

Introductions of Present Board Members:

- Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President
- Nicole Hurt, DHHSC Board Vice-President
- Anna Virnig, DHHSC Board Treasurer
- Jaime Johnson-Clay, DHHSC Board Member (arriving in a bit)

Absent:

- Jessica Lozano-Delgado, DHHSC Board Member
- Christian Gentile, DHHSC Board Member
- Patty Killough, DHHSC, Secretary

Introduction of Michelle Bronson, DHHSC Executive Director

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

All right, we'll see our progress report listed here. First one is about board documentation that we have been working on. The second one will be DHHSC agency updates from Michelle. Again, please share comments, concerns, and communications with board@dhhs.org.

Thank you, Jessie, for the lights. I need to remind myself to stay away from the screen showing Powerpoint.

I will say we're happy about the progress of the bylaws. It's been a very long time coming. We did send the edits to the lawyer, and because the work is pro bono, services are provided free to DHHSC, we don't want to reach out to them too much for fear of being charged for the services. And so Nicole did a tremendous amount of work to get them in place and ready to then submit to the attorney. The attorney is doing their work, but it's been almost a year of waiting. And when we got it back, it was vastly different than what we had before. We thought it would be very similar to other agencies, but because the services we provide in this agency are very different, there were things that were not there that should have been.

We made some more edits to it and then resubmitted it to the attorney, and I think just last year, after two years total, we got them back. Things look great.

It is in a PDF signed and officially filed. The bylaws are complete and the bylaws are solid. Now, there were many things that we needed in terms of protecting the board and protecting the agency. And the board would like to have more transparency, and these bylaws enable that.

If you are interested and want to know what those bylaws look like, if you'd like to read them, I will show you where to find them. (Steve pulled up the bylaws to share them on the projector.) You will see the dates of 2023. It has taken this long to get them back from the attorney. You will see all of the items listed here that have been cleaned up by the attorney.

Alright, so let's have Jessie turn on the lights again and explain a little bit more about the Advisory Deaf Council. They have a very important function here at DHHSC, as many other organizations have. DHHSC wanted to make sure they had that. DSS wants to make sure that we have it. So Jesse is going to explain a little bit more about that part of our organization.

Jesse Lewis, DHHSC Project Director:

Hello, everyone. I believe I know all of you here. About the Deaf Services Advisory Council. DSAC is the official name. Previously, each group would have to meet within the offices specifically and then meet with staff. We now have greater flexibility. They are not required to necessarily meet together. If they become a member of the DSAC, they can meet one-on-one with a representative of the management team. And the idea of DSAC membership is that those individuals represent their community's concerns, to bring forth ideas, workshop requests, a variety of things.

So if you are a DSAC member, you may attend various events and while you are there, you can share with others that you are a DSAC member and determine whether or not there is anything they would like for you to bring forth to the board. For duplicative requests, we recognize that those are important concerns as we have heard those repetitively. Sometimes people are unwilling to share directly with us. They may be afraid to come forward. They may not want to come into the agency. But as a DSEC member, there is a connection that individuals can make with their community to pass on community concerns to the right people. Whether that is in regards to service which would be shared with the staff, or if it were a particular workshop or event that the community is feeling is important.

If there is an ongoing issue that needs to be resolved, if that indeed is relevant to the board, we can share that with the agency. Community members can also share concerns at events like we are hosting today. I believe, if I remember correctly, we can have up to eight DSAC members.

Michelle Bronson, DHHSC Executive Director:

Yes. We must have a minimum of two from each office.

Jesse Lewis, DHHSC Project Director:

Currently we have no members in Fresno.

We do. We have two, yes, two in each office, officially. They are at home.

Each office has two members. Currently, we can have up to six additional members. So up to eight.

The way to become a member is to reach out to me. I will clarify the process and expand in greater details the responsibilities involved. If that

is still something that you would like to do, then we will move forward with that. It will be brought for a vote.

