

West Virginia Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Minutes

March 20, 2025

Virtual via Zoom

Commission Members Present:	Commission Members Absent:	Commission Staff Present:	Public Visitors:	Interpreters:
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Paul See• John Burdette• Nancy Gillispie• Gloria Hollen• Roy Forman• Meegan Wolfe• Angela Wilson• Julie Shoeman• Crystal Law• Dawn Embry-King• Rae Bates• Christine Firkins• Donna Pauley-Wilson (<i>proctor for M. Golden</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Regina Woodcock• Clayton Burch• Mary Anne Clendenin	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sarah Lowther• Erik Essington• Gwen Bryant	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chris Mick• Jimmy Harrison• Earl Hollen	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adaie (Convo 5617)• Carl (Convo 5622)

Call to Order

- Paul See called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.

Reading of Mission Statement and Introductions

- Paul See read the Mission Statement.

Public Comments

- Chris Mick
 - He has been made aware that FEMA is having difficulties reaching out for assistance.
 - He also believes that Video Phone calls to WVCDHH are not being answered or returned.
- Jimmy Harrison
 - More interpreters are needed in the state with continued training to help the interpreters to become certified.
 - He also brought up issues with contacting the office via Video Phone.

Minutes

The minutes from the November 8, 2024 meeting were reviewed. Gloria Hollen made the motion to approve the minutes. Christine Firkins seconded. Minutes were approved.

Staff Reports

Erik Essington shared information from the written board report.

- The term for the Otolaryngologist/ENT position on the board expired in June 2020. Applications can be submitted to fill this position.
- There are three Board terms with upcoming expiration dates: the term for a Deaf/Hard of Hearing Community Member position on the board, held by Julie Ann Lewis Shoeman, expires on June 30, 2025. The term for the Audiologist position on the board, held by Dr. Nancy Gillispie, expires on June 30, 2025. The term for the Parent position on the board, held by Dr. Christine Firkins, expires on June 30, 2025.
- The WVCDHH website and social media are updated on a regular basis.
- On the WVCDHH Facebook page, we have gained 57 followers since November 2024 for a total of 2,962. There have been 30 posts made. The highest post reach was 3,117 with 565 post engagements. Audience statistics - Men - 17.40% / Women - 82.60%.
- Effective May 10, 2024, to be eligible to register for and take a VQAS Written or Performance Assessment, a candidate must be able to provide documentation verifying that they live, work, OR attend an interpreter training program in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The policy allows a transition period for outside candidates to phase out of the VQAS by December 31, 2027. After this transition period, we will no longer utilize the VQAS. Instead, we will implement the Board for Evaluation of Interpreters (BEI) certification program.
- WVCDHH sponsored another free fifteen-week virtual ASL 1 class provided by Dr. Christine Firkins. There were over 100 people that signed up to take the class. The class began on October 12, 2024, and it ended on January 18, 2025.
- Deaf Awareness Day 2025 was held on Wednesday, March 19, 2025.
- WVCDHH will be working to have more input in the interpreter contracts and bidding process in May 2025.
- WVCDHH would like to sponsor, organize, and provide more workshops for interpreters and the Deaf/Hard of Hearing community throughout the state soon.

Committee/Task Force Reports

- Executive Committee: No report.
- Nominating Committee: No report.

Board Member Reports

- Gloria Hollen
 - There is a lack of directions and signage when visiting the WVCDHH office.
 - She believes there is a conflict of interest with Christine Firkins serving on the WVCDHH board.
- John Burdette
 - There are currently deaf-related bills moving forward in Legislation. There is one for captioning in public places and one for open captioning in movie theaters.

- Christine Firkins
 - The ASL class completed in mid-January. There were many family members of deaf children who enjoyed the class and are eager for the next one to begin. The next class will be geared towards assisting families with communication rather than being academically based.
 - She would like to collaborate with WV Outreach to provide learning opportunities for families who are interested.
 - She thinks that there should be more email communication between board members instead of waiting quarterly to express concerns.
 - Proposed the idea of setting up a temporary committee to assist interpreters and agencies with the upcoming contract/bidding process.
- Julie Ann Shoeman
 - She agrees that there should be more email communication to work together.
- Meegan Wolfe
 - There is a lack of certified interpreters in schools, so sign support specialists are sometimes used to fill the role.
 - The EIPA test can be requested to be given in local counties instead of traveling to Romney for testing.
- Donna Pauley-Wilson
 - She shared updates regarding Kid's First Hearing Aid service. Funding has stopped and will no longer be available.
 - Gwen Bryant asked for more information on Children with Special Healthcare Needs (CSHCN) eligibility requirements, process for applying, and services and support available for a deaf or hard of hearing child and their family.

Future Meeting Dates

- May 16, 2025 – Charleston, WV
- August 7, 2025 – Davis, WV

Adjournment

John Burdette made the motion to adjourn the meeting. Gloria Hollen seconded. The motion was approved. The meeting was adjourned at 12:07 p.m.