



DHHSC BOARD MEETING MINUTES

6 PM, Tuesday May 13th, 2025

I. Call to Order – 6:04pm

Board members Present:

- Nicole Soyland
- Patty Killough
- Anna Virnig
- Christian Gentile
- Joe Lind
- Omar Ruiz

II. Approval of Agenda Items

- Changed item, approval of “December” minutes, to February minutes
- Approved as changed

III. Approval of February Board minutes

- Approved

IV. President's Report – Nicole Soyland

- Greetings
- I mentioned in the last report that I would like to set goals for the board this year but got unexpected news about Michelle, our Executive Director (ED), leaving and all of our energy and focus got shifted to the available ED position and getting the hiring committee together.
- I had a meeting with Michelle and Jesse to help create the hiring committee and in the process we have two new members who joined us in the meeting tonight.

- Even though we all had voted and approved on two new board members, we will do official voting tonight for record.
- Two new board members, Omar Ruiz and Joseph Lind. Welcome! And so happy to have you two here.
- The board is working very hard on the process of seeking a new ED, and we hope to find a good person. There are big shoes to fill, and the position is hard to replace after Michelle. Michelle has been really wonderful and we would like to thank her for her service. We all love her very much and want to wish her the best on her next journey.
- The deadline for applications for the ED position is this Saturday May 17th. If you are interested or know anyone who is interested in applying, please apply now. You can go to the DHHSC website, apply, and then send the application to the board at board@dhhsc.org. We will send you a reply when we receive your application. If you have already applied and haven't gotten a reply, then please do reach out to us at this email.
- We will be having a townhall meeting in mid august and would like to ask the board tonight if they would like just the meeting or want to add an event with this meeting and see if they have ideas.
- That's all for my report tonight and thank you!

V. Vice President's Report

- This position is currently unfilled; no Vice President's report available

VI. Secretary's Report – Patricia Killough

- Community
 - Compass Church in Salinas
 - Fellowship & Friendship
 - Wednesdays: Rosemary Rashad Wanis leads ASL bible study on Zoom
 - Sundays: ASL interpreted sermons
 - Honored to witness the baptismal of Liz Hernandez
 - Education

- 2025 High School Graduation! 2 Deaf students & MANY American Sign Language students are graduating
 - Senior Awards Ceremony
 - 1 Deaf student earned several awards!
 - On behalf of the World Language Department, I presented an award to a very kind and dedicated hearing ASL student
 - Pledge of Allegiance performed in ASL by Deaf & Hearing seniors!
 - My daughter, Harly Taylor, is graduating too!
- DHHSC
 - DHHSC Hosted Events
 - February: Valentine's Day Pizza Night in Salinas
 - April: Family Day Bowling in Salinas - About 30 attended
 - May: ASL Coffee in Monterey - About 5 attended
 - DHHSC in Schools
 - YES Program ending
 - No more school visits

VII. Treasurer's report – Anna Virnig

Treasurer's Report		
		
Checking/Savings Balance	1,840,477.67	As of April 30, 2025
Accounts Receivable Grants	226,833.37	* Outstanding invoices not yet collected as of March 31, 2025
	+	
Accounts Receivable Interpreting	489,889.31	* Outstanding invoices not yet collected as of March 31, 2025
Accounts Receivable Total	716,722.68	Outstanding invoices not yet collected
Accounts Payable	\$ 13,102.20	Outstanding bills not yet paid
Board Private Fund Fiscal Year Balance	900.00	** 07/01/2024 - 04/30/2025
Board Private Cumulative Fund Balance	2,813.62	** Current
Per Profit and Loss Statement (Overall) *	22,913.95	*** As of April 30, 2025
Status on DSS (Department of Social Services)		
Grant Awarded for 2024-2025	\$ 1,086,338.00	
Grant funds expended (Estimated)	850,701.77	*
Unspent balance of Grant	\$ 235,636.23	*
* Approximately ** To Be Determined and reconciled *** Invoicing to be entered and/or collected; approximate		

- Discussion: Anna clarified the numbers, and pointed out that the board did purchase a tablet for last year's Valley Deaf Festival (VDF).

VIII. Executive Director's report– Michelle Bronson

Budget Updates:

We are pleased to share that we were approved for \$4400 from Stevenson Philanthropy in Monterey to cover any needed interpreting services for our

Salinas staff and Deaf and Hard of Hearing community members at public events in the area.

We will reapply for Wagner-Peyser funding for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing through Employment Development Department due May 27th. We will keep you posted. We have been funded since 2016 and are grateful for the continued partnership in serving the D/HH in our service region.

We are currently requesting our California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Cash Advance due May 31st, and we tend to get this check in August or September to ensure we have continued cash flow.

Our Project Director, Jesse Lewis, went to Sacramento last Thursday and Friday on my behalf to meet with legislators and for the CDSS/Office of Deaf Access (ODA) meeting. During the meeting, we were warned that we may face a budget cut due to reduction in federal funding. 25% of ODA funds is federal, and we do not know if and how much our CDSS funds will be reduced. We are currently working on a plan if that concern becomes a reality. Just want to emphasize we are not closing our doors, just may have to reduce staffing and make some changes. The management team will work closely with the new Executive Director to make any needed changes, but we are holding out hope that we will not experience any cuts. As the saying goes, "Prepare for the worst and hope for the best."

Staffing Updates:

We are pleased to share that Leilani Jurena will start on June 2nd as our new Communication Specialist. We are excited to welcome her aboard and have her grow professionally with us.

As you all know, my last day is June 30th so I am wrapping up as much paperwork and as many projects as possible. I want to make sure DHHSC is set up for success for the next Executive Director. I am thankful the

management team will be assisting the new ED during the transition period.

Compliance Issues/Concerns:

None at this time.