We typically will have town hall meetings at the various offices, and then the committee can vote as to who they would like to have represent them during even and odd number of years. The DSAC members will be voted in and be a part of the board, but there's a lot of additional details that I could expand upon. But for now, if there are any questions, or if anyone is interested, just let me know.

Unidentified Speaker:

Yeah, I'm happy to hear that because it's been a real challenge when they were required to be together. It wasn't super successful. And so I like the concept of them being able to still continue the work, still listen to the community, get feedback from them, express their comments and concerns, and attend our board meetings. It'd be nice to link both the DSAC group and DHC. I'd like to suggest that as an idea.

Jesse Lewis, DHC Project Director:

There are some areas where they prefer to meet together. For example, in Visalia there are two individuals, and although they are not required to meet, they prefer to meet. So they do meet regularly and then inform me of those details. Sometimes I am invited to participate in their meetings, but it is very flexible and we have expressed to the DSS as to the challenges. Oftentimes meetings have been canceled because people have not been able to agree on a time and date for a meeting, or we will set a meeting and then no one will show up. So we have incorporated that flexibility to facilitate that in a better way.

Any questions?

Okay, thank you. Oh, yeah. Seeing a question from the audience. Okay, we'll come over there, since he's playing with the camera.

Unidentified Audience Speaker:

So I am definitely interested. Is it a form that I fill out here?

Jesse Lewis, DHHSC Project Director:

If you are interested, then we can talk via VP, have a discussion. It's a relatively simple form that needs to be completed, but then for the vote, this is an even number year. So we would have to vote at the next event.

Michelle Bronson, DHHSC Executive Director:

Yes. So just a bit of clarification.

It can be anytime. So she will meet with you. We have two members in Fresno, and once those two members vote her in, it can be right away. We want to make sure we have a degree.

Jesse Lewis, DHHSC Project Director:

So the bylaws were changed to accommodate that. Well, that's a new one to me.

Unidentified Audience Speaker:

Yes, I just. I would like to put my name into consideration because they need me. Yep, that's my email.

Unidentified Speaker:

Okay, thank you.

Michelle Bronson, DHHSC Executive Director:

Can I just add a little bit of clarification? The reason we have provided this is since COVID so much has changed. We all know that people attending events and meetings is far reduced. And so we decided to parent with DSS. To say, we are having a hard time recruiting advisory council members. And we are not the only Deaf agency facing this issue. It is pretty much an issue everyone is facing.

We want to make sure we are doing the right thing. We just had to figure out a way to make it easier. So we asked, can we do it one on one? Can we do group sessions? And basically it's whatever is going to work for those community members, for them to be able to gather feedback, again, having a minimum of two for each office. We also filled out a request for a five year agreement. So I'm super thankful that we have two in each office.

So please, if you are interested you are more than welcome. We want to make sure that we are getting feedback from the community.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

Thank you. And Jamie, the board member I mentioned previously, is here.

Jaime Johnson-Clay, DHHSC Board Member:

MyJamie: Sorry I'm late.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

We now have four.

Jaime Johnson-Clay, DHHSC Board Member:

My name is Jamie, and I come from Madera. I think it's been almost four years since I've been on the board. I thought I was done. I thought this was the last month for me.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

No, there was a one year extension.

Jaime Johnson-Clay, DHHSC Board Member:

Okay, awesome.

Nicole Bruno, DHHSC Board Vice-President:

This is Nicole. Hold that. I do have another comment as it relates to DSAC membership. I do want to express a concern I have for the form for DSAC membership. I have one person from the community that says, well, I'm a DSAC member and if you really want to express your concerns, you can let me know. And I think it's a good idea to have a list of the individuals who actually are the official DSAC members so that community members are not sharing their feedback with somebody who is not an official DSAC member. So I think we need to be careful to make sure that those channels of communication are accurate and clear. And in terms of that one year extension, I thought that began last fall.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

Yeah. Remember with the bylaws, we changed that. Once the bylaws were passed it became effective. And because that was passed and voted on, we are good to go.

