

Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) Advisory Board

**Commonwealth Keystone Building
400 North Street
Harrisburg, PA 17120**

March 1, 2023 Meeting Minutes
Conducted via Teleconference

<p><u>Board Members Present</u> Kay Tyberg, Chair; President, HLAA-Blair County Chapter; member, National Association of the Deaf (NAD), Pennsylvania Society for the Advancement of Deaf (PSAD), and Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA). Public member.</p>	<p><u>Visitors/Guests:</u> Spencer Nahf, Public Utility Commission (PUC) (BTUS) John-Paul Rodgers, PUC BTUS Melissa Derr, PUC (BTUS) Denise McCracken, PUC Office of Communications Lori Shumberger, PUC Office of Communications Aaron Margolis, PUC Office of Communication David Screven, PUC Law Bureau Matt Hrivnak, PUC Bureau of Consumer Services Joe Witmer, Office of PUC Chairwoman Brown Dutrieuille Joel Cheskis, Office of Vice Chairman DeFrank Eric Jeschke</p>
<p>Amy Goldman, Secretary; President, US Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication. Public member.</p>	<p>Laura Grassia, TDDP Manager, Institute on Disabilities, Temple University,</p>
<p>Sandi McNally, Assistant Director, TechOwl, Institute on Disabilities, Temple University</p>	<p>Thaddeus Graham, Outreach Coordinator, Hamilton Relay</p>
<p>Christa Cervantes, Pennsylvania Account Manager, CapTel and TRS, Hamilton Relay</p>	<p><u>Legal Advisor to the Board:</u> Tiffany Tran, PUC Law Bureau</p>
<p>Melissa Hawkins, Director, PA Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing</p>	<p><u>Sign Language Interpreters:</u> Jessica Bentley-Sassaman Kathy Zimmerman Morgan Shimer (student)</p>
<p>Steve Samara, PA Telephone Association</p>	<p><u>CART/Real Time</u> Michelle</p>

Call to Order

Chair Kay Tyberg convened the meeting at 9:31 AM.

Welcome/Introductions

Attendees and guests introduced themselves and were welcomed.

Secretary's Report/Approval of the Minutes

Minutes of the December 7 meeting were approved as submitted.

Old Business:

Changes by the PUC Order

Tiffany Tran from the PUC Law Bureau led a discussion of proposed changes to existing TRS bylaws. Highlights of changes below:

- replaced the Office of Special Assistance with the Office of Communications
- eliminated the requirement of 14 members, to allow the Board flexibility to have a different number of members
- removed the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission as a nonpublic member representative to the board
- added a new section describing the administrative support the Commission will provide to the Board
- added a sentence to specify current employees of the Commission are not eligible to serve as Board representatives
- reordered listing of members (public members/nonpublic representative members)
- added language that the Commission will review nominees' applications to determine whether they satisfy Board membership requirements
- established two-year terms for all public members with no term limits; terms are not staggered and begin and end at the fourth quarter meeting of the board (e.g. June) every two years
- Board members filling a vacancy part way through a two-year term will be required to submit another application if they wish to serve for any additional terms
- the Board shall biannually elect officers from the public members of the Board
- should any officer resign from serving as an officer during their two-year term the Board chairperson may convene a special meeting to hold an election to fill in the remaining terms of that officer position
- clarified the sources of support: Administrative support provided to the board through the Office of Communications; technical support from the Bureau of Technical Utility services and the Bureau of Consumer Services, and legal support through a staff attorney from the Commission's Law Bureau
- The Board will hold quarterly meetings.

Report of the Telecommunication Device Distribution Program (TDDP) including Wireless (WEI) by Laura Grassia

Laura distributed a detailed report of equipment distribution, support services and outreach events, providing a summary of activity for the quarter. Laura highlighted the finding that 95% of distributed devices were for people with vision disabilities. She also reported all materials have been updated, and discontinued devices removed from the listing.

Hamilton TRS Outreach Report by Christa Cervantes

Christa provided data on outreach events, as compiled by Amy Strawser, for Telephone Relay Services (TRS) for which Hamilton is the contracted provider. She highlighted the Farm Show event, traditionally a great venue for outreach.

Hamilton CTRS Report by Thad Graham

Hamilton Telephone Company d/b/a Hamilton Telecommunications is the contracted Captioned Telephone Relay Services (CTRS) provider throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. CTRS is similar to its counterpart traditional relay service with an added feature that allows consumers to receive captions on their phone as well as being able to hear what the caller is saying. He presented information on CTRS outreach, both in person and virtual events. There has been collaboration with TechOwl (TDDP) at several conducted/planned events.

TRS Advisory Board Member Recruitment

Kay and Amy emphasized the importance of recruitment given their length of service and time holding the same offices. Ideally, recruitment should be done in person as we seek to find people with advocacy skill, interest, and the commitment to support programs for all people with disabilities who can benefit from telephone access programs under the PUC. The ODHH Hearing Expo (October) is a prime opportunity. There is a need for an (accessible) attractive, eye-catching, succinct flier; social media should be maximized if possible. Denise McCracken is assisting the TRS Advisory Board and drafting a memo to the Commissioners offices as to why they think there should be more members, the challenges of recruitment and what we are requesting from staff to achieve the goal.

RTT Trial

A motion was made and passed to recommend to the PUC that (1) RTT phones purchased for the RTT trial but not distributed and currently housed with Hamilton be transferred to TechOwl's reutilization program and made available to individuals who do not qualify for a phone through the TDDP and (2) individuals who received a phone for the trial can keep the unit.

New Business:

Update on FCC

Joe Witmer provided an update on the state broadband plans, and encouraged TRS members to learn more and engage their stakeholders in providing comments on the Commonwealth's digital equity plan ([Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority - PA Department of Community & Economic Development](#)). Tiffany noted the board could only make recommendation to the commission about the comments that the commission would potentially file although comments may be provided as individuals.

Terms of Current Public Members

Given the expiration of current members' terms (Kay and Amy), a motion was made and passed to allow existing expired board members' terms to continue to run until such time as the new board bylaws are adopted and new elections can be held.

Acknowledgement of Eric Jeschke's Retirement

The TRS Advisory Board extended gratitude to Eric Jeschke for his years of service and dedication to the Advisory Board, and wished him all the best in his retirement.

2023 Meeting Dates

Meetings will start at 9:30 AM if they are by videoconference and 10:00 AM if they are in person. In 2023, the following meeting dates remain:

June 7

September 6

December 6

Meeting Adjourned

The meeting at 1:00 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy S. Goldman, Secretary