

**Montana Telecommunications Access Program**  
**Minutes: Full Committee Meeting**  
**February 22, 2018**  
**MCDD - Helena**

**Committee Members Present:** Drew Arnot, chair, Marilyn Daumiller, Tina Shorten, Julie Saylor, Nick Domitrovich, Tom Thompson (via phone), John Pavao

**Committee Members Absent:** Ron Bibler, Jay Preston, Tyler Pert, Char Harasymczuk

**MTAP Staff Present:** Barbara Varnum, Steve Johnson, Lisa Gault

**Supporting and Contributing Persons Present:** Lisa Furr, Hamilton Relay account manager, Trisha Smith and Stella Woodrum, sign language interpreters, Shawn Tulloch, program manager for Deaf services, Sheri Vukasin, financial manager/budget analyst, Connie Phelps, Hamilton Relay

**Meeting called to order:**

Drew Arnot called the meeting to order.

**Approval of Minutes:**

A motion by Tina Shorten was made to approve the minutes and Tom Thompson seconded. Minutes were approved.

**Public Comment:** No public comment

**MTAP Director's report: Barbara Varnum**

Barbara Varnum reported that the committee is short three members but two new members are still waiting for the official signature from the Governor's office. They are Cam Tulloch who will fill Char Harasymczuk's position and Lisa Cannon who will take the audiologist position that Pat Ingalls has vacated. Ms. Varnum hopes by the May meeting these two will be able to attend. Tyler Pert is still on the committee but wants to be off and he's having difficulty recruiting someone to replace him as there are very few Verizon employees in Montana. There is one position remaining that needs to be filled and that's for a small business representative.

Ms. Varnum let the committee know that Julianna Whittaker has left MTAP in January to go work for MonTech. Her position has been posted online for people to apply and will close March 6<sup>th</sup>. The goal is the replacement will be hired in April and training will be done in Missoula and Helena and have the person accompany both Steve Johnson and Ms. Varnum on client trips. Interviews will be held in Missoula. Ms. Varnum and Mr. Johnson will conduct the interviews along with people from the committee. Both Mr. Arnot and Mr. Thompson volunteered to be the representative from the committee for the interviews.

Since Ms. Whittaker vacated the position, both Ms. Varnum and Mr. Johnson have taken over the client visits. Mr. Johnson has had to do the law enforcement 911 trainings alone twice.

Ms. Varnum also informed the committee to start considering opening an office in Billings in the eventuality that Steve Johnson retires at some point. Billings is the biggest city and Mr. Johnson has had to drive out there frequently and it would make sense to have an office there.

Discussion ensued about whether more staff was needed or if four is sufficient. Four FTE's have been appropriated for the program and applications have declined a little bit. Ms. Varnum feels once a replacement is hired, four people is sufficient to run the program.

A vehicle has been ordered for the Missoula office. It is a 2018 Dodge Journey all-wheel drive, \$21,547. The Helena MTAP office has been moved from the second floor to the fourth floor of the Arcade building. The rent has been cut in half, going from about 37K to 16-17K a year. The vocational rehabilitation office will be moving into the old office on the second floor.

The Federal Poverty Level (FPL) has been changed in February but this change won't be published in the Administrative Rules of Montana (ARM) until later in the year. MTAP doesn't have to wait for the publication to start using the updated FPL and this benefits the clients MTAP serves. A TRS (traditional relay service) annual report has been submitted to the FCC. It is composed of how many minutes TRS and STS (speech to speech) and caption that has been used each month through the year. Remote conference captioning (RCC) has gone up in usage, 7 out of the last 12 months it was used.

Ms. Varnum discussed how the 406 number is billed – she contacted the Dept. of Revenue for clarification after the last committee meeting and it turns out Montana does not collect on the 406 number, they collect on the service address. All phone bills that go to an address in Montana is based for revenue collection.

Outreach is continuing within MTAP with several events coming up in the spring. Discussion ensued about contacting audiologists to raise awareness of the program. Ms. Varnum also added that a good source of referral are the small telephone companies as she and Mr. Johnson will be going to an annual conference of the phone companies at Three Rivers. Social media usage was also discussed. Ms. Varnum posed a question to the committee about the location of the next meeting in May as traditionally that meeting is held at another location other than Helena. A vote was tallied and the majority wanted to remain in Helena for the May meeting with the understanding that meetings will still be held out of town in May in the future. One committee member queried about visiting the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind. Ms. Varnum mentioned the annual Family Learning Weekend which the MTAP staff attends and she said she could check with the school to see if the board members could visit during this weekend.

### **Budget Report: Sheri Vukasin**

Sheri Vukasin opened with the amount of budget authority remaining the same and spending is a little down from projected figures and spending is about 40 percent for the last seven months. Normally the spending would be a little over 55-58 percent. She feels it will go up during the spring as more events occur during the warmer months. Projections for relay services are at \$215,000; equipment purchases - \$120,000 and \$131,000 for outreach services. The vehicle purchase came a little under than the projection. The NFB Newsline has \$33,000 projected and this will be voted on in the May meeting. \$775,000 is still set aside for the budget appropriation for the FCC mandates in case the FCC decides to put the responsibility back on the states. Preparation is underway to start the new budget cycle for the next biennium that starts July 1<sup>st</sup> of 2019.