Nicole Bruno, DHHSC Board Vice-President:

Okay. I thought the term ended last year and then we added a year. So maybe we need to clarify. We can discuss that further.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

We had moved the one year extension by one year because the end of the term was at a certain date and then we extended it one year.

Nicole Bruno, DHHSC Board Vice-President:

So is that one year term ending soon? And I think your term ends in August. And then my term for membership is in August and the SVP is November. But all of those memberships are coming to a close in the fall, so we need to clarify when the actual membership expires.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

Thank you, Nicole.

We want to make sure that that information is clear; that one year extension is a one year extension. So as soon as we get to the end of that term, it's extended by one year. So you have one more year. I know Anna is in the middle of her term, but we all have an extension of one year.

(Steve is pointing to the projector screen.) So looking here, the grievance complaint form and procedure, and typically that has been for DHHSC only, but we wanted to broaden that scope to include things like the board, the staff. We want to make sure that concerns and complaints are heard. We don't want people to feel like they cannot share their grievances because gossiping is not okay. It just makes everything worse and it's unnecessary.

Other agencies have been affected by that kind of process. We want to make sure that we have grievance procedures in place so that we can follow through.

We want to make sure that there is a time stipulation to it. So when a grievance is filed, there is a time limit within which to respond and act. The DHHSC might have their grievance process, but we are talking about the community and the board. We want to make sure that we are hearing from you, the community. We don't want anyone to ever feel like they are not being heard. This grievance process requires that we communicate out via email that a grievance has been filed.

And if you're not comfortable writing in English that's no problem. The important thing is to have the option to either enter it in written English or submit a video. There is a process for that. You give your name, that you want to file a grievance, and then the why, the where, the what happened. Following that list of the information that's needed, that video is then sent to boarddhhsc.org. Once we receive the video, we will put that into written English for you, because, again, if somebody would

prefer to submit their grievance in ASL, they can. And we will submit that to you so you have a chance to review it and say whether or not it is in fact what you shared, and then we will meet about it and act on the grievance.

(Steve is pointing to someone in the audience.) Yes, Tim.

Tim, Audience Speaker:

I have not been coming to meetings. I am far behind the eight ball. But I am curious, in terms of the DHHSC website, are those forms and instructions available so that community members can file a grievance or complaint? I've not been aware of that.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

We did post it. We have not posted it, rather, because we have to make sure that we, as a board, review and vote on it. We need an official vote, and so we have to wait for an official board meeting. And so once we have that and we have the vote in place, then we will be able to post that on the board website. There will be a web form that you can download as a PDF. I'm sure you're familiar with how that works. Once it's downloaded, you can then fill in the fields electronically and then submit it back to our email address again or submit your video. Did that answer your question, Tim?

Tim, Audience Speaker:

Yes.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

Yes; Nicole.

Nicole Bruno, DHHSC Board Vice-President:

With all the forms that we have just made revisions and improvements on, including the bylaws as a board, we do plan to read those before our

October meeting, which is our next board meeting, and I want to confirm that we will make those approvals in October.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

So the bylaws were voted on and passed, but the grievance procedure has not yet been voted on. And again, yes, that will be in October.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

All of the forms; we will review and approve all of the forms formally in October. Correct?

Michelle Bronson, DHHSC Executive Director:

So I just wanted to clarify. The general grievance form is on our DHHSC website because it is required by DSS. They contact each of us to say, must have it, because some agencies did not. They were in fact checking. And we do have ours on our DHHSC website.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

And it is based on those revisions so that people can submit those electronically. Once those are voted upon and approved, then that will be reposted. Nicole.

Nicole Bruno, DHHSC Board Vice-President:

There's no X. You still haven't put an X on the floor. All right, I'm sorry I keep interrupting or having comments, but I think there might be some clarification needed in terms of the grievance form. So if I have a grievance against a staff member or I have a grievance against the board or another community member or whatever, we just want to clarify that there are two forms. One is for DHHSC to see, and one is for the board. So I wonder if Michelle or Steve, one of you, can clarify for the community what is for which form so folks know how to proceed.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

Yes. Within the form, there are specific boxes to be checked whether it is directed towards the DHHSC or your grievance is directed towards the board. So we will ensure that they are directed to the proper. As a board, when grievances come to us, we will review those and take care of those. Staff members will also review those that go to DHHSC. So there is a place within the form that they can direct their grievance.

