

Approved September 8, 2023

**Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard
of Hearing Full Commission Board Meeting
4600 Valley Rd, Room 4A, Lincoln NE**

June 16, 2023 Meeting Minutes

A. Welcome

Vice Chairperson Frances Beurivage called the meeting to order for the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH) Full Commission Board on March 10, 2023 at 8:34 a.m. at 4600 Valley Rd, Room 4A, Lincoln Nebraska.

B. Notice of Open Meeting

Vice Chairperson Frances Beurivage announced that the notice of the meeting was duly given, posted, published, and tendered in compliance with the Open Meetings Act, and all Board Members received notice simultaneously by email. Publication of official notice of the meeting appeared in the June 9, 2023, edition of the Omaha World Herald, a legal newspaper of general circulation in this state, as required by the Open Meetings Act. The agenda was kept current in the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing's office and on the NCDHH website. The materials generally used by the Board for the meeting today are on a table in a public folder that is available to the general public for the purpose of this meeting in accordance with the Open Meetings Act {Neb. Rev. Stat. §84-1412 (8)}. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is available for the duration of the meeting.

C. Roll Call

For the record, Board Members Ms. Candice Arteaga, Ms. Frances Beurivage, Ms. Brooke Fitzpatrick, Ms. Valerie "Vali" Hitz, Mr. Jonathan Scherling, Ms. Sandra Shaw and Ms. Peggy Williams were all present for roll call. Ms. Diane Schutt was absent. NCDHH staff members present were Ms. Arlene Garcia Gunderson, Executive Director, Ms. Kelsey Cruz, Marketing & Communications Specialist; Ms. Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator and Ms. Kim Davis, Advocacy Specialist. Sign Language Interpreters present were Ms. Amber Tucker and Mr. Ben Sparks. Inclusive Communication Access Nebraska provided Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) services by zoom.

D. Review of Agenda

Director Garcia Gunderson reviewed the agenda with the board members.

Vice Chairperson Beurivage added that under new business we will have elections for the officers of the board.

E. Acceptance of Agenda

Ms. Candice Arteaga moved to accept the agenda with the addition of election for the Chairperson position under New Business. Ms. Peggy Williams seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Beaurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Schutt was absent.

F. Acceptance of Minutes

Ms. Brooke Fitzpatrick noted that the March 10, 2023 meeting minutes reflected that she was present, she did not attend the meeting.

Ms. Candice Arteaga moved to accept the March 10, 2023 meeting minutes with changing the minutes to reflect that Ms. Brooke Fitzpatrick was absent. Ms. Peggy Williams seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Beaurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Schutt was absent.

G. Chairperson of the Board’s Report

1. Public Comments

No public comments.

2. Personnel Discussion (Closed Session)

Ms. Peggy Williams made the motion to go into closed session at 8:43 a.m. Ms. Candice Arteaga seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Beaurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Schutt was absent.

Back in open session at 10:27 a.m.

Ms. Peggy Williams made the motion to go into open session at 10:27 a.m. Ms. Valerie “Vali” Hitz seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Beaurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Schutt was absent.

Omaha Office Remodel

The board will review the project budget at the September 2023 meeting.

Executive Director Mileage Reimbursement

Ms. Candice Arteaga made the motion for Director Garcia Gunderson to work out of the Lincoln office 51% of her time during the week, for example two days in the Lincoln office, two days in the Omaha office, and the fifth day at her discretion. Director Garcia Gunderson will be offered mileage reimbursement from her home residence to the Omaha office at 1313 Farnam, Omaha NE. Ms. Valerie “Vali” Hitz seconded the motion.

Director Garcia Gunderson asked for clarification on the motion. Ms. Arteaga stated that Director Garcia Gunderson is requested to be in the Lincoln office 51% of her time. Ms. Arteaga added that the board is flexible with Director Garcia Gunderson using her professional judgement on dividing up her time. Director Garcia Gunderson indicated that her home is in Omaha so travel to the Omaha office would be reimbursed. Vice Chairperson Beurivage added that the motion is that the Agency will pay mileage when working in the Omaha office; the Agency will not pay your mileage from Director Garcia Gunderson's home to the Lincoln office. Also, with the expectation that 51% of Director Garcia Gunderson's time will be spent in the Lincoln office, how she divides that time is left to her professional discretion.

