

PENNSYLVANIA TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICE/TRS ADVISORY BOARD

Commonwealth Keystone Building

400 North Street

Harrisburg, PA 17120

December 6, 2023, Fourth Quarter Meeting Minutes

Virtual Platform Teleconference Using MS Teams

ATTENDEES & AFFILIATIONS

Board Members

Amy Goldman, Chairperson,
Past President, US Society for Augmentative & Alternative Communication/USSAAC, 2023-2024. Member; Board of Directors member of National State Boards of Examiners in Speech and Language Pathology and Audiology. Public Member

Kay Tyberg, Secretary
USA HLAA member; President, HLAA-Blair County PA Chapter; National Association of the Deaf (NAD) member; Pennsylvania Society for the Advancement of Deaf (PSAD) Lifetime member; National Association of Late Deafened Adults (ALDA) member; etc. Public Member.

Sandi McNally
Assistant Director, TechOwl, Institute on Disabilities Temple University

Melissa Hawkins
Director, PA Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing within PA Labor and Industry

Christa Cervantes
Pennsylvania Account Manager, CapTel and TRS, Hamilton Relay

Steve Samara
Pennsylvania Telephone Association

TRS STAFF & GUESTS

Eric Jeschke,
Public Utility Commission (PUC) (BTUS)

Melissa Derr
PUC (BTUS)

Matt Hrivnak
PUC Bureau of Services

Denise McCracken
PUC Office of Communications

Tom Giannantonio
PUC BCS

Christine McGougal
Vice Chairman's Office of PUC Commission

Spencer Nahf
PUC Telephone Utility Services

Aaron Margolis
PUC Office of Communications

John Paul Rogers
PUC Telephone Utility Services

Spencer Nahf
BTUS

Aaron Margolis
PUC Office of Communications

David Screven
PUC Law Bureau

Joel Cheskis
PUC Chairman Legal Assistant to Commissioner

Lillian Harris
PUC Commissioner Legal Assistant

Kayla Rost
PUC Commissioner Legal Assistant

Laura Grassia
TDDP Program Manager, Institute on Disabilities, Temple University

Jenny Pearson
Outreach Coordinator, Hamilton CapTel

Public Member Vacancy: 3

Board Members Absent:

Matt Hrivnak
Steve Samara

Thaddeus Graham

Outreach Coordinator, Hamilton Relay

Legal Advisor to the Board:

Tiffany Tran

Law Bureau of the PUC

David Screven

Law Bureau of the PUC

Sign Language Interpreters:

Jessica Bentley-Sassaman

Cindi Brown

Sara Riley, Intern

CART/Real Time

Archive Reporting and Captioning

Call to Order

Chairperson Amy Goldman convened the Fourth Quarter of the TRS/PUC Advisory Board meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, December 6, 2023.

Virtual Platform Etiquette Protocols

While conducting Virtual Platform meetings the board established appropriate protocols to adequately accommodate the needs of those with hearing loss, deafblind, and speech disabilities with hearing assistive technology communication mode for attendees. We ask for everyone's cooperation:

- a) Articulate clearly when speaking,**
- b) face and look into the camera's headshot when speaking to allow those who rely on lipreading to see you,**
- c) avoid backlighting the background,**
- d) one person speaks at a time when called upon,**
- e) to assure accuracy raise your hand and say yah or nah during the voting process giving people with disabilities time to respond or to second a motion,**
- f) allow a minute for those using sign language to respond, and**
- g) before addressing the members unmute your audio and state your first name before speaking.**

OLD BUSINESS

Welcome/Introductions

Chairperson Amy Goldman welcomed the Advisory Board members and guests to our last 2023 Advisory Council meeting. Amy wished everyone a nice holiday and a good season ahead.

Secretary Kay Tyberg conducted the roll call of the advisory board and other guests. Absentees are Steve S. and Matt N. Guests include Tom Giannantonio, Lillian Harris, Spencer Nahf, and Kayla Rost.

Chairperson's Report

Amy reminded everyone of our Virtual Platform Etiquette Protocols. Amy reminded attendees when it comes to the telecommunications device distribution program all disabilities whereby telephone communication interference may be affected by actions or comments of this committee.

Amy had no Chairman's report or comments.

Secretary's Report/Approval of the Minutes

The meeting minutes were reviewed for corrections or comments. Amy Goldman asked for a motion on the floor to approve the minutes. Christa Cervantes made a motion with a correction to Cindi Brown's name, seconded by Sandi McNally. The meeting minutes were unanimously approved by the board.

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

The Telecommunication Device Distribution Program (TDDP) includes Wireless equipment distribution and support services where Sandi McNally reported the TDDP on behalf of Laura Grassia who is offsite with an outreach project whereby the focus is on the positive year-end results.

The report shows that from July 1, 2023, to September 30, 2023, there were 80 applicants out of 96 applications submitted from 36 counties in Pennsylvania. Laura's procedure is to follow up with the incomplete applicants and inactive applicants. Report on the devices there were 76 recipients in 31 counties with 83 pieces provided to 76 recipients. The outreach focus was on underserved areas, the Spanish-speaking population, and veterans. Sandy stated the office looked at the age group of people requesting TDDP. Outreach contacts were regional centers that have educational and outreach for TDDP and Laura participated with the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority.

TDDP's highest percentage of device distribution was for people with vision disabilities, 13% were for hearing loss, and 9% were for other disabilities. People who need telephone access who meet the eligibility criteria (e.g. are deafblind for I Can Connect are served by that program. Sandy clarified iPhone 6S is the last model with a "home" key which many people relied on.

Amy Goldman suggested for future reports it would help to disclose the questions the survey asks and the consumers' responses. Nothing was brought up about this.

Hamilton TRS Outreach Report by Jenny Pearson

Jenny Pearson provided an in-depth report for the quarter on Hamilton's TRS Outreach. Jenny emerged in her new role by meeting new associates and partners as well as learning how to navigate across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. She attended several state representatives and a senator senior expos, senior centers, and others.

Forthcoming events are the PA CareerLink presentations, the PA Farm Show with Thad, an ice hockey game event, and the Hamilton Relay will have a table on the concourse. Sandy referenced Jenny's Outreach report on page 9 explaining to the board the external complaints given are people who hang up, call the relay service trying to get another company, get the wrong number, and other minor items that are not unusual to receive.

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 like its counterpart's traditional relay service with an added feature that allows consumers to receive captions on their telephone with the ability to hear what the caller is saying.

Thad shared this was a busy time of the year, especially with multiple senior expos hosted by different Commonwealth of Pennsylvania senators. Thad attended the Senior Health Fair in Cambria County. He made connections with multiple agencies. Ambitious about how to connect with the deafblind community and the visually impaired. Thad hosted two webinars for a healthcare call center near Philadelphia. Several presentations were completed in the Erie area. Multiple presentations were done throughout Cambria County. We can't leave out the PA Farm Show partnering with Jenny all week in January. Displayed several photos from the HLAA Walk4Hearing at the Navy Yard in Philadelphia in October which was a great event. It has been a busy quarter.

Broadband Report by Laura Grassia

Sandi spoke on behalf of Laura who was on an assignment offsite. The Broadband Authority sent out an email at the end of November 2023 with a draft of the Statewide Digital Equity Plan. The Broadband Authority is looking for public comments. The comment period is from November 27 and ending January 8, 2024. Denise will forward the information to those interested in completing public comments to the board.

TRS Advisory Board Member Recruitment

Denise McCracken and Tiffany Tran interacted with members of the Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) recently which works similarly to the TRS Advisory Board. Lenore Best serves on the CAC requested an update on TRS Advisory Board. Denise and Tiffany took the opportunity to mention the recruitment effort at this time. During their conversation, a person from a small business advocate provided some names of groups/organizations. Denise indicates she needs to get back to her. Tiffany added Elizabeth Marks, who works with low-income and vulnerable communities, was willing to distribute the flyers. The board was pleased with its ongoing recruiting efforts. Amy reminded the board attendees there is a lot of intersectionality between the low-income community and people with disabilities. Please keep in mind that public member nominees should have some connection with telecommunication.

ODHH Hearing Loss Expo – Melissa Hawkins

Melissa Hawkins summarized the ODHH Hearing Loss Expo held on 10/11 and 10/12 at Camp Hill. The Secretary of Labor and Industry and State Representative Joe Hollinstein spoke to the audience. The expo had 72 vendors and probably over 200 attended. One day was dedicated to the Deafblind community and the second day was focused on transitioning for students who are deaf, hard of hearing, and/or Deafblind. Sixteen school districts participated across the Commonwealth.

NEW BUSINESS

Possible Speaker

It was suggested to ask Neil McDevitt of DHCC to speak at our next meeting. Amy will reach out to him.

Potential Public Members

Discussion among attendees of potential public members like Joseph Witmer now that he is retired from PUC, Neil McDevitt, and others. Board members will pursue this before our March 13th meeting.

Statistical Data on Relay and CapTel

Kay Tyberg inquired if Hamilton Relay has county data on relay customers and CapTel customers. There is no data on this. Discussion followed about how to produce information without disclosing the customers like using zip code, or some other sequential means. Christa responded with what she knew. Perhaps break it down to area codes.

2024 Meeting Dates

Our next MS Teams virtual meeting is Wednesday, March 13, 2024. Virtual meetings will start at 9:30 a.m. The 2024 meeting dates are June 5, September 11, and December 4.

Public Comment

No question but holiday wishes were extended to all.

Meeting Adjourned

Chairperson Amy asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Kay made the motion and was seconded by Sandi McNally. The board unanimously approved, and the meeting adjourned at 10:55 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

**Annita Kay Tyberg
Secretary**

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