Michelle Bronson, DHHSC Executive Director:

For example, if it's staff related, I am responsible for addressing those staff concerns. If it is about me, that would then be directed towards the board. Just as a point of clarification.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

Yes. Yes. If it is about a staff member, it goes to Michelle. If it is about Michelle, it goes to the board. And I am aware that you are aware that we have been working on policies and procedures, things that have not been contained in the bylaws, because bylaws are something that need to be static, not constantly changing. And so that's important. So we want to maintain our bylaws as a static document.

However, there are parliamentary procedures, board meetings, standing rules of operation that need to be revised from time to time. And as a board, we can vote to make those revisions as necessary. And when those are voted upon, then those are added to the board policies and procedures separate from the bylaws. The board policies and procedures are what we call dynamic documents, which means they can change.

We have also hosted board training recently. In September, we hosted a board training session. It was a great session. We would have liked to have had more information, more time. We felt like a single day was not adequate. However, they did suggest that they are willing to reconvene via Zoom, and some of the points that were made were quite valid and

things we were unaware of that were brought to our attention. If we have less than twelve members, we can do certain things. If we have more than twelve members, we cannot do certain things. So it's important for us as a board to be aware of what those procedures are.

The DSS is constantly looking at the way we are doing things.

Previously, we would simply submit grants. However, now we check with the executive director and let them know what has been contributed, and then we can give. Because there has been such abuse and fraud that has been prevalent in the community. They want to make sure that when the board is receiving and collecting those donations that the executive director is aware of, that allows us to keep vigilant about our fundraising, and we are constantly attempting fundraising. However, it's been hit and miss. There are some that have been effective. There are some fundraising efforts that have not been effective. And when we find that those have been ineffective, those are the ones we need to put aside. We might put a great deal of effort but generate very few funds. We want to focus on those efforts that generate more funds and that better enables DHHSC to make the improvements and do the things they would like to do. Board training is also dependent on funds that are raised.

So we as a board are responsible to look at the various ways that we can raise money. Things such as car washes are not going to raise a lot of money. Panda Express and some of those other things generate more funds because we've had greater publicity and community members have gone to those events. Sometimes there are restaurants where we have a fundraising event where we have minimal attendance. So we need to take a look at where it is that we can generate greater funds for the agency. And that is an ongoing problem.

And I don't have my power. Now we're back to the PowerPoint. In terms of recruitment of board members, I'm going to be transparent and tell

you it is tough, not just for us here at DHHSC, but throughout the state of California. With nonprofit agencies, it's difficult to generate the excitement and stimulation that is needed to run a grade board. And we need to somehow get that out to the community that this is a healthy process and something that can be a lot of fun. And a healthy agency will have a healthy board. A healthy board will enable both to grow the board and the agency.

So we want to make the kind of improvements that are necessary to ensure that happens. That is why we need documents. We need forms, so that as people join the board, they do not simply see a one page sheet of information. When people join the board, they need to be aware of board policies and procedures, bylaws, and all of those things. That information needs to be available visually in a blog so that people can view those things and understand what it is that they are committing to as they join the board. We don't have those sorts of things, so we need to make those kinds of improvements.

When I am finished with my term, I will know that the board and the agency is in a better place knowing that we have improved the recruitment. We want to focus on individuals that are in the community in powerful positions of influence, maybe attorneys, maybe bankers, other individuals that can contribute to the board. They have great ideas. So we need to revisit our recruitment methods. We have focused on recruiting Deaf individuals, but we also need to take a look at recruiting community members that have power and influence and help bring and generate funds into the agencies. Maybe a photographer that can donate his services for other purposes within the agency. So my belief is that we need to expand those that we are recruiting from in order to improve our influence in the community.

