



DHHSC BOARD MEETING MINUTES **(January 13, 2015)**

I. Meeting called to Order at 6:00pm

II. Board Members Present: Jonathan Silva, Vice President (JS), Chad Catron, Treasurer (CC), Jill Nolen, Fundraising Committee (JN), Tess Contreras (TC), Justin Gaines (JG)

*Board Members Absent: Sue Stone (SS)- excused, Brianna Berg, Public Relations (BB)- unexcused

*Board Members Tardy: Melissa Sortwell, Secretary (MS)- excused

DHHSC Staff Members Present: Michelle Bronson, Executive Director (MB)

Visitors: Alexander Sanborn, Skippy Sumner, Janel Birrenkott, Justin Blanco, Martha Coletti, and Shelley Stout.

Interpreters: Pam Warkentin and Nicole Wolfe

Support Service Providers(SSP): Emily Trujillo and Lori Bothelo

III. Public Comments – Skippy Sumner- There are several issues; we received an email from DHHSC stating the “Board Meeting Today!!” The way it was punctuated didn't appear professional to me. The DHHSC news that goes out every Friday is always capitalized or has a number of exclamation marks within it. I don't know if that is a "hearing thing" but when I see a bunch of big letters and alarming punctuation marks, I often feel like I am being yelled at. Essentially, it's disrespectful. I don't mind a couple here and there, but when the news is consumed by them then I begin to wonder. Another concern I have is regarding the board minutes. They aren't provided to the community in an ample amount of time before the next meeting; it is typically made available to the public by the week before the next board meeting. One week before the next meeting isn't enough time for the community (that didn't attend the previous meeting) to review and appreciate. Also where is the passion? Where's the vision and how are they tied into DHHSC? What has happened with the survey that we have discussed in meetings past? Has the Board and DHHSC staff come together to develop a better survey yet? If yes, then where is it? Why haven't I seen it? Have we improved on it? Where's the information on it? Lastly, who is on the Advisory Council (AC)?

IV. Approval of Agenda Items – approved

*short announcement- We just got news that our intermediate secretary, Melissa Sortwell, was just involved in a car accident and it is looking like she will be unable to make it to the meeting tonight. Because of this news, her absence/tardy will be excused.

V. Approval of November Board Minutes – approved

VI. President's Report – N/A

VII. Vice-President's Report – JS: Meetings will be occurring every 2 months rather than every month. On the months that we do not have a Board meeting, we will be meeting with the DHHSC Management Staff. In addition, we are looking into other ways to get more of the Community involved with our Board meetings and workshops. We have considered trying to live stream, but we don't have all the technology to do so. It has been proven that email just isn't enough to do the job anymore. Also, Community Comments were in August. Several topics were brought up and will be discussed later in the agenda. Attendance in general is dwindling and it's a popular topic that still hasn't improved. For example, VDF is where we are seeing the dwindling numbers and it's one of our bigger events. FDE is no longer running and we have high hopes for HOH to become more active in the Community alongside us. The falling attendance numbers are very concerning to us Board members. Money is always an issue, and transportation is difficult to manage as well as expensive. One thing that we really

have to figure out how to do is tap into the city of Fresno and Clovis. We can't keep just relying on our own community to provide for our events. Part of our plan right now includes a recent attempt to apply for a grant with United in Tulare. Part of the recommendation for that particular grant was developing a strategic plan. However, it is difficult to create these goals because they need to be measurable. We see this as a great opportunity to team up with the management team of DHHSC.

VIII. Secretary's Report – MS: none

IX. Treasurer's Report – CC:

November-December Financial Report distributed and reviewed.

Checking/savings balance	\$327,231.62
Accounts receivable total	\$246,762.43
AR grants	\$160,755.59
AR interpreting	\$86,006.84
Accounts payable	-\$7,807.35
Board private fund balance	\$1,339.50
Profit/loss	\$46,073.04 (for 6 months)
Grant awarded for 14-15	\$650,564.00
Grant spent up to 12/31/14	\$327,887.60
Grant unspent for 6 months remaining (ending 06/30/15)	\$322,676.40

X. Executive Director's Report – MB:

Grant Updates:

-We just completed our UW Tulare grant application for both the PRAISE and ROCK programs, which is due this Friday. We are hopeful we can expand Taylor's hours through this grant.

-We are now moving onto several grants, including Target for our literacy program, Gannett Foundation for Deaf Seniors, and a meditation-related grant, which will include Tai Chi and yoga for participants through all four of our offices. American Association of Retired Persons will also be releasing grants in February, so we are continually checking to see if we can apply for any of their grants for our Deaf Seniors.

