote:

Arteaga – Yes

Christensen – Yes

Crabtree – Absent

Culver – Yes

McCowin – Yes

Mruz – Yes

Schutt – Yes

Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 3:21 p.m.