

PENNSYLVANIA TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY SERVICE/TRS ADVISORY BOARD

Commonwealth Keystone Building

400 North Street

Harrisburg, PA 17120

March 5, 2024, First 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. Board of Directors member of National State Boards of Examiners in Speech and Language Pathology and Audiology. Public Member

Kay Tyberg, Secretary

HLAA National member; HLAA-Blair County PA Chapter President; 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; Say What Club, and TDI member. 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

Allison LaBrie

Pennsylvania Account Manager, CapTel and TRS, Hamilton Relay

Steve Samara

Pennsylvania Telephone Association

Public Member Vacancy: 3

TRS STAFF & GUESTS

Eric Jeschke

Public Utility Commission (PUC) (TUS)

Melissa Derr

PUC (TUS)

Matt Hrivnak

PUC Bureau of Consumer Services

Denise McCracken

PUC Office of Communications

Tom Giannantonio

PUC Bureau of Technical Utility Services

Christian McDewell

Vice Chairman's Office of PUC Commission

Aaron Margolis

PUC Office of Communications

John Paul Rogers

PUC Telephone Utility Services

Riley Schaeffer

Public Utility Commission

Spencer Nahf

Bureau of Technical Utility Services

Aaron Margolis

PUC Office of Communications

David Screven

Law Bureau of the PUC

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

Thaddeus Graham

Outreach Coordinator, Hamilton Relay

Board Members Absent

Kay Tyberg

Guest Speakers:

Steven Cooper serves as the State of Maryland Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunication Relay.

Kayla Rost, Vice Counsel to Rost

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

CART/Real Time

Archive Reporting and Captioning, **Abby**

Call to Order

Chairperson Amy Goldman welcomed members and guests to the First Quarter TRS/PUC Advisory Board meeting on Wednesday, March 5, 2025. The meeting was called to order.

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) Before addressing the board, members please unmute your audio and state your first name before speaking,**
- b) articulate clearly when speaking,**
- c) one person speaks at a time when called upon by the chairperson,**
- d) face and look into the camera's headshot when speaking to allow those who rely on lipreading to see you,**
- e) avoid backlighting in the background,**
- f) allow time for members relying on the sign language interpreter to translate to the hearing loss person to communicate or cast their vote,**
- g) to assure accuracy raise your hand and say "yah" or "nay" during the voting process giving people with disabilities time to respond or to second a motion, and**
- h) while communicating live or virtual platform avoid wearing abstract or loud patterns due to those who experience vertigo.**

OLD BUSINESS

Welcome/Introductions

Amy Goldman welcomed everyone. Amy Goldman administered the roll call, requesting board members to introduce themselves, followed by PUC staff, interpreters, and guest(s) present. Guests were Steven Cooper, and Kaylie Rost, vice chair of Rost.

Chairperson's Report

No report from Chairperson Amy Goldman.

Secretary's Report/Approval of the Minutes

In Kay's absence, Amy requested that the board review the March 5, 2025 meeting minutes. Steve Samara motioned to accept the meeting minutes, and Allison LaBrie seconded. The board anonymously approved the December meeting minutes.

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

Laura Grassia reported that the Telecommunication Device Distribution Program (TDDP) includes wireless equipment distribution and support services. Her report is attached. She focused on the TDDP Report and outreach projects from October 1 to December 31, 2024.

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 report consists of November through January 2025, starting with the presentation of the Hamilton Relay Community Leader Service Award at Mt. Aloysius College. You will notice in today's PowerPoint presentation that our TRS/PUC Advisory Board secretary, Kay Tyberg, joined me at the presentation. Kay gave a speech. It was a fantastic event. Other outreach events were held at senior centers and the PA Farm Show. I did eight presentations.

PA TRS Quarterly Update Report by Allison LaBrie

Allison LaBrie provided the Pennsylvania TRS Quarterly Report. Pennsylvania captioned and traditional relay services are doing well.

Allison followed up from the December 2024 TRS/PUC meeting when Kay Tyberg inquired whether there was data or any report on digital data usage. Since we reported

on the PSTN, there has been no digital usage report. Hamilton Relay hopes to incorporate analog-to-digital transition materials into its outreach program to help consumers who have lost access find alternative solutions.

ASCII Discontinued

On November 22, 2024, the FCC granted a partial temporary waiver for ASCII, which could be used for two years. Hamilton Relay decided not to support the waiver. Data in Pennsylvania shows that ASCII is not being utilized by their consumers. Hamilton Relay is discontinuing ASCII until an alternative is selected. Consumers are being notified of this discontinuation.

