

March 11, 2022

REMOTE MEETING OF THE ILLINOIS DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING COMMISSION

A quarterly meeting of the Illinois Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission (IDHHC) was held remotely on Friday, March 11, 2022.

Call to Order

Chairperson Dennis O’Brien called the meeting to order at 1:21 PM.

Commissioners Present

Joseph Culpepper	Yes	Jean Draths	Yes	Michael Dubowe	Yes
David Frazier	Yes	John Jun	Yes	Lori Krakora	Yes
Dennis O’Brien	Yes	Jennifer Sender	Yes	Kevin Smith	Yes

Public

Remote Live Broadcast

Approval Meeting Minutes

John Jun moved to approve the minutes as read for the November 5, 2021, Quarterly Meeting; seconded by David Frazier Motion passed.

Joseph Culpepper	Yes	Jean Draths	Yes	Michael Dubowe	Yes
David Frazier	Yes	John Jun	Yes	Lori Krakora	Yes
Dennis O’Brien	Yes	Jennifer Sender	Yes	Kevin Smith	Yes

Chairperson’s Report

Chairperson Dennis O’Brien began the report by reporting he and the Director have been having frequent and constant communications regarding the Commission programs, services, and activities as well as personnel. Most of our communications are covered in the Director’s report.

- Chairperson O’Brien reported that he has completed annual performance evaluation of Director as required by the state and submitted to the Governor’s Office. Chairperson O’Brien recognized that it is important for all Commissioners to have access to view the performance evaluation of the Director closed to the public in accordance with the Open Meetings Act. Due to the remote platform’s inability to have a secured closed session, the performance evaluation will be available to all Commissioners in the next in-person meeting’s closed meeting session.
- Chairperson O’Brien reported that he and Director has been discussing on envisioning the technological needs for improvement of staff to operate the Commission’s programs, services, and activities seamlessly. This discussion would be a great opportunity for inclusion in the new 5-Year Strategic Plan.
- Chairperson O’Brien encouraged Commissioners to review Director’s reports that may reflect the action for contributions towards the development of the new 5-Year Strategic Plan.

Director's Report

Commission Director Benro Ogunyipe provided an agency report for the period from November 2021 to March 2022.

- The Director reported the Commission continues to be in the **General Compliance Examination and Cybersecurity Compliance Examination** period for 2 Years (ended June 30, 2021) by the Illinois Auditor General. The compliance report will be concluded and released this year.
- The Director reported that the Commission currently has nine (9) Commissioners. Two (2) Commissioners will continue serving on expired terms until Governor's Office makes new appointments: Joseph Culpepper and Lori Krakora. Commissioner David Frazier is eligible for reappointment which will be for the term ending November 14, 2024. The Director added that the Commission continues to encourage the public, who are interested in serving on the Commission to apply at this website, www.appointments.illinois.gov.
- The Director reported that as of March 1, 2022, when the state lifted its mask mandate, state employees and visitors are not required to wear face masking in the state facilities. However, state employees are required to wear face masking when interacting with visitors. The Commission requires appointments are from visitors. This also means the state is transition slowly to in-person meetings. However, our conference room is too small to host in-person meetings on strategic plan due to the need to maintain 6 feet social distancing protocol. The Commission still plan to have an expanded conference room space.
- The Director reported that the Commission continues to work with CMS and building management to lease additional space (expanded conference room) adjacent to the office. The expanded conference room space will allow the Commission to host in-person public meetings with 11 Commissioners, staff, ASL interpreters, and public (visitors); Illinois License Board meeting; BEI Rating sessions and trainings; and conduct IL BEI Interpreter Testing (current conference room limits to 6 persons space under the social distancing protocol).
- The Director reported agency headcount and the Commission continues to experience staffing shortage and it impacts some operational needs of the agency. The Commission currently has two vacancies, the Interpreter Coordinator and Administrative Assistant I. The Commission is still working with the Central Management Services (CMS) on a new state electronic HR system before the positions can be posted for interested candidates to submit their applications. Due to various factors including CMS state electronic HR system, the Commission still anticipates vacant positions will be posted followed by the interviewing and hiring process this year, 2022.
- The Director provided the Commission Budget report: expenditure report of the FY21 budget, status on the current FY22 budget, and for the upcoming FY23 budget, the Commission is currently working with the Governor's Office of Management and Budget (GOMB) on reviewing and submitting budget requests for the Fiscal Year 2023.
- The Director reported that the Commission has completed the FY21 Annual Report for the fiscal year period, July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021. As statutorily mandated, the FY21 Annual Report is released to the public. It is now available on the Commission website, posted under the Report page. Electronic copy of the FY21 Annual Report has been sent in email to all Commissioners and will be shared with the Licensure Board members.
- The Director reported that as of October 2021, the Commission has reopened the IL BEI Interpreter Testing after a year and half suspension due to the pandemic. Both the written Test of English Proficiency (TEP) and BEI Performance on Basic, Advanced, or Master level

certifications are being offered. BEI Rating sessions are being worked out to rate BEI Performance Exams after two years hiatus due to the pandemic.