As we move to DHHSC updates, I'm going to turn the floor over to Michelle who will talk about the headquarter renovations that have been taking place over the last four months.

Michelle Bronson, DHHSC Executive Director:

Thank you so much. I'm trying to make sure people can see me okay. As you all know, this renovation was a very long process. We hoped to have it started in January. However, we needed permits. The city of Fresno takes a very long time. Yes, nothing new, Jane, but takes a long time.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

But we had planned it even earlier than that, correct, correct.

Michelle Bronson, DHHSC Executive Director:

But it was a permit process. We finally got them from the City of Fresno and started to work on it. But you know how construction companies are. They come, they do some work, they have other projects, they come back, they do some more work projects. Most of the work is done and there are little pieces still left to be fixed in terms of the lighting for the whole building. And most of what's happened in the kitchen is done. We have some wiring left to fix, but I believe we're just waiting for the company to come back to do the final fixing and then the inspection. We can't close it until we pass inspection. So the second half of the payment is held until they come back and we pass the inspection. So, like I said, we are focusing on many projects, or they are focusing on lots of projects.

And so we reached out to them, saying there's just a few things left. We are very happy with the changes to the lighting. As you can see, it's much brighter. The kitchen is very, very nice. It's ADA compliant now, so anyone, including those who are using wheelchairs, have access. I'm very happy about that. So it's been a very long journey, but we're almost done.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

And remember phase three - first phase, second phase, and at the end of phase three, we will be finished.

Unidentified Speaker:

What about the roof?

Michelle Bronson, DHHSC Executive Director:

The roof was finished before COVID Thankfully, I remember him on the board at that time. There have been no leaks and replaced. I remember you were on the board at that time. So thank you for being part of that.

So that is done. But that's why we work on the ceiling. Because once the roof was fixed from all of the tiles, you know, getting wet and falling through, some lights had stopped working now that the roof was fixed. And. Yes, the old wiring.

Unidentified Speaker:

And the women's bathroom is next.

Michelle Bronson, DHHSC Executive Director:

Yes. We just had to make sure that the roof was in good standing first so that way we could fix the inside and what had been damaged in the leaks. So, yes, thank you for asking.

Unidentified Speaker:

Welcome.

Michelle Bronson, DHHSC Executive Director:

Well, let me be honest with you. We have one staff member whose ultimate goal for giving Tuesday - remember giving Tuesdays is in November - will be to renovate the men's and women's restroom.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

Equality. Men and women. Okay, that takes us through the renovation. And I'm going to turn the floor over to Anna to discuss with you the financial aspect of the agency.

Anna Virnig, DHHSC Board Treasurer:

Put me on the spot. Thanks, Steve.

This will be short. There are no solid numbers for today. We'll hold that for the board meeting in October. Please join us. Maybe that's a teaser to get you to attend again.

Again, since COVID there have been so many changes. A lot of people have left or are no longer with us, such as Paul. We've seen a tremendous amount of change. It's not just at DHHSC, but everywhere. Even our own personal lives were affected by that happening. Cindy has been doing a lot of housekeeping and catching up and has done a great job.

I have enjoyed working with her, especially through media and that whole process. She was great. The agency was blessed to have her. Michelle, do you want to talk a little bit about what Cindy's doing?

Michelle Bronson, DHHSC Executive Director:

I do. Again, in the spirit of transparency, you know that during COVID Paul passed away. Our CPA, Michael Michener also passed away prior to Paul's passing. So we had a subcontractor by the name of Gary who came in and took over the account. But we were one of 14 clients, so he did only what was necessary to keep us afloat. When Cindy came in, there was a tremendous amount of work that needed to be done.

And we just finished the audit for 2022-2023. So that is wrapped up. And so this month, mid-month, we will start the process for 2023-2024. So it has been a marathon in trying to get us to speed and where we need to be.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

You know how Paul had his process with all of the paperwork, not electronic, but Cindy has done the work to get it all into an electronic system and no longer having to keep and maintain paper files, so it's much less paperwork. So Cindy has really done a tremendous amount of work.