Amy Goldman asked if TTYs were being used anymore. Yes, the elderly deaf and hard-of-hearing generation relies on TTYs, and consumers are notifying appropriate offices about the lack of landlines to utilize their TTYs. The true solution would be real-time communication, which Hamilton Relay offered previously.

Hamilton TRS Outreach Report by Jenny Pearson

Jenny Pearson provided a report for the quarter on Hamilton's TRS Outreach. Jenny is navigating her way across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. She attended several state representatives and a senator's senior expos, senior centers, and the successful Montgomery County Senior Center Expo, which was held on May 9th. She has made connections with CareerLink. Upcoming June events are in the works.

Broadband and Telecommunications – Joel Cheskis

Joel counsels the PUC Chairman Steve DeFrank on telecommunication and broadband issues. In addition, Joel is involved in the Pennsylvania Broadband Development Authority under Chairman DeFrank.

Joel reported that the change in the federal administration brings questions and uncertainty about whether the funds will be disbursed as foreseen and reported at our December 2024 quarterly meeting.

It is up in the air just how much Pennsylvania State will receive. The Broadband Development Authority is disbursing funds to continue as people pick up the shovels, checks have been sent in the mail and moving forward.

The Broadband Equity Access Deployment (BEAD) made applications available by the February 7, 2025, deadline. Progress is moving forward with \$1 billion allocated to Pennsylvania.

Public Members Recruitment – Denise McCracken

Amy let Denise report on the recruitment status of new public members. One person has contacted Denise with questions about the application. Tiffany has an update on recruitment. Tiffany contacted Liz Marks, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Public Utility Law Project, and connected her with Sherry Shade of the Disability Rights Network regarding new public members. Communication is ongoing between DRN and PUC to find ways to broadcast the need for recruits. Other suggestions were brought to the board's attention; the Institute on Disabilities asked Sandi to get the word out, do an announcement at the Statewide Independent Living Council, the ACDHH council, reach out to speech pathologists, and the Development Disabilities Council. If possible, Kay shared the idea of a recruitment video done by PUC Communications.

NEW BUSINESS

Guest Speaker Steven Cooper, a Laryngectomy

Missy Derr introduced Steven Cooper. Mr. Cooper resides in Maryland. He sits on the Maryland Governor's Advisory for TRS, is an executive board member of Easy Throat Cancer Support Group and is a past president of the National Association and patient ambassador of Atos Medical. Please welcome Steven Cooper.

He provided his background and his experience with throat cancer in 2019, having had extensive surgery to remove his cancerous vocal cords. Mr. Cooper discussed the device(s) he uses to communicate, specifically Decal and a voice prosthesis. Another tool is an electrolarynx. The above-mentioned communication tools are the only means for people with speech-to-speech, visual speech-to-speech, and carryover. On Facebook, Larry Speak Easy has 5,000 members. ACC devices and smartphone texting are helpful.

In Maryland, our gatekeepers are the speech pathologists, speech language pathologists, Jefferson Hospital, and the University Hospital of Pennsylvania. On the international and national level, speech pathologists are unaware of what's available. TRS/PUC is experiencing advertising, but we're not getting responses from people. Maryland, like Pennsylvania, uses Hamilton Relay.

Mr. Cooper used the appropriate terminology instead of speech-to-speech, which is known as "nonstandard speech." Speech-disabled and hearing-disabled are no longer acceptable. In Maryland, another term used is limited speech. People who have lost their voice cords, their second language is English. In the same way, ASL is the Deaf person's first language, and English is second.

2025 Meeting Dates

Our Second Quarter TRS/PUC Advisory Board MS Teams virtual meeting is on Wednesday, June 4, 2025. Virtual meetings will begin promptly at 9:30 a.m. Please log in sooner to set up your connection.

Forthcoming meetings are scheduled on September 3rd and December 3rd, 2025.

Public Comment

No comment was presented.

Meeting Adjourned

Amy Goldman asked a member to make a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mellissa Hawkins made the motion, which Allison LaBrie seconded. The board unanimously approved it.

Respectfully submitted,

Annita Kay Tyberg

Annita Kay Tyberg, Secretary

Report Attachments

Rev. 05/31/2025, 06/02/2025



2025-03-05 PA
Advisory Board PPT -



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TDDP Update for
TRS Advisory Council