

Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
Full Commission Board Meeting – February 27, 2009 – Approved July 17, 2009
Lincoln Medical Education Partnership Building
4600 Valley Road, Room 4A, Lincoln, NE

Chairperson Dr. Raymond Meester called the meeting to order at 8:14 a.m.

A. Roll Call

Members present were Ms. Mary Ann Burke, Mr. Cliff Carlson, Mr. Dillard Delts, Mr. Steve Manning, Dr. Jan Moore, Dr. Raymond Meester and Dr. David Rutledge. Members absent were Ms. Luana Duennerman and Ms. Maureen Larsen. Staff attending was Ms. Lori Burrage, Business Manager. Interpreters were Ms. Lorelei Waldron and Ms. Kelly Brakenhoff.

B. Acceptance of the Agenda

Dr. Meester asked for acceptance of the agenda. **Mr. Carlson made a motion to accept the agenda as presented. Dr. Rutledge seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Mr. Carlson, yes; Mr. Delts, yes; Ms. Duennerman, absent; Ms. Larsen, absent; Mr. Manning, yes; Dr. Moore, yes; Dr. Rutledge, yes. Vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.**

Dr. Meester introduced Mr. Matthew Eash from the AS Budget Office. Mr. Eash explained the Governor's budget recommendation provided flat budget proposals across the board for most state agencies. A few agencies such as the Department of Education received a small increase. Nebraska is required to have a balanced budget by law. The revenue forecast was reviewed in November after agencies submitted their budget requests. Most agencies asked for a modest increase, however, the revenue forecast showed a 1% growth, in the past the growth has been around 5 – 7%. The Forecasting Board felt there may be slight growth in the second year, around 3%. The Governor has recommended taking \$80,000,000 out of the cash reserve fund which is for fiscal crisis, revenue shortfalls, etc. The Forecasting Board meets today which will be the last meeting before the budget is decided. At this time it appears there may be zero to negative growth. The federal stimulus money will go to three major areas, Medicaid, education and transportation. While the stimulus money will not affect the Commission directly, it may free up general funds that may, in theory, reduce budget reductions for other agencies.

Ms. Burrage asked the status of the "save it, keep it" concept which would allow agencies to carry over the money it saves this fiscal year. Mr. Eash responded the Governor and Appropriations Committee is supportive of it, he has not heard that it will not be allowed, therefore, we should count on it at this time. Since this requires statutory authority, it will be included in the final appropriations bill if approved.

Mr. Carlson asked how Mr. Eash views the Commission and its constituency versus the other agencies he works with. Mr. Eash responded that he fully understands the impact the Commission has directly on peoples lives with the services we provide. Mr. Carlson stated the need for services will continue to rise significantly in the next five years with the number of military personnel coming back with a hearing loss from two

wars and with one in 10 children born with hearing loss. Dr. Meester asked if the Legislature will micro manage the agency in regard to closing the Scottsbluff office and eliminating the Interpreter Program Coordinator position. Mr. Eash responded the Governor did not fund the salary and benefit increases. The Appropriations Committee funded those increases and took the modifications the agency submitted in the budget proposal. It will be the agency's decision on what reductions to make.

C. Acceptance of the Minutes

1. Full Commission Meeting – November 13, 2008

Dr. Meester asked for acceptance of the minutes. **Ms. Burke made a motion to accept the minutes as presented. Mr. Delts seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Mr. Carlson, yes; Mr. Delts, yes; Ms. Duennerman, absent; Ms. Larsen, absent; Mr. Manning, yes; Dr. Moore, yes; Dr. Rutledge, yes. Vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.**

D. Chairperson's Report

Dr. Meester provided an update on LB310 which would require all sign language interpreters to be licensed. The bill was narrowed to require medical settings to use licensed interpreters. Lobbyists representing the medical community, physicians, hospitals, pharmacists, and nursing homes were at the hearing opposing the bill.