Anna Virnig, DHHSC Board Treasurer:

And if I may also add one additional thing, in the spirit of transparency, we want to make sure that you are aware of where we are and that we are working on getting caught up. Covid made things very difficult, but we are in that process, and it is going to be much easier moving forward.

Unidentified Speaker:

And who is Cindy? Is she hearing?

Anna Virnig, DHHSC Board Treasurer:

Cindy is our accountant. She is hearing.

Jaime Johnson-Clay, DHHSC Board Member:

So what about the iPad for VDF and how that whole process worked?

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

Jamie brought up the fact that we used to keep track of all the finances for the Valley Deaf Festival on paper. We are now doing that on an iPad. And I think we had purchased one or two iPads and a scanner that allows us to, basically a smart device, that allows us to accept payment. And that has been a great time saver. And Cindy was involved with that process as well. And as we purchase these items, Cindy has helped to ensure that we can use those devices for other events as well.

Not simply VDF, but we can use those for our Walk Through Deaf History and those other events that we've hosted, because people come and people don't carry cash. This is a card society these days, and they

just tap their card and pay that way. So it's important that we keep up to date in terms of smart devices.

Anna Virnig, DHHSC Board Treasurer:

The tablet has really been extremely convenient, moving from paperwork and counting to everything being automated within the smart device. And it's programmed ready for us to take orders, and afterwards we can see what was ordered. The money is all accounted for even if it was by cash or card. We can view and obtain our totals. It's really been a time saver.

Jaime Johnson-Clay, DHHSC Board Member:

Now, are you looking to purchase a third one?

Anna Virnig, DHHSC Board Treasurer:

I'm hoping so. If money allows. If we generate funds necessary, it would be nice to have four for DVF because that is a large gift.

Nicole Bruno, DHHSC Board Vice-President:

All right, thank you for mentioning the iPads. I haven't received an update on the iPads. I wasn't sure if DHHSC felt like they needed more or if what they had was sufficient. So maybe the board needs to consider adding a third one. And I can ask. And we might need an ad hoc meeting for the board to be able to talk through VDF planning.

So we can talk more about that at the meeting. But I'm just curious, what are the most recent needs for DHHSC and for the board? So as we know what those are, please share them with me.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

Absolutely. Yes. For the ad hoc meeting, most definitely. We will revisit that and talk about what we need to purchase, discuss those things with staff at DHHSC, and make those decisions.

Anna Virnig, DHHSC Board Treasurer:

Yes, we can add that item to the agenda for our next meeting as well.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

Any additional questions from the community for Anna? Thank you, Anna.

Thank you so much. And that is a vision of what we have been doing. I do want to check back in. Nicole, is there anything else you'd like to add? Anything else that you would like to share as to what we as a board have been doing?

Nicole Bruno, DHHSC Board Vice-President:

No, I think you covered it.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

Okay. So as a board, we have completed our part. Michelle has explained what's gone on with the staff. It is your turn as a community to share your ideas, your thoughts, your concerns, things that you've noticed in the community. If you would please come to the front of the room. The camera that was facing the back part of the room is not working. So if you would just stand here so we can ensure that we get your comment on video.

Jane, come on up. Come on.

Jane, Speaker from audience:

Hello. My name is Jane Lessard. I am a community member and also an instructor at SCC. I teach students ASL. I had a few concerns. I am here and I have my hat on because the lighting is too bright for me, but all is fine. And I came into the lobby. My eyes quickly found this flyer. It's far too dark. There's too much black on this flyer.

Saving money is not happening with this flyer because there's too much toner being used for these flyers. I will say I was shocked to see it in its current state.

Steve Longo, DHHSC Board President:

Thank you for sharing your insight with the DHHSC staff and Board.

We will now close the meeting. Please stay and enjoy the refreshments that the board has provided.