Members Present:
Traci D. Branch
Shantell D. Lewis, Au.D.
Timothy R. Patterson
Kathi A. Mestayer
Colin H. Wells

Members Absent:
Carrie N. H. Humphrey, NIC
Roy B. Martin, IV
Susanne B. Wilbur, LCSW
Jason M. Zuccari

Staff Present:
Eric H. Raff, Director
David J. Bahar, Virginia Relay Manager
Leslie G. Hutcheson, Interpreter Services Manager
Rhonda S. Jeter, Business Manager
Christine C. Ruderson, Technology Assistance Program Manager

Staff Absent:
Karen Brimm, Community Services Manager

ASL Interpreters/CART Provider:
Cat Clough
Bernadette C. Mayhall
Rhonda D. Tuck, Cavalier Reporting

I. NETWORKING – COFFEE & REFRESHMENTS
On Wednesday, August 7, 2019 at 9:30 a.m., the members of the Advisory Board of the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) convened in the conference room at the VDDHH Central Office, 1602 Rolling Hills Drive, Suite 203, Henrico, VA 23229-5012.

II. CALL TO ORDER
At 10:05 a.m., Chairperson Traci D. Branch called the meeting to order. All members and staff were welcomed and introduced themselves.
Chairperson Branch announced that the board had four members present at the start of the meeting. A quorum was not established and the meeting proceeded for discussion purposes only without voting.

Chairperson Branch reviewed communication rules to follow during the meeting. The Board reviewed the draft agenda. Director Raff recommended last two items (board reports and strategic plan review) be shortened in order to finish the meeting by 2 p.m., to allow for a member to leave early. An advisory board member then arrived, making the number present at five, and the meeting proceeded with a quorum.

No corrections or revisions were requested to the meeting minutes from May 1, 2019. The motion to approve the minutes as submitted was made by Mr. Patterson, seconded by Mr. Wells and unanimously passed.

Director Raff requested that members review the Advisory Board membership roster and check both contact information and terms for accuracy.

III. BUDGET PRESENTATION
Victoria Baldwin, Budget and Policy Analyst with the Virginia Department of Planning and Budget, presented on the state’s biennium budget development process and timelines.

Rhonda Jeter, Business Manager, presented on the VDDHH budget, including funding sources and expenditures.

The Board recessed from 11:02 to 11:17 a.m.

IV. PROGRAM REPORTS
Executive report: Director Raff reported that the Statewide Interagency Team (SIT) will have a town hall meeting on August 10 in Abington, followed by October 19 in Martinsville and November 2 in Staunton. The purpose of the town hall meetings is to identify needs, issues and barriers for deaf, hard of hearing and deafblind individuals. SIT will develop a comprehensive report and set priorities.

Director Raff introduced David Bahar, Virginia Relay Manager, and shared information about the Virginia Relay Council. The next meeting will be October 22 at the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (Central Office) and all meetings are open to the public. Advisory Board members are welcome to attend.

Community Services: Director Raff provided the Community Services report for Karen Brimm. VDDHH will collaborate with the I Can! Project with Partnership with People with Disabilities at Virginia Commonwealth University to produce a video in ASL translating the brochures about protective orders. Ms. Brimm has been working on emergency management, particularly about shelters with upcoming hurricane season, as well as the Support Service Providers workgroup. She has also been involved with Senate Bill 1741 about language acquisition of children who are deaf/hard of hearing, which was referred to the Joint Commission on Health, and has been serving as the representative/technical consultant of VDDHH.
Virginia Relay: David Bahar presented the Virginia Relay report and briefed the Board on communications tax, relay volume, and the two-year cycles. For the end of the fiscal year (June 2019), the call volume for the Virginia Relay was 300,000 relay minutes. It is expected that call volumes will decrease as more people switch from analog lines to internet-based and wireless services. The FCC manages the internet-based protocol calls and has held preliminary discussions as to shifting some of the responsibilities to the states. VDDHH will be looking internally at updating our contracts for relay services, considering that the relay traffic is expected to decrease, and possibly working on an RFP in the year 2020 to 2021. As TTYs are currently not being manufactured, we are looking into other types of technology such as real-time text in order to continue to meet relay users needs.

Interpreter Services Program: Virginia Quality Assurance Screening (VQAS) is getting ready to standardize a new set of QAS testing materials. The program will be bringing together raters in September and providing training so that they all have the same foundation when reviewing a candidate’s materials, which is important for the validity and reliability of the testing.

In the Interpreter Services Program, Ms. Hutcheson has worked with the DARS procurement manager to develop the new interpreter services agreement which will launch in October. Hopefully, the agreement will result in expanding the number of interpreters because it will cover city, county and state governments with standardized rates.

For the past 6 to 8 months, ISP has had interactions with the Supreme Court of Virginia. Ms. Hutcheson will present at a judicial conference in Williamsburg on August 28 about communication access in the courtrooms. It will be a 30 minute presentation with an array of topics to cover quickly. ISP is also looking at ways to improve the current Memorandum of Understanding with the courts which was put into place last August, particularly related to lodging and use of external private entities for interpreter coordination and remote video interpreting (VRI). She will also present at a conference in September for clerks of the courts.

(Recess)

Ms. Hutcheson reported on the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation (DPOR) which will study the need for licensure of sign language interpreters in the Commonwealth. DPOR and VDDHH have discussed how to reach out to the deaf community during the public comment process. DPOR has connected with Carlisa Gunter to provide the announcement of the public comment period in ASL. It will also allow the submission of video comments presented in ASL. At least four town halls are planned and VDDHH will share the dates as they become available. DPOR asked for information about the number of complaints about unqualified interpreters (e.g., how has the public been harmed by using an unqualified interpreter and how extensive was the harm) and statistics about deaf/hard of hearing individuals residing in Virginia. DPOR needs enough data to convince the General Assembly, one way or the other, and defend the recommendation to get a bill passed.

Technology Assistance Program: Ms. Ruderson, Technology Assistance Program Manager, reported on the Request for Proposal (RFP) for technology services and community services contracts went out on August 5. It was sent to 890 individuals and VDDHH hopes to receive a
Dr. Carl Amos plans to retire from Danville Community College, where there was a TAP distribution site, which has been officially closed. The area is covered, however, because Margaret Bryant has been slowly absorbing those consumers.

TAP has been working with the Department of Veterans Services and presented to the executive leadership team. TAP was invited to be an exhibitor at the statewide convention for veterans. TAP is focusing their team on national and statewide organizations, as they already have databases and can get the word out fast and efficiently.

TAP has been working with speech language pathologists (SLPs) to identify individuals who may benefit from artificial larynxes that are distributed by TAP. A workshop for SLPs is being planned for the fall featuring the East Coast representative from Griffin Labs, one of VDDHH’s vendors. TAP participated in the Voters with Disabilities exhibition and had the opportunity to look into voting machine accessibility for individuals with hearing loss. TAP has also approached the new CEO of Richmond Redevelopment and Housing Authority. It is interested in bringing TAP and Relay services to the residents. Ms. Howard and Ms. Ruderson will attend the board meeting in September.

V. PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was offered.

VI. WORKING LUNCH: BOARD/AGENCY COLLABORATION AND AGENCY REPORTS FEEDBACK

This was held during the recess above.

VII. BOARD REPORTS

Ms. Mestayer shared that she has experience in providing training to nurses in clinical phases and is available to present at any time to promote awareness about hearing loss.

VIII. STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW

Director Raff reported that the entire strategic plan did not have to be updated this year. Some technical corrections and financial information needed to be updated and were very basic. The goals and priorities did not change. The real changes will come next year and he would like for the Advisory Board to be involved in the plan development process during the three meetings between now and the due date. Director Raff provided hand-outs with instructions and asked for feedback on VDDHH values, because values are currently not included in the plan.

Feedback from the discussion included values such as: diversity, understanding the population that VDDHH serves and provide supports and the extra help needed, looking for new ways to engage people, communication education, mutual respect for communication modes, and listening.

A question was raised if values were needed or already covered under the vision statement. Clarification was made that the values are optional. The board will provide feedback and make
recommendations to the VDDHH staff but the agency is responsible for the actual submission. The Chairperson asked that VDDHH decide which areas to focus on during the next three Advisory Board meetings and allow the board members to read those sections prior to the meetings.

IX. NEW BUSINESS AND FUTURE MEETING AGENDA

The Chairperson asked for any particular interest areas to address at the board meetings or to invite presenters. Mr. Bahar offered to provide information about any area of the relay and emerging technology, including what other states are doing and captioning advances. Another area of interest are the blogs posted to Facebook by schools that are not captioned, and deaf/hard of hearing students may be missing the information. Another suggestion is to ask a staff member from DARS to present about its services available for the deaf/hard of hearing, or the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired to present about deafblind services.

X. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, a motion was made by Ms. Mestayer, seconded by Mr. Wells, to adjourn the meeting at 1:54 p.m.