Ms. Vukasin mentioned that if the committee wants to do a FTE to hire another position for MTAP, this would have to be sent through the Governor's budget office and request a modified position. A modified position means the legislature hasn't approved it but the budget office has. If the position were to become permanent, one can go to the legislature and ask to vote to add an additional position. This would need to be decided by the May meeting so that it can go through the budget process. Nick Domitrovich has stated that since there's so many reductions in force within the Department, asking the legislature for an FTE would be a challenge even if MTAP has its own funding. Ms. Vukasin's advice is that there are good alternative resources to doing outreach, partnering with VR as they have clients that are going to school for this purpose or having an intern work on it.

### **Hamilton Relay Report: Lisa Furr**

Ms. Furr outlined the call traffic report as follows:

For traditional relay services --

Intrastate calls, 25,280 conversation minutes during last year (February 2016 to February 2017)  
17,370 conversation minutes this past year (February 2017 to February 2018)

Interstate calls, 7,940 conversation minutes during last year (February 2016 to February 2017)  
3,770 conversation minutes this past year (February 2017 to February 2018)

For 2016 to 2017, most of the calls were TTY, second is voice carryover and third is voice users.  
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No usage of ASCII or Spanish users for either year.

2017: HCO (hearing carry over) 835 minutes	2018: 547 minutes
2017: STS (speech to speech) 60 minutes	2018: none
2017: TTY 3,558 minutes	2018: 12,276 minutes
2017: VCO (voice carry over) 2,447 minutes	2018: 2,283 minutes
2017: Voice 4,780 minutes	2018: 3,179 minutes

The remote captioning (RCC) feature has been growing in usage and the total for that is 360 minutes so far.

For CapTel –

Intrastate calls, 53,000 conversation minutes during last year (2017)  
48,000 conversation minutes (2018)

Interstate calls, 64,700 conversation minutes during last year (2017)  
54,800 conversation minutes (2018)

For inbound calls for CapTel users, for 2017, 53,211 conversation minutes and for this year (2018), 47,135 minutes.

For voice calls, there were a total of 33,821 conversation minutes for 2017, for 2018, 27,201 conversation minutes.

As of December 2017, 70 CapTel phones have been used; in November 65 have been used; and in October 67 were used.

Ms. Furr did the outreach report in lieu of Emilie Banasiak's absence. She mentioned attending the MATE show with Emilie Banasiak the previous week prior to the committee meeting. In relation to the earlier discussion about audiologists, Ms. Furr stated that there were two audiologist booths at the MATE event and Emilie went and chatted with both booths, sharing information about MTAP. They also learned about an annual home improvement show that happens in March in Billings as well and they will consider attending this one as well next year. Six events have been discussed with Ms. Varnum for the rest of the year, which is as follows: the Women's Fair in Missoula at the University of Montana, the Gerontology conference, the Family Learning Weekend in Great Falls, the 100-year Crow Fair celebration, the Veterans' Stand Down in Libby and lastly, the APCO (Association of Public Communications Officials).

Hamilton Relay awarded Brenda LeMieux with the Deaf Community Leader award for her involvement with the Great Falls Club of the Deaf and the Montana Association of the Deaf. Hamilton will also be giving out two other awards later this spring. One is a high school scholarship for seniors who are deaf or hard of hearing, blind or have difficulty with speech. Applications for the scholarship is due by March 1<sup>st</sup>. The other one is the Better Hearing and Speech Community Leader Award for the hard of hearing or late deafened. Applications for this one is due April 2<sup>nd</sup>.

## **DPHHS report: Nick Domitrovich**

Nick Domitrovich opened with stating that there are not a lot of developments as most of the focus is dealing with decisions made by the last legislature. Speculation is that on March 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup>, the interim Revenue and Transportation committee will be meeting and it's thought that the state budget director will be going to that committee meeting with a proposal to help Voc-Rehab, senior and long-term care and the Child and Family Services division. With the MTAP and Voc-Rehab move, money was saved and since the state and federal match monies, the money saved from the moves can be leveraged and services can be provided to people and avoid further reductions in force. Voc-Rehab is operating on a skeleton crew, about 27 percent vacancy. Mr. Domitrovich is hoping that the committee mentioned previously might be interested in some solutions.

He thinks that the division needs an overhaul of the Administrative Rules due to some requirements in VR that come out of the Workforce Investment Opportunities Act (WIOA). The rules conflict with the Federal level in some areas. Regarding the Federal poverty limit, the process has been overhauled in the Director's office and the office of Legal Affairs so it should be quicker in having it updated. He would like to see the organizational rules for the agency have one FPL rule and then the programs can have a multiplier rule that they can change every year instead of doing more than 20.

Mr. Domitrovich discussed the current bill, HR 620 that was just passed in the House of Representatives. He expanded on what the bill was about and how it affects people with disabilities and businesses.

In relation to the outreach discussion earlier with the audiologists and having an intern – he was thinking of setting up a time to get on the agenda for one of the board of Audiologists' monthly meetings.

Ms. Varnum asked Mr. Domitrovich if there is any idea of when the administrative position will be posted that Mr. Domitrovich has been filling in since Jim Marks vacated the position. He has not heard anything about whether this position will be open to applicants.

### **Unfinished business**

No unfinished business.

### **New business**

Ms. Varnum asked the committee if there's anything they want to discuss in the May meeting and added that they will discuss the different phone calls, (VCO, STS, etc) with Hamilton Relay. She also reminded the committee that a vote will be taken on funding the NFB Newslite during the May meeting as well.

**The meeting was adjourned at 1:15 pm**