Dr. Meester asked for a motion to close the meeting to discuss the Executive Director position and personnel issues. **Dr. Moore made a motion to close the meeting at 9:40 a.m. Mr. Delts seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Mr. Carlson, yes; Mr. Delts, yes; Ms. Duennerman, absent; Ms. Larsen, absent; Mr. Manning, yes; Dr. Moore, yes; Dr. Rutledge, yes. Vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.**

Dr. Moore made motion to open the meeting at 10:58 a.m. Dr. Rutledge seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Mr. Carlson, yes; Mr. Delts, yes; Ms. Duennerman, absent; Ms. Larsen, absent; Mr. Manning, yes; Dr. Moore, yes; Dr. Rutledge, yes. Vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

1. Executive Director Position

Mr. Carlson made a motion to offer the Executive Director position to Dr. Peter Seiler. Dr. Rutledge seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Mr. Carlson, yes; Mr. Delts, abstain; Ms. Duennerman, absent; Ms. Larsen, absent; Mr. Manning, yes; Dr. Moore, yes; Dr. Rutledge, yes. Vote was five votes in favor of the motion with one abstention.

Dr. Rutledge made a motion to offer a salary of \$65,000 and to reimburse up to \$5,000 for moving expenses. Mr. Carlson seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Mr. Carlson, yes; Mr. Delts, yes; Ms. Duennerman, absent; Ms. Larsen, absent; Mr. Manning, yes; Dr. Moore, yes; Dr. Rutledge, yes. Vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Dr. Meester stated the soonest Dr. Seiler can start is June 15th and recommended hiring an Interim Director until he can start. **Dr. Rutledge made a motion that Dr. Meester negotiate and hire an Interim Director to assume all responsibilities. Discussion. Mr. Carlson made an amendment to hire an Interim Director to assume**

the supervisory and program development duties and offer a 5% salary increase pending approval by State Personnel. Mr. Manning seconded the motion. Roll call vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Mr. Carlson, yes; Mr. Delts, yes; Ms. Duennerman, absent; Ms. Larsen, absent; Mr. Manning, yes; Dr. Moore, yes; Dr. Rutledge, yes. Vote was unanimous in favor of the motion. Mr. Carlson made a motion to re-assign NIS duties permanently to existing staff and proceed with the necessary training. Dr. Rutledge seconded. Roll call vote: Ms. Burke, yes; Mr. Carlson, yes; Mr. Delts, yes; Ms. Duennerman, absent; Ms. Larsen, absent; Mr. Manning, yes; Dr. Moore, yes; Dr. Rutledge, yes. Vote was unanimous in favor of the motion. Clarification was made that the Mental Health Specialist will retain her current duties in addition to the supervisory and program development responsibilities. Dr. Meester indicated he talked with State Personnel and it generally takes a couple days to get the approval. He will submit the approval letter to State Personnel.

3. Business Manager's Report

a. Budget Proposal

Ms. Burrage presented the Board with the preliminary recommendations from the Governor and Appropriations Committee. The Appropriations Committee hearing is scheduled for March 5th, therefore the Board will need to decide who will write and/or provide the testimony at the hearing. Ms. Burrage explained that the Board voted in September on the modification budget identifying what reductions the agency would make to accommodate a budget reduction. In the past the testimony has included specific information on what staff or programs would be eliminated. Mr. Carlson stated he does not want to see the Scottsbluff office closed and does not want to include it specifically in the testimony. Discussion. Mr. Carlson will write the budget testimony stating budget concessions will be made but not specifically identify what cuts will be made. Mr. Carlson will provide a general statement that staff will be cut if needed to meet the budget limitations. Mr. Meester will provide the testimony at the budget hearing on March 5th at 1:30 p.m.

Next meeting

Dr. Meester asked that the next meeting be scheduled when Dr. Seiler is available to attend. He will follow up with Dr. Seiler.

Adjourned at 12:25 p.m.