Approved 11/10/2026

Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
1602 Rolling Hills Drive, Suite 201
Henrico, VA 23229-5012

Advisory Board Meeting Minutes
August 5, 2026

Members Present: Carl Cline, Jr., Chairperson Traci Branch Chris Gregory Aubrey Lipscomb Dr. Andrew Nash John Winstead	**Staff Present:** Eric Raff, Director Karen Brimm, IS Manager Kathleen Frazier, Policy Analyst Brittany Howard, TAP Manager Rhonda Jeter, Business Manager Felecia Smith, Virginia Relay Manager Paul Stuessy, Community Services Manager
Members Absent: Dr. Cathee Wolford, Vice Chairperson Karen Engelhardt Kristin Karmon	**ASL Interpreters/CART Provider:** Juan Ortega, CART writer Katherine Malady, Interpreter Lorelei Schanstra, Interpreter Bernice Venuto, Interpreter Amanda Wharton, Interpreter
Visitors: Tom D'Angelo	

On Wednesday, August 5, 2026, the members of the Advisory Board of the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (VDDHH) convened at the VDDHH Conference Room, 1602 Rolling Hills Drive, Suite 201, Henrico, Virginia 23229-5012.

CALL TO ORDER
At 10:03 a.m., Chairperson Cline called the meeting to order. Housekeeping matters and communication rules were reviewed. A quorum was present, and the meeting proceeded. Introductions were made of the members VDDHH staff, interpreters, CART provider and visitor. The chairperson reminded the board to contact the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office if they are up for reappointment. The roster was reviewed, and members were asked to provide any updates or corrections. There were no changes to the agenda.

The minutes from May 5, 2026 (By-Laws Committee) and May 6, 2026 (Quarterly Board) meetings were reviewed. A motion was made and seconded to accept the minutes as presented (Lipscomb/Winstead). Motion carried.

VISITOR PRESENTATION – DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES
Charles Akpoghenobor and Moineca Bland

Mr. Akpoghenobor reiterated that all conversations that occur on the UbiDuo are saved to a flash drive that the DMV retains for 3 years in a secure location in the event the information is needed for an investigation

- VDDHH Board Members and staff raised concerns that this is unequal treatment and inquired if every hearing individual has the same level of conversational monitoring and retention
- Mr. Akpoghenobor noted that all of the stalls at every Customer Service Center (CSC) are recorded

Mr. Akpoghenobor shared that the Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) indicator on one's license is voluntary, but requires verification via a physician's note

- Aubrey Lipscomb and Chair Carl Cline emphasized the unequal treatment of this indicator compared to that of using glasses for driving. There is an onsite vision test, and customers can simply tell the DMV representative that they use glasses, and the indicator is added without question
- Chair Cline added that getting a note from a physician often requires an office visit and occasionally an additional fee, adding a barrier to adding the indicator to the license
- Mr. Akpoghenobor noted the requirement of a physician's note is in the state code
- Ms. Lipscomb and Mr. Cline asked Mr. Akpoghenobor to follow up with them in the hopes of advocating for the code to be amended to remove the requirement

John Winstead inquired about what state and local police see on their computers when they run a license plate, driver's license, or other DMV issued identification. Mr. Winstead suggested that police be able to access the DHH indicator information as there have been instances of violence towards individuals with hearing or vision loss due to miscommunication with police.

Ms. Bland gave a brief overview of requirements for certification of driving schools in the state

- The DMV only pays for interpreters when the driving school is required for an individual due to failing their test 3 times, or after a traffic violation refers them to driver's school. In this case, the individual would contact VDDHH to request the interpreter and VDDHH would coordinate with the driving school
    - Karen Brimm asked what information is posted on the DMV's website regarding this and requested that the DMV meet with her in the future to review the information posted to VDDHH's website
    - Kathleen Frazier asked how this information is communicated to those who must take classes; do they have to know to request an interpreter, or is the information offered up when they receive information about the class requirement? Ms. Bland said she would look into that.
- The DMV does not pay for individuals taking classes proactively, however driving schools should pay for this cost themselves
    - Eric Raff noted that we often receive complaints from consumers that driving schools are refusing to pay for interpreters noting the cost.
    - Ms. Bland wants to continue this conversation and be notified when these types of complaints are received as providing interpreters is a requirement for the schools.

Suggestions from VDDHH for the DMV:

- Mr. Winstead suggested the DMV host a Town Hall to get feedback from the broader community about their experiences and barriers when visiting the DMV.
- Ms. Brimm suggested having a picture in picture sign language interpreter available for the video/ classwork portions of DMV classes.

VDDHH BUDGET OVERVIEW

Rhonda Jeter, Business Manager, reviewed the VDDHH budget structure, employment levels, fiscal year 2026 budget performance and the fiscal year 2027 budget as recently approved by the General Assembly.

AGENCY REPORTS

Executive – Eric Raff, Director

Director Raff pointed out the Audio/Visual upgrades to the conference room as a result of a grant from the Department of Social Services (DSS) in hopes of making the Advisory Board meetings accessible to those who may not be able to attend in person and increasing transparency and involvement. Director Raff was recently elected to be the President of the National Association of State Agencies for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NASADHH) and shared his hopes of working with this group to increase funding for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community from the federal level.

WORKING LUNCH - BOARD REPORTS

John Winstead – Mr. Winstead share information about his participation in American Association of People with Disabilities lobbying day on Capitol Hill. The Disability Rights Office is looking into the accessibility of voting processes, including Virginia. He plans to lobby for the SSP/CN program at the General Assembly and thanked VDDHH for obtaining the current grant.

Chris Gregory – Mr. Gregory's band was able to perform for a fundraising event for "Waiting to Hear." Mr. Gregory was able to perform with his band again due to the success of his Cochlear Implant.
Audrey Lipscomb – Her family visited France over the summer and toured the catacombs where communication accessibility was a challenge.

PROGRAM REPORTS (RESUMED)

Policy – Kathleen Frazier, Policy Analyst

The board was given copies of the FOIA virtual meeting policy, and a summary of VDDHH's 3 legislative proposals that will be submitted to Health and Human Resources and the office of the Governor for review and approval before being considered for the 2027 General Assembly session. Frazier shared with the Board that they are only able to take final action on items that are on the agenda available to the public prior to the start of the meeting as a result of legislation passed during the 2026 General Assembly Session.

PUBLIC COMMENT

VRID Professional Insights and Current Affairs Committee provided written comment regarding the Interpreter Services Agreement, read by Rhonda Jeter and provided to the Chairperson. The comment noted that a year had passed since VDDHH hosted an open meeting with the interpreter community regarding the interpreter agreement. The committee proposed the rate for nationally certified interpreters be set at $75 as compensation impacts the quality and availability of interpreters, and asked VDDHH to establish a clear timeline for updating the interpreter agreement and include active state interpreters in the process of developing the agreement.

Tom D'Angelo introduced himself and shared that he recently moved to Virginia as his wife was hired at the Virginia School for the Deaf and the Blind (VSDB). He shared that he is looking forward to being involved with VDDHH's work.

PROGRAM REPORTS (RESUMED)

Technology Assistance Program -- Brittany Howard, Manager

Ms. Howard shared successes with directly shipping equipment to consumers in regions that do not have a specialist as well as the creation of new categories of equipment based on a consumer survey. Additionally, interviews are currently underway for the recently approved full-time regional specialist that will be serving Regions 5 & 7.

- Mr. Winstead asked Ms. Howard to research if the Weather Alert system is accessible for deafblind individuals

Virginia Relay – Felecia Smith, Manager

Ms. Smith shared that the VDDHH coloring book will soon be printed and available to use as a giveaway. Additionally, VDDHH's Medical Communication Cards have been updated to replace outdated information. Ms. Smith provided the Board reports and statistics on Virginia Relay usage numbers and noted their steady decline. However, VDDHH would like to promote the use of Remote Conference Captioning (RCC) as this is not a Relay feature that will phase out with the removal of analog phone lines.

Community Services – Paul Stuessy, Manager

Paul Stuessy shared Community Services Information and Referral (I&R) tab on the VDDHH website now has 4 publications posted in the top 6 spoken languages in Virginia; this is a result of the DSS grant that the agency was awarded in the spring. Mr. Stuessy shared that interviews for the Deaf Mentor Coordinator position are underway, and he is hoping the department will hold another round of training for Deaf Mentors in February. On September 29th, VDDHH will host a Statewide Meeting on "Aging in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Communities," at the Tuckahoe Library in Henrico from 1-5pm.

- Ms. Lipscomb requested that Mr. Stuessy provide her with resources for finding an ASL teacher for her workplace.

Interpreter Services – Karen Brimm, Manager

Karen Brimm shared the Interpreter Services is currently advertising for the Interpreter Services Coordinator position and will begin advertising for the Staff Interpreter position once the posting is finalized with HR. Ms. Brimm is making efforts to streamline the interpreter request process as well as the Virginia Quality Assurance Screening processes by increasing digitization of documents and forms that have historically been kept as paper copies.

Break

OPEN DISCUSSION

Chair Cline raised the updated ByLaws for discussion. It was noted that the updated language will provide flexibility in scheduling meetings of the Board. There was no further discussion by the Board.

OLD BUSINESS

Bylaws Motion Nash/Lipscomb. All members voted in favor of adopting the updated ByLaws - Passed.

NEW BUSINESS

The board discussed rescheduling the November meeting. A motion was made and seconded to change the meeting date to November 10, 2026 (Lipscomb/Winstead). All members voted in favor of the date change - Passed.

Mr. Winstead requested that two items be added to the November agenda: to discuss adding "deafblind" to VDDHH's Code in several places, and to discuss changing the agency's name to add deafblind.

TRAVEL REIMBURSEMENT

Chairperson Cline asked the members to sign their travel reimbursement forms and give them to Ms. Jeter.

Note: Board members are reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses for their attendance. Overnight travelers are reimbursed for mileage and meals at the per diem rates (no receipts are required). Any board member can be reimbursed for mileage upon request. Pertinent travel forms were distributed and signed by the board members.

MEETING ADJOURNMENT

Being that there was no further business before the board, the meeting adjourned at 2:25 PM.