

Montana Telecommunications Access Program
Minutes: Full Committee Meeting
August 19, 2021
Helena, Montana

Committee Members Present: Barbara Varnum, chair; Tina Shorten, vice chair; Cam Tulloch, Lee Hazelbaker, Jim Streeter (via Zoom), Lisa Cannon, Tom Thompson (via Zoom), John Pavao, Ron Bibler

Committee Members Absent: Chanda Hermanson, Jay Preston, Sherri Odlin

MTAP Staff Present: Mary Taylor, Lisa Gault, Mike Bouchard, Jeff Haley

Supporting and Contributing Persons Present: Shannon Mackey, budget analyst; Emilie Banasiak, Asia Johnson, Hamilton Relay (via Zoom); Shawn Tulloch, deaf services manager, Stella Woodrum and Trisha Smith, sign language interpreters

Meeting called to order:

Barbara Varnum called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes:

Cam Tulloch moved to approve the minutes from May 20, 2021 and Tina Shorten seconded.

Public Comment:

Shawn Tulloch expressed gratitude to Mike Bouchard and Jeff Haley for their assistance with the audio equipment for the recent SRC meetings.

MTAP Director's report: Mary Taylor

Mary Taylor began with an update on the committee membership. A few members have terms coming up for renewal, effective July 1, 2021, including Jim Streeter, Tina Shorten, Sherri Odlin and Jay Preston. All except one so far have confirmed that they would like to continue serving and have submitted paperwork to the Governor's office. In addition, MTAP has a potential member who is interested in filling the vacant Independent Service Provider seat. An application has been submitted and pending approval and appointment from the Governor's office. We are awaiting notification from the Governor's office on the new applicant and reappointment of the others.

MTAP welcomed new equipment technician, Jeff Haley, who began his employment in early July. Jeff works out of the MTAP Missoula office.

Ms. Taylor mentioned that there was notification that all State employees are to return to the office after September 7th (for those who had been working from home remotely due to COVID-19) and offices are also opening back up to the public.

The MTAP office recently added a new leased 2021 Chevy Trax vehicle for the Billings office and turned in the 2010 Ford Escape that the Helena office was using. The 2015 GMC Terrain that Mr. Bouchard had been using in Billings has been relocated to the Helena office. The 2018 Dodge Journey for the Missoula office remains there as it is only a few years old and still has low mileage.

New applications have remained steady, averaging about 17 applications a month and an advertising campaign is occurring with the newspapers around the state, and will continue through September. There has been some advertising on TV during the Summer Olympics as well. Outreach is ongoing, and a goal this year for the program is to reach out to veterans more. Ms. Taylor has a contact at Fort Harrison and more events will be set up that are geared to veterans.

For the Remote Conference Captioning service (RCC), there will be additional fields added to the Scheduling Request Form as there was some concern on misuse. In addition, verbiage has been added to the form to make people aware that there must be an accessibility need, at least three people participating in the conference, and that the user must be a Montana resident. Ms. Taylor said she has not seen any reason for concern in Montana in terms of misuse but thinks this addition will help clarify who the Remote Conference Captioning is intended for. There will be additional fields for address and phone number which will help in data gathering regarding the RCC minutes for future auditing reports.

Ms. Taylor reported that she was asked to incorporate some goals and objectives for the MTAP contract for Facebook and she worked with the contractor to come up with goals that would be manageable. Currently, the contract has been through the approval process and waiting on some signatures. Ms. Taylor also submitted the FCC report that was due July 1st which covers the CapTel and Traditional Relay Services.

The NASRA business meeting is coming up on September 14th and the TEDPA business meeting is scheduled for Sept. 23rd. Both will be virtual.

Budget Report: Shannon Mackey

Shannon Mackey opened with the state fiscal year 2021 budget totals for MTAP as of June 30