Conversation between the board members and Director Garcia Gunderson regarding the request for mileage reimbursement when she is working in the Lincoln office.

Vice Chairperson Beurivage called for a vote on the motion made earlier in this conversation -- Ms. Candice Arteaga made the motion for Director Garcia Gunderson to work out of the Lincoln office 51% of her time during the week, for example two days in the Lincoln office, two days in the Omaha office, and the fifth day at her discretion. Director Garcia Gunderson will be offered mileage reimbursement from her home residence to the Omaha office at 1313 Farnam, Omaha NE. Ms. Valerie "Vali" Hitz seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Arteaga abstained. Mr. Scherling voted no.

Internal Procurement Procedures

Mr. Jonathan Scherling made the motion that the board needs to approve any contracts that are \$25,000.00 or more. Ms. Candice Arteaga seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Schutt was absent.

Interpreter Review Board (IRB) Appointments

Ms. Candice Arteaga made the motion to accept Ms. Vicki Steinhauer – Campbell's application as a local government representative for the IRB. Ms. Peggy Williams seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Schutt was absent.

Vice Chairperson Beurivage noted that this concludes out motions from the closed session. We will now move into the Executive Director Report.

H. Executive Director Report

Director Garcia Gunderson began her presentation, noting in April 2023, she had some financial concerns. Director Garcia Gunderson indicated she was reactive in a communication because she wants to be very careful with the funds given to run the Agency. Director Garcia Gunderson shared there were some items that had not been followed through with, and going forward, she will address such items with the Executive Committee Members first and then share with the full commission board members. Director Garcia Gunderson noted that this was a mistake on her part and will correct this going forward. Director Garcia Gunderson shared her concerns regarding the budget status of the Agency, and she discussed her changes for the upcoming fiscal year and how her management team will be a part of this process.

Director Garcia Gunderson asked the members if they would like to continue to receive the biweekly updates. Director Garcia Gunderson also added that she has a monthly report that outlines Agency activities. Conversation between the members on their thoughts about receiving the biweekly emails from Director Garcia Gunderson.

Director Garcia Gunderson asked the board members if they would consider the Agency providing each of them @nebraska.gov email addresses. Director Garcia Gunderson added that she wants to make sure that our communication is protected, in having everything documented properly. Director Garcia Gunderson shared that the cost would be around \$4,000.00 a year for all the board members to be set up with @nebraska.gov email accounts.

Conversation between the members regarding transitioning to @nebraska.gov email accounts for all the board members for security purposes.

Ms. Valerie “Vali” Hitz made the motion to proceed with getting all the full commission board members @nebraska.gov email accounts. Ms. Candice Arteaga seconded. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Schutt was absent.

Director Garcia Gunderson proceeded with her presentation, referencing the agency’s organizational chart, and she outlined the newly promoted management staff. Director Garcia Gunderson indicated the team meets on a weekly basis.

- Ms. Kim Davis, Advocacy Specialist, will supervise the advocacy specialists team.
- Ms. Kelsey Cruz, Marketing & Communications Specialist, will supervise the administrative staff to include Jackie Novak, Gina Petersen, Cindy Woldt.
- Ms. Sharon Sinkler, Interpreter Program Coordinator, will supervise the Deaf Interpreters (DI), in addition to the management of interpreter services within the agency.

Director Garcia Gunderson shared with the members that Ms. Sharon Price, Behavior Health Coordinator, resigned from her position with NCDHH and her last day will be on July 7, 2023.

Director Garcia Gunderson explained that the positions she sees the greatest need for in the agency include a Youth & Family Coordinator and an Educational Advocate. Both positions would be statewide. General discussion ensued between the members on the vacant positions. Director Garcia Gunderson added there are a total of 4 vacancies, including two Advocacy Specialist positions.

Director Garcia Gunderson added that she has been working with Linsay Darnall, Jr. regarding mentoring and leadership development in the agency. Director Garcia Gunderson added there is a lot of potential with the staff that just needs to be developed.

