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DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
AGING AND DISABILITY SERVICES DIVISION
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Dena Schmidt
Administrator

Nevada Commission for Persons who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing: Accessibility Subcommittee

APPROVED MEETING MINUTES

**Date and Time of Meeting: Friday, March 29, 2024
10:00 AM**

Location of Meeting: ZOOM

AGENDA

1. **Roll Call and Opening Statement:**

Members: Laura Fussell, Thom Duva, Lee Bullock, Betty Hammond, Paula Koerwitz

Guests: Carolyn Carr, Kristy Fritzler, Catherine Nielsen, Kim Le.

Accommodations: Tory Jaramillo, Interpreter; Jamie Jaramillo, Interpreter; Becky Van Auken, Captioner

Staff: Obioma Officer, Executive Director; Lorraine Belt-Dolan, Administrative Assistant III.

2. **Public Comment:**

- Carolyn Carr of Senator Jacky Rosen's Office as a regional representative of the Southern Nevada office. Senator Rosen's office can help constituents with a variety of situations and concerns. They can assist in facilitating conversations with government, with federal agencies, some examples would be Social Security, Medicare, Department of Education, we also help with grants and community project funding.
- Betty Hammond, I speak as a tax-paying Nevada citizen who also happens to be part of the larger Deaf Community. I joined the subcommittee due to having grave concern regarding the shrinking access members of the community have spoken about. Since I was in high school, I've been made aware and seen first-hand the lack of access afforded to the deaf and hard of hearing members. Many aspects of life. Education, employment, social environments, government, and

community-wide communications such as governor's speeches, states of address, emergency situations, for example the shooting in Las Vegas October 1st, I believe. So, there are laws that prevent this lack of access, the ADA, IDEA, yet those laws are ignored by the powers that be. I would wage a guess that 99% of people here understand that fact. Lack of access is the result of the problem. No, the actual problem. The problem is the stakeholders are being ignored. After the public utilities commission was taken to the Nevada Supreme Court, the court ruled that the people who were experts, the program people, should run the Deaf Centers, Deaf Centers are mentioned in the law. The commission should have a say in the budget and the spending. However, one bureaucracy has replaced another, and the experts continue to be silenced in the name of What? Experts are not making decisions about access, and it shows. In addition to this, it is very important to consider the biennial budget, the biennial state budget and how lack of appropriate program spending has resulted in a downward spiral and will result in a continuing downward spiral of the program if not maintained appropriately.

3. **For Possible Action:** Approval of draft Minutes of the December 5, 2023, meeting.
 - Laura Fussell made a motion to approve the minutes, Thom Duva seconded, motion carried.
4. **For Possible Action:** Nominations, Elections, and/or reappointment of subcommittee members and chair.
 - We would like to introduce Betty Hammond and Paula Koerwitz as applicants to join the subcommittee.
 - Betty Hammond is an interpreter, retired from the state as a state employee for 23 years,
 - Paula Koerwitz has lived in Las Vegas for the last 27 years, originally from the East Coast, she has a passion for the Deaf Community, and she has personal experience as a tactile interpreter for the Deaf-Blind.
 - Laura Fussell made a motion to accept Betty Hammond and Paula Koerwitz as new members to the subcommittee, Lee Bullock seconded the motion, motion carried.
5. **For Possible Action:** Review and discuss and approval of assignments of items related to Accessibility Subcommittee Goals and Needs based on the State Plan that need legislative attention and possible approval by the commission to take action:
 - Recommendation #1 – Inclusion of the Community
 - Recommendation # 2 – Government Accessibility
 - Having the ability to access accessibility when entering government buildings.

- An incident has come to our attention, where a Deaf community member went to the State Welfare office to ask about an immigration issue and was told they had no interpreters and had to use their child under the age of 10 to interpret.
- When it comes to interpreters it seems like there is always a budget and a plan for spoken languages but not for sign language. There should be access for all.
- The recommendation has been made that just as they have a phone available for spoken language interpretation, they should have an iPad available for sign language interpretation as well, unfortunately that has not been well received.
- There is an understanding that government offices are to have an ADA compliance officer and we know that DETR has one, but we don't know about other agencies, and we need to find out, what we do know is that there is not an ADA compliance officer for the state.
- Recommendation # 4 – Emergency Response and Management
 - Creating a plan of action to help those with a hearing disability when a disaster strikes.
 - Having shelters with available accessibility,
- Recommendation #5 – Healthcare Access
 - Address the lack of resources in hospitals, doctor's offices, and emergency rooms.
 - Better WIFI that can accommodate VRI in all rooms.
- Pay attention to surroundings what can be brought back to the Commission to advocate for?
- What changes to legislation are needed?
- What states can Nevada learn from?
- Monitors, do all buildings have closed caption available.
- Requirements for stronger private Wi-Fi availability throughout government, hospital, and doctor's offices are needed.
- Address the airports' lack of accessibility.
- Research other states such as Arizona and east coast state provide accessibility.
- Who is responsible for ADA oversight?

6. **For Possible Action:** Approval of tentative Agenda Items for Next meeting, June 11, 2024.

- Report on assignments of finding out what other states have for accessibility and how Nevada can make changes to enforce ADA law.
- If you have a topic you want to add please email Obioma with your ideas.

7. **Public Comment:**

- Laura Fussell let us know that the Commission is hosting 3 townhalls, April 9th in Ely, NV. April 16th in Reno, NV. And April 26th in Las Vegas, NV.
- Obioma stated the commission is also participating in Deaf Night out in Reno on April 17th.
- Paula Koerwitz stated that she will be attending in Reno.

8. **Adjournment (For Possible Action): 11:18 AM**

Accommodation Requests and Meeting Materials:

NOTE:

- Supporting documents referenced above in the “for possible action” items may be requested from Lorraine Belt-Dolan, Commission Administrative Support, ADSD at Lorrainebelt@adsd.nv.gov and is/will be available at the meeting locations and ADSD website at [Nevada Commission for Persons Who Are Deaf Hard of Hearing or Speech Impaired \(nv.gov\)](#)

AGENDA POSTED AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:

Notice of this meeting was posted at the following Aging and Disability Services Office at 3208 Goni Road, Building I, Suite 181, Carson City, NV. 89706. Notice of this meeting was posted on the Internet through the Nevada Aging and Disability Services Division website at [ADSD \(nv.gov\)](#) and Nevada Public Notices website at <https://notice.nv.gov>