- The Director also reported that the Commission completed its annual License Renewal Period from November 1st to February 15th. The Commission currently complete its BEI Certification Renewal that typically issues renewal certifications in March annually. The next Licensure Board Meeting will be held virtually on Friday April 8, 2022, the last meeting of the fiscal year 2022.
- The Director reported that the Commission will again cancel its in-person Annual Interpreter Conference. This summer 2022, the Commission will again sponsor alternative options for professional interpreter development opportunities and two week-long training institutes: Basic and Advanced Interpreter Institute – most of these presenters and trainers are from Texas. This summer events provide an opportunity for continuing education hours to be earned as part of the Interpreters for the Deaf Licensure Act. This summer events will draw community-based interpreters, educational interpreters and students currently enrolled in Interpreter Training/Preparation Programs. The ISBE grant typically cover expenses.
- The Director reported on the Commission’s Collaboration, Partnership, and Technical Support with the following entities: Illinois Department of Human Rights, Illinois Department of Public Health, Illinois State Board of Education, DHS Division of Rehabilitation Services, DHS Division of Mental Health (DMH) & Dept of Children and Family Services (DCFS), Illinois Law Enforcement Agencies, and National Association of State Agencies for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
- The Director stated he has provided additional reports to the Commissioners: State Government Meetings; Staff Professional Development/Trainings; Outreach/Presentations; Community and Stakeholders Meetings; Commission Reports; and Legislative Bills and Resolutions.

New Business

None.

Public Comments

The Commission received one public comment, a written submission Sharon King (who is a member of the Chicago North Shore Chapter of the Hearing Loss Association of America) regarding AT&T Landline Service in Illinois which was read by Chairperson O’Brien for the record:

Discussion of Action Regarding Affordability of AT&T Traditional Landline Telephone Service in Illinois for Users with Disabilities. AT&T is required currently to offer its traditional landline telephone service in Illinois and, presumably, to do so at a reasonable cost. Although the Illinois Telecommunications Act was amended in July 2017 (the “Act”) to eliminate the requirement that AT&T provide traditional landline service in Illinois, this provision is only effective if AT&T has obtained final approval from the FCC, which it has not done.

AT&T’s traditional landline service is important to people who have disabilities who require reliable service to support medical alert capability and access to 911. Unlike most landline services, AT&T’s service remains functional during electrical outages without the necessity for battery backup.

Although AT&T still provides this service in Illinois because it is legally required to do so, it has made access to this service increasingly more expensive. Based on information received from an AT&T representative, AT&T offered discounts for such service upon request until about a year ago. Now, discounts are not available.

It appears that AT&T hopes to discourage use of its traditional landline telephone service through increased charges for this service. The decreased use of this service will work to AT&T's advantage in seeking FCC approval to discontinue the service in Illinois based on lack of use.

Should IDHHC act on behalf for those whom it serves in urging that AT&T be required to provide its traditional landline telephone service at a reasonable cost?

Open Discussion

- Chairperson O'Brien opened the discussion on Telecommunications Accessibility (Landline Telephone Service). Commissioners discussed, with questions and answered by the Director, on the AT&T's plan to disconnect the landline telephone service pending FCC approval, customers' choice and options, and state legislative and agencies' role and responsibilities related to the customer's rights to utilize landline telephone service.

Adjournment

Lori Krakora moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:35 PM; seconded by Michael Dubowe. Motion passed.

Joseph Culpepper	Yes	Jean Draths	Yes	Michael Dubowe	Yes
David Frazier	Yes	John Jun	Yes	Lori Krakora	Yes
Dennis O'Brien	Yes	Jennifer Sender	Yes	Kevin Smith	Yes

(Signature in file)

Chairperson

Date

(Signature in file)

IDHHC Open Meetings Act Designee

Date