Agency Updates:

We had our “A Walk Through Deaf History” in April and we had more people in attendance than last year’s. We had approximately 185 people for our morning and afternoon sessions combined. It was our second year in hosting the event and we have ideas on how to improve upon and expand the event for next year. I would like to thank staff and volunteers for making this event happen, and I know people especially enjoyed the Deaf Artists’ booths. It is always fun to support local artists!

We had two more DHHSC videos created by KMPH/Fox 26 as part of our contract with them. We highlighted our Literacy Program and DeafBlind Support Group. We were very pleased with the videos and hope you have seen them on air. We may do one or two more, depending on the remaining balance, but this has been a goal of ours to make DHHSC more visible.

Three staff, Joshua Blanco, Mariel Ortiz, and Lisa Painter, are working hard to prepare for NTID Summer Camp during week of June 15th-20th, which is a partnership between DHHSC, National Technical Institute for the Deaf (in Rochester, New York), Fresno State University (FSU), and Department of Rehabilitation (DOR). The camp will be at Fresno State University, and NTID is contracting with DHHSC for our staff time and interpreting services. Our staff are doing a wonderful job planning the workshops and I am grateful for their leadership. We will have other staff who will also do the workshops so this is a true team effort.

As I said in my last vlog, “This is not goodbye, it’s see you around,” and I will

continue to support DHHSC in the coming years. DHHSC has been a HUGE part of my life for the past 29 years, and staff, board, management team, and the community will always have a special place in my heart. Thank you all for the honor and privilege to serve DHHSC and our D/HH Community. I also plan to be at VDF so I hope to see you all there!

- Question from Patty: Please clarify changes to how DHHSC will serve schools with the closing of the YES program, and if DHHSC staff will be continuing to visit the DHH classroom and support the ASL classroom, especially since Deaf students are enrolled.
 - Michelle: The YES program has been closed; however, DHHSC will continue to support DHH students in a different manner - still working out what that will look like. However, staff are still going to be visiting the schools in person. Also, DHHSC and Department of Rehabilitation (DOR), also known as Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), have a partnership and will be discussing how to best support students, especially as there is a new Deaf DOR representative.
- Discussion about community feedback: Many changes in people coming up - Michelle is leaving and board members are leaving as well - brainstormed ideas for keeping board, and DHHSC, in the loop for what's going on in the communities (Fresno and outreach office areas). It was discussed that perhaps those in Advisory Councils (AC) can report back to Jesse, and then Jesse can share findings with the board. Michelle emphasized the importance of gleaning the input of all communities within DHHSC's areas, and that although we've agreed it's been difficult to get enough AC members from each site, we must continue to ensure that we have the minimum number of board members to keep DHHSC within operating compliance, but that we should continue to seek out more volunteers for ACs.
- Discussion about board members and compliance: We need a minimum of 4 members, and 51% of them must be Deaf.
- Michelle's future plan: Michelle was asked if she will be serving on the

DHHSC board, and she said “I have to wait a year. According to the bylaws between being a staff member and being a board member, I need to rest and recover first. And then I'd be happy to join the board in a year.”

IX. Fundraising report

- None at this time

X. General Board comments

- None

XI. Unfinished Business

- None

XII. New business –

1. Official election of the new members

- a. Introductions of Joe Lind and Omar Ruiz
- b. Omar: A unanimous vote approved Omar as a new board member.
- c. Joe: A unanimous vote approved Omar as a new board member.

2. Vice president's vacancy

- a. Patty asked for clarification: “. . . bylaws stated that an individual has to wait one year before becoming an officer. In order to fill a vacant position, can a new member be elected prior to the completion of one year?”

Michelle's response: Normally the new member must wait a year; however, if all board members are in agreement, a new board member can serve as an officer.

- b. Michelle was asked if she can continue to serve as an advisor when she is no longer DHHSC's director. Michelle clarified that past directors can continue to advise the board and that she'd be happy to continue to provide advice.
- c. The board members agreed that energy should be focused on finding a new director first.

3. Town Hall Meeting

- a. August 23, 2025
- b. Most, if not all, agreed that the inclusion of some type of social or food would be preferred.

- c. Another suggestion: Make available a suggestion box for members for those that do not wish to present.
 - d. All agreed with passion that it's about the community rather than the board; we all want the community to be heard.
 - e. Omar: Expressed that it would be great for the community to meet the new director, in addition to or instead of time for community comments. Michelle responded that we can do both, and that it is imperative that we have a record of community input, including but not limited to their comments, complaints, issues, grievances, and feedback for our DSS report.
4. Board members expressed gratitude for Michelle's support, and Michelle responded, addressing the board members and everyone in the DHHSC community:

"I just want to say that it's been my pleasure to serve and it's been a joy and an honor to serve.

And... I'm calling out to the community to please continue to support the board, support the agency, DHHSC belongs to you. And without you what is the purpose of DHHSC? We are here for the communities. I'm asking the community to please get involved.

Please do not be afraid to be involved. Do not be afraid to volunteer. I know some people are afraid to look stupid or to make mistakes or just the fear of you know, anything.

I want to get rid of the word fear and we don't know what we don't know until we try. We don't grow until we try. When I first became executive director, I remember that the next morning I woke up scared. Like, what did I do? What have I done? But I knew that it was a huge responsibility and a huge necessity. And DHHSC was the best thing. And I want more people in the community to experience that joy and the opportunity to serve.

I don't want people to be afraid to serve. So please be involved with DHHSC. Join the staff, join the board. Just be a part of the community.

People say, well, why should I? Why should I? Well, why not? Right. That should be the question. This is a safe place to take those risks.”

XIII. Announcements

- None

XIV. Closed session

- None

XV. Adjournment- 7:58pm