

# Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Board

Commonwealth Keystone Building  
400 North Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17120

March 30, 2022  
Meeting Minutes

Conducted via Teleconference

<b><u>Board Members Present</u></b> <b>Kay Tyberg, Chair;</b> Hearing Loss Association of America, Pennsylvania State Office (HLAA-PA), HLAA-Blair County Chapter Hearing Loss Association, National Council of the Deaf, and Association of Late Deafened Adults. Public member.	<b><u>Visitors/Guests:</u></b> Melissa Derr, Public Utility Commission (BTUS)
<b>Amy Goldman, Secretary;</b> President, US Society for Augmentative and Alternative Communication. Public member.	Amy Strawser, Hamilton Relay, PA TRS Outreach Coordinator
<b>Melissa Hawkins,</b> Director, PA Office of the Deaf and Hearing Impaired	Kim Singleton, Director of TechOwl, Institute on Disabilities, Temple University
<b>Eric Jeschke,</b> Public Utility Commission (BTUS)	Laura Grassia, Institute on Disabilities, Temple University, TDDP Manager
<b>Matthew Hrivnak,</b> Public Utility Commission (BTUS)	Joe Witmer, Office of Chairman Gladys Brown Dutrieuille
<b>Steve Samara</b> PA Telephone Association	
<b>Christa Cervantes</b> Pennsylvania Account Manager, CapTel and TRS, Hamilton Relay	<b><u>Sign Language Interpreters:</u></b> Jessica Bentley-Sassaman Imanni Jones Melissa (intern)
<b>Sandi McNally,</b> Assistant Director, Institute on Disabilities, Temple University	<b><u>CART/Real Time:</u></b> Christina Pennock
<b><u>Legal Advisor to the Board:</u></b> <b>Alphonso Arnold, Jr.,</b> Public Utility Commission Office of Special Assistants, Staff Attorney and counsel to the TRS Advisory Board	<b><u>Board Vacancies</u></b> Vice Chair (Public Member) Public Member Public Member Public Member

## **Call to Order**

Chair Kay Tyberg convened the meeting at approximately 9:35 AM.

## **Welcome/Introductions**

Attendees and guests introduced themselves and were welcomed.

## **Chairperson's Report**

Kay reviewed ground rules for the meeting and emphasized her priority to recruit new public members.

## **Secretary's Report/Approval of the Minutes**

Minutes of the December 1, 2022 meeting were approved. Secretary Amy Goldman reported on the letters she drafted that may be used when communicating with applicants for the Public Member vacancies: acknowledgement of receipt of the application; invitation to attend a meeting; recommendation to the PUC to consider the applicant for appointment.

## **Old Business:**

### **Report of the Telecommunication Device Distribution Program (TDDP) including Wireless (WEI) by Laura Grassia**

Laura provided updates on the TDDP, highlighting supply chain issues that are resulting in delays in shipping times to consumers. For example, it takes about six weeks from order date for Apple products. Where appropriate and available, alternatives to devices that vendors report as "back ordered" may be offered to consumers. The trend of wireless applications far exceeding landline applications continues.

### **Hamilton TRS Outreach Report by Amy Strawser**

Amy Strawser reported on outreach events, including exhibits (live) as well as various statewide webinars and networking opportunities, November 2021 – February 2022. During this period, she provided training for two medical facilities in Philadelphia as well in-person training to senior living facilities and senior housing.

### **Hamilton CTRS Report by Christa Cervantes**

Hamilton Telephone Company d/b/a Hamilton Telecommunications is the contracted Captioned Telephone Relay Services (CTRS) provider throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. CTRS is similar to its counterpart traditional relay service with an added feature that allows consumers to receive captions on their phone as well as being able to hear what the caller is saying. The Condition of the CTRS was presented to the Board members with an opportunity for members to ask questions. Christa referenced the report she provided and mentioned the utilization numbers have return to a more "normal" (e.g. pre-COVID) level. Christa announced Sudan Bradley has left; Hamilton is recruiting for a replacement and asked Advisory Board members for their assistance in the search. In the interim, other outreach coordinators are filling in to cover planned and new events.

## **RTT Trial by Hamilton conducted in Pennsylvania**

Christa provided an update on the RTT trial, which ended February 28, 2022. Hamilton is currently reviewing the data and preparing the report to the Commission. She noted that the needs of people who are deafblind indicate some changes to the technology, e.g. braille on certain features on the phone itself as well as making sure the phone can connect to other assistive technology such as refreshable braille. Joe Witmer encouraged Hamilton to include in the report all suggestions (even those from other states) regarding the technology, as well as the recommendations as to whether or not the program should be made permanent. In particular, Joe suggested the Commission would be interested in how the PA pilot compared with pilots in other states, and reminded Christa it is necessary for suggestions as well as recommendations be in the report so they are part of the record.

## **TRS Advisory Board Member Recruitment**

Amy reported she had invited a colleague from Pittsburgh to apply, but does not know if the person followed up. Applications are addressed to the Commission Secretary Rosemary Chiavetta at [rchiavetta@pa.gov](mailto:rchiavetta@pa.gov). Eric will check to see if any applications were received. Recruitment remains a priority for the future operation of the Advisory Board.

## **Bylaws**

Eric had distributed the most recent version of the definitions via email, incorporating feedback from members. The next step is for the updated definitions to be “plugged in” to the bylaws, to create one document for approval.

## **TRS Taskforce**

Phonse advised there has been no change with regard to recommendations made by the Task Force to the Commission (2019). Kay will connect with Phonse, Eric and Amy to follow up with the PUC regarding recommendations.

## **OVR and TDDP**

Kim Singleton advised she had met with Shannon Austin before Shannon’s departure from OVR, and had submitted a budget to OVR for them to submit to the PUC for 2022-2023. Ryan Hyde is acting director; Melissa offered to invite Ryan to the next Advisory Board meeting.

## **New Business:**

There was no new business.

## **2022 Meeting Dates**

Meetings will start at 9:30 AM if they are by videoconference and 10:00 AM if they are in person. The Advisory Board decided to continue with virtual meetings until there is official guidance regarding in-person meetings. The remaining calendar for 2022 is as follows:

June 1, 2022

September 14, 2022

December 7, 2022

**Meeting Adjourned**

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 10:55 AM.

**Respectfully submitted,**

**Amy S. Goldman, Secretary**

[https://www.puc.pa.gov/media/1806/22\\_affordable-broadband\\_feb2022.pdf](https://www.puc.pa.gov/media/1806/22_affordable-broadband_feb2022.pdf)

<https://www.puc.pa.gov/telecommunications/telecommunications-relay-service/trs-advisory-board/>

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