DOR Updates:

-Harvey and I have met with Debbie Rose, Sheila's supervisor, the past two months and will meet again this Friday. The process is slow but we have identified many problem areas and are now working to address those concerns. The monthly meetings seem to benefit us in that we are meeting more regularly to follow up on referrals, keep communication channels open, review billing concerns, etc. For example, Debbie was not aware that we have D/HH students in Fresno County or Clovis Unified, she only knew of those in Fresno Unified. Omar, our Employment Specialist, has already met with D/HH students at Buchanan High School in December and will start meeting with other D/HH students at other Clovis high schools in February. This begins the referral process for D/HH students graduating from high school for DOR services. These monthly meetings allow us to more closely monitor what is happening with each referral.

Event Updates:

-As you know, we just finished a very busy holiday season with many events in November and December. Merced had its Thanksgiving Party on 11/20 with between 25-30 people in attendance, and we were very appreciative of Nicole and Cheryl hosting the party. I would also like to thank Merced AC members for assisting with this event. Harvey and I enjoyed the party.

-The Visalia office hosted its Holiday Party on 12/10, and Taylor did a great job coordinating the games and activities. The two-armed gift-wrapping competition as part of the "60 Seconds to Win" game was fun to watch! I believe Taylor and Kathy Carlson won that round.

-The Salinas office had its Holiday Party on 12/13 and had the largest turnout they could remember. 60 people attended, and we appreciated Wayne and Rochelle for hosting this event.

-The Merced office hosted its Holiday Party on 12/18 and approximately 50 people attended. They also enjoyed playing Bingo, which is a popular activity there.

The Fresno Headquarters had our 6th Annual Holiday Luncheon on 12/22, and I would like to thank Hand on Hand, California Association of the Deaf, Central Valley (CADCV), Fresno's Deaf Services Advisory Council members, and all of our volunteers for assisting with the event. They were involved with the event set-up, food preparations and pick-up from various restaurants, served food to our guests, facilitated games and activities, and event clean-up. We had approximately 175 people, including 34 children, which was great! More children were able to participate this year because we hosted the event after the schools were out for the holidays.

-I would like to thank Sorenson Communications for sponsoring our holiday events at all four offices. Their support means a lot to us because food is expensive, and their sponsorship covers some of the expense. Our holiday events are our way of thanking the community for their continued support of DHHSC and our services.

-I would also like to express appreciation to all the restaurants that donated food to our Holiday Luncheon, Mountain Bear Fan Club for their generous donation of 70 stuffed animals, and Toys for Tots and United Way Fresno for toy donations for client families. The outpouring of support and donations during the holiday season was very touching and very much appreciated. The success of our event was largely because of their support and donations and community involvement. Thank you!

-Two last events were our 26th Annual Valley Deaf Festival on November 22nd and Silent Sleigh on Dec. 10th. We had approximately 700 people at VDF and 150 children at Silent Sleigh. VDF was wonderful and a lot of fun with the 50s-theme. We especially enjoyed the Break the Barriers performance, and the kids did amazing stunts and flips. The limbo contest was fun to watch! A big thank you goes to Sorenson Communications, AT&T, EECU, and Harris Communications for sponsoring VDF. The Board, staff, and volunteers did an amazing job preparing for VDF, and I would like to thank everyone for all the time and work that went into hosting such a successful event!

-For Silent Sleigh, I would like to thank Fresno Rotary Club and Exchange Club for their sponsorships of the event. They covered the costs of healthy lunches for the children and replaced old Silent Sleigh banners that we've had for years. We had a fun day at the event, with many games and a large parade. Last, but not least, I would like to thank our Deaf Santa who made rounds at Silent Sleigh, our holiday events, and the Deaf Blind Holiday Social. He was very busy but a jolly good character throughout it all!

XI. Committee Reports

a.) Bylaws Committee – will be added to New Business.

b.) Fundraising Committee – JN: First of all, Happy New Year 2015! I always try to set new goals for fundraising and in the past we have hosted a Fresno Deaf Soccer event. Hopefully we can do a tournament style event for all ages this year. We will also continue with our restaurant fundraising. In addition, we are excited to welcome back our 3rd annual SoakMePah! I'm looking forward to it.

c.) Grant Monitoring Committee – MB: There was a concern about the number of people attending meetings, I propose that for further Board discussion to see what can be done.

d.) Public relations - JS: This was originally set up by many recommendations from the Community and we are now trying to decide what this looks like. Many times we will have events set up that need recognition and sponsorship which is not proving to be that effective right now. Many don't know who we are. The thought is that maybe we can use this PR committee to establish a report and give a face to DHHSC. Not aggressively, but in an approachable and pleasant manner in order to develop relationships to the outside communities.

XII. General Board Comments –

JG: I am president of Hands on Hands and I am here with Alex who is with CVDE. Alex: our purpose is to work together to establish more events in the Deaf Community.

JS: My understanding is the HOH is taking over the FDE role who is no longer there?

JG: Yes, however, we want to involve also the Deaf Blind mission and combine it with these events.

JS: On the same note, I used to be the Fundraising Chair and one thing I learned is that we can use up funding and resources very easily. Now we have more help on the Board and we need to strive for balance. My theory is to set up events every month or every 6 weeks like the gaming events that I advertise. If I charge \$5 each to play, that money will go into DHHSC accounts. I would like to see more of those types of activities bringing in money that we don't always tap into. I would like to see that expanding to Hearing Communities also. On the topic of another issue at Community Comments, there was mention of the English wording on the surveys. English is not a first language for many of our clients, and most of the answers do not address the questions being asked. Also, not everyone can access the technology to view a Vlog for assistance so that didn't work. Having a staff member sit down with the clients does not provide anonymity unfortunately, and we don't have any staff members we can devote to that. So maybe we can have a person ask a Client/Community Member if they don't mind watching a video to fill out a survey in a private area with an incentive offered, such as a raffle ticket number at the bottom of the survey as an appreciation for their time and opinions. We also plan to edit the survey and cut the questions down from 16 questions to 5-6. This can't happen in 3 months so it will take time. We will need to meet and make changes which we will be doing very soon. Just an FYI that my personal experience allowed me to participate in other Boards, and not many are public but they are still transparent. There is more going on behind the scenes and not in front of others. For us, we report what happens to you directly but there is so much more than that which is not seen. We all take out our personal time and it is significant for the Board to change, it is a natural process. We are still learning and are not perfect, but we are all passionately

involved. There is still a lot to do but we do have a vision and goals. Remember, the Board paid for the security cameras, new paint etc., and unfortunately, many people still question the Board. They don't want to come to a 2 hour meeting, but it's not supposed to be fun. We now have a different audience and we are not trying to hide anything. We have to decide how to lure members, and the response was a closed session. Then we received complaints about that, which is strange because the mundane details of our closed session is not something I think the community would have wanted to be indulged in. It included the discussion of food, supplies etc., and extra purchases. It is just business, and we do these sessions to respect your time. It is rare and according to your feedback, a longer meeting is not desired. Bottom line, more work is done outside the meeting. This is simply a reporting avenue, and we have to be supportive of that. Since attendance is horrible however, something to consider is the question of whether we should meet with staff instead? So we decided to move to every two months as stated earlier, due to this historically low attendance. In terms of Community Comments, I know the 3 minute limit seems like an inconvenience, but we have no problem allowing you to go above 3 minutes if it stays on topic. It is more of a disclosure that we cannot allow discussion of just any unrelated topics to the Community. Also, some people have expressed offense to exclamation points or large font for event notifications etc. This is not to offend, but just to make announcements noticeable. We have also gotten concerns that we distribute via email the agenda and minutes only 7 days before the meeting. I would like to ask the Executive Director her thoughts on that?

MB: First, I want to share that I appreciate your Community emails. It is a challenge to make the events interesting and we have no problem adjusting the way these events are advertised/displayed, but we have noticed that not many people read it. So it is hard to meet everyone's needs.

JS: Yes, we appreciate the comments, it is good for us and we accept it humbly. I also want to warn the Community and Interpreters that we have a lot to discuss so we will be going beyond 7:30 and do apologize.

TC: I want to announce that I am interested in becoming President.

JS: Great! We will go ahead and start the training -congrats!

XIII. Unfinished Business – none

XIV. New Business –

JS: DHHSC has set up a year amount to achieve but not all our Board Members can afford to pay. This is not in the bylaws currently but we will have a closed session on that to see whether we can work something out. Again, it is decided that we will meet every other month, and we had a great Staff/Board meeting last month. We were able to discuss so many things including the 7 issues in Community Comments and what our plans and strategies will be for 2015. Expect that final draft any day now, it will be posted in the minutes. In order to accomplish this, we just need to focus and prioritize our energy. We also noticed that many of our past concerns have successfully been addressed and now we have a new list of current goals. Many things have been done and will continue to be done and it is important to make it visible.

MB: Yes, it was important to have this Staff/Board meeting because everyone pitched in enthusiastically to discuss in depth our issues and projects, including the status and growth of fundraising like the ROCK program. We will be able to show you how the old goals are merging with our new current goals.

JS: Keep in mind that as a Board, we do not get paid, but there is a full assessment interview process for these individuals. If one does not understand the Board fully, there will be training. They must be adequate in their ability to support the agency. I would now like to turn our attention to something we discussed in closed session. We noticed that our bylaws spoke nothing to board members taking LOA. Sue Stone is the first person to request this, and we realized we need to establish rules to protect all members of the Board. So I'd like to propose two options for the timeframe of LOA. This will be either 6 months or 4 months?

CC: I propose that we add a new bylaw concerning LOA and the limits on that.

JN: I second.

TC: Maybe we can offer both depending on circumstance?

JG: I think maybe 4 months is more appropriate since 6 months is a relatively long time.

JS: True, however, if a spouse etc passes away, that's not very long...?

CC: In regards to that concern 4-6months, if in extenuating circumstance could they request longer?

TC: I think that is reasonable.

JS: I think 6 months and if longer that person might need to consider leaving the Board.

TC: I motion to allow a 6 month limit to LOA requested by a Board Member.

CC: I second.

JS: Motion passed.

JS: Now we need to decide the fraction of the Board allowed to take LOA at one time. (10% or 20%)

TC: I move to go with 10% allowed to take LOA at any given time

MS: I second.

JS: Motion passed.

JS: Our bylaws will be updated this week as LOA only up to 6 months, only 10% at any given time, and that individual will not be able to vote.

JS: Also, currently we have a member on LOA. We can ask for a formal request to join the Board or ask for a formal request for resignation. Anyone disagree with making a formal request to rejoin? No. Okay we will ask her to return now, since the 6 months has been met.

MB: In another topic, we have strategic goals from 2013-2014 which was a plan developed by previous President Amanda Sortwell for an early intervention brochure. This relates to a grant that I'm requesting in order to fund the program READY. Therefore, I am asking for Board approval to apply for that grant.

JN: I motion that we apply for the Community Foundation of Monterey Grant for this program READY.

TC: I second.

JS: Motion passed.

XV. Public Comments -

Skippy Sumner: CVDE and HOH is a partnership?

JS: We should discuss this after the meeting -neither is related to DHHSC.

Skippy Sumner: How often do we apply for the United Tulare Grant? I'm worried about Deaf events if the VDF is only being held every 2 years. What is the sponsorship level for this event? That might help the ability to fund it. We need to clarify to the Community that DHHSC is a separate service provided. We don't want to see that blurred with HOH or CVDE. It is important to plan 6-8months in advance on how to solicit the sponsorship for the year. There needs to be a goal, motivation behind wanting to become a Board member. What made you decide on the LOA decision to formally request Sue's return?

JS: Sue is a cherished member of the Board, we want her back. The process behind Board member hiring is serious and not taken lightly.

Skippy Sumner: Since Sue has been with us a long time, why not leave and come back later?

JS: Yes, that is an option to request for resignation. We will give her the option.

MB: United Tulare Grant is annual. Also, the details of VDF were decided upon in a previous meeting as displayed in the old minutes. We did set goals in advance for sponsorship on larger events, but the smaller events are more manageable.

Martha Coletti: It would be a good idea to have a Fresno Bee editor write about DHHSC and update our image, people still read the paper so this will be good publicizing.

Shelley Stout: Also add that we publicize to Spanish-Speaking Communities who are unaware that we provide services to them as well. And providing food is always good.

JS: In regards to Spanish-Speaking Communities, we are moving in that direction yes, and the brochure displays that.

MB: We did have some Spanish displayed on Univision in the past. Yes, we will work on networking that more.

JS: Also, food is not always successful and can go to waste. We can definitely try it again but for now we will see how our strategy works.

Justin Blanco: Could you please expand on the training involved in PR? I am very curious.

JS: Public Relations focuses on Community Awareness, phone calls etc. It works on establishing relationships on a personal level (management etc).

XVI. Announcements –

JG: We plan to have our HOH at Martha's Vineyard May 5th. We are still in the planning phase, but we will announce soon.

Shelley Stout: We have an ASL film showing this Saturday Feb 7th at 3pm at FCC, proceeds will go to DHHSC.

MB: Yes please get the word out, we need to sell a minimum number of tickets. I will look more into what the movie is about. Also, there will be a speaker coming to talk about Deaf Identity through CCRID. \$30 for senior citizens 55 and up, students (high school or college) \$45, and general cost is \$55. Jan 24th 9-4pm. No food provided, sorry. Yes, it is expensive but we are covering all the fees of the speaker's travel expenses etc.

TC: I'm excited to announce that I need a "pat on the back" -it is my 1 year anniversary on the Board today!

XVII. Adjournment – 8:33pm

Date of Next Local Board Meeting: (March 10, 2015 at 6:00pm) DHHSC – Fresno

Draft submitted by Melissa Sortwell, intermediate DHHSC Secretary

*****GET SIGN-IN SHEET*****