Ms. Peggy Williams asked if the management team will receive an increase in pay. Director Garcia Gunderson indicated the management team will receive an increase in pay and the paperwork is in process and should be approved as early as next week.

Ms. Candice Arteaga asked if Ms. Susan Whitaker, Advocacy Specialist in Scottsbluff, is in the role of Educational Advocate. Director Garcia Gunderson replied that Ms. Whitaker was assigned the role of Educational Advocate under previous leadership. Director Garcia Gunderson shared that she and Ms. Whitaker discussed the current structure and decided to promote the Educational Advocate as a state-wide position. Also, Director Garcia Gunderson added that Ms. Whitaker has shared a list of 12 families that are struggling with the educational system, and considering this, the Educational Advocate position must be a full-time position.

Director Garcia Gunderson discussed several other topics she has reviewed with her team such as calendars and dress code. Director Garcia Gunderson also added the agency is not doing presentations and booths currently as the management team is working to make these more streamlined and consistent. The reason for this is Director Garcia Gunderson has observed inconsistencies among team members.

Director Garcia Gunderson shared she has set up quarterly all staff meetings, in addition to monthly all staff meetings that are held by zoom. Director Garcia Gunderson shared information about the first in person staff meeting, and the responses she received from the staff.

Director Garcia Gunderson discussed a few conferences agency staff will be attending. General discussion ensued regarding the various conferences and the trainings being held in Nebraska.

Director Garcia Gunderson shared that a meeting was held with the Nebraska

Department of Education (NDE) regarding language assessments. Director Garcia Gunderson added that she hopes to have a training for language assessments in the fall and then again in the spring. Director Garcia Gunderson also added she wants to offer American Sign Language (ASL) classes at no cost, as she is getting requests for parents for this. General conversation ensued regarding other partnership possibilities with Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) in the future.

Discussion ensued regarding changing the agency logo. Director Garcia Gunderson is meeting with deaf owned businesses to assist with the rebranding. Ms. Peggy Williams asked for the anticipated cost in changing the logo. Director Garcia Gunderson replied that Ms. Kelsey Cruz is currently looking into the cost breakdown and added logo development and strategic planning will utilize two different businesses. General discussion ensued on how to go about choosing the new logo and garnering the public's input.

Vice Chairperson Beurivage thanked Director Garcia Gunderson for her report.

Mr. Jonathan Scherling made the motion to accept the Executive Director Report as presented. Ms. Candice Arteaga seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Schutt was absent.

Ms. Peggy Williams asked for clarification regarding the budget report information, specifically the amount of unused funds left for carryover to the next fiscal year, presented in the board member binders. Ms. Peggy Williams requested to have Ms. Jackie Novak, Business & Finance Manager, break the budget down in layman's terms for the board to easily understand, and she requested this information be emailed to each of the board members.

Ms. Candice Arteaga made the motion to amend the acceptance of the Executive Director Report to include the budget report. Ms. Valerie "Vali" seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Schutt was absent.

I. Committee Reports

Vice Chairperson Beurivage provided the board members the history behind the various committees that are a part of the full commission board and indicated the committees have not been active for a long time. Vice Chairperson Beurivage indicated the committees will be re-established. Vice Chairperson Beurivage indicated the committees generally meet at the end of the quarterly board meetings.

Executive Committee – Serves as the personnel committee that develops and revises personnel policies as needed for approval by the full board. The executive committee

also performs such duties in the management of the commission as may be directed or delegated by the full commission. Members serving on this committee include the chairperson, vice chairperson, and the secretary.

1. Ms. Frances Beurivage, Chairperson
2. Ms. Valerie “Vali” Hitz, Vice Chairperson
3. Ms. Brooke Fitzpatrick, Secretary

Legislative Committee – Develop, monitor, and recommend changes to current NCDHH state statute or new legislation that will benefit people who are deaf and hard of hearing, in cooperation with the various organizations serving the deaf or hard of hearing community. This committee must meet prior to the beginning of the legislative session (fall) to formulate bills and be active during the legislative session.

1. Ms. Peggy Williams
2. Mr. Jonathan Scherling
3. Ms. Brooke Fitzpatrick

Interpreter Issues Committee – Reviews and updates interpreter best practices, sign language evaluation systems and internal procedures.

1. Ms. Frances Beurivage
2. Ms. Peggy Williams

Education Committee – Review’s methods to educate the general public, state agencies, public entities, and the deaf or hard of hearing about the impact of hearing loss in general. Specifically, the education committee seeks ways to implement the vision, mission, and goals of the Commission through awareness activities. In addition, the education committee reviews issues emanating from educational practices, rules, and legislation.

1. Ms. Valerie “Vali” Hitz
2. Ms. Candice Arteaga
3. Ms. Brooke Fitzpatrick

Recognition Committee – Reviews and recommends awards for any outstanding work by staff of the agency. The full board has approved an awards and recognition policy for the agency’s staff. The policy also applies to the Interpreter Review Board.

1. Ms. Sandra Shaw

J. Old Business

Nothing to report.

K. New Business

Vice Chairperson Beurivage shared the board needs to vote for a new Chairperson for the board in light of Mr. Robert Feit’s resignation. Vice Chairperson Beurivage added she stepped in as Chairperson for today’s meeting.

Ms. Candice Arteaga asked Vice Chairperson Beurivage if she would like to maintain the role as Chairperson. Vice Chairperson Beurivage replied yes.

Ms. Candice Arteaga made the motion for Vice Chairperson Beurivage to be the Chairperson of the Board. Ms. Sandra Shaw seconded. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Schutt was absent.

Chairperson Beurivage stated the role of the Vice Chairperson must be filled. Ms. Valerie "Vali" Hitz indicated she was interested in serving in that position. General discussion ensued regarding the duties of the Vice Chairperson position.

Mr. Jonathan Scherling made the motion for Ms. Valerie "Vali" Hitz to fill the role of Vice Chairperson. Ms. Candice Arteaga seconded. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Schutt was absent.

Chairperson Beurivage confirmed the executive committee will now consist of herself as Chairperson, Ms. Valerie "Vali" Hitz as Vice Chairperson and Ms. Brooke Fitzpatrick will continue as secretary.

Director Garcia Gunderson commented that when she was presenting her report, she did not ask her management team present to the board members. She would like to give them an opportunity to do so.

Ms. Kim Davis introduced herself to the board, sharing that she has been with the agency for 13 years. Ms. Davis thanked Director Garcia Gunderson for her trust in making her a supervisor for the team. General discussion ensued between Ms. Davis and the board members regarding a need for the monthly reports to be included in the quarterly board packets or shared during the board meeting. The board members opted to not receive the monthly report information. Ms. Davis shared various items her team is working on and discussed the upcoming ADA Training in August 2023.

Ms. Sharon Sinkler thanked the board for their support and added she will be attending the Registry of Interpreters (RID) Conference with Director Garcia Gunderson. Ms. Sinkler added this is the renewal time for sign language interpreters state licensure as they expire on June 30, 2023. To date, Ms. Sharon Sinkler has approved 61 license renewals. Ms. Sinkler commented about the deaf and hearing interpreter workshop that NCDHH is hosting this Friday, Saturday, and Sunday. Lunch will be provided by Nebraska Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf (neRID). The Lincoln Association of Sign Language Professionals (LASLP) also donated funds for the Sign Language Interpreter workshops.

Ms. Kelsey Cruz shared a recap of the Coffee with a Cop event in Lincoln, held in May

2023. Ms. Cruz indicated it was a smaller event as it is a busy time of year and added she is working with various deaf-owned businesses to decide which one will be the best fit for the agency to assist in rebranding.

L. **Adjourn**

Ms. Peggy Williams moved to adjourn the meeting at 12:23 p.m. Ms. Candice Arteaga seconded the motion. With no further discussion, the motion carried with Ms. Arteaga, Ms. Beurivage, Ms. Fitzpatrick, Ms. Hitz, Mr. Scherling, Ms. Shaw and Ms. Williams all voting aye. Ms. Schutt was absent.

Next Meeting Date

- September 8, 2023 – 1313 Farnam, Room 227, Omaha
- December 8, 2023 – 4600 Valley Rd, Room 4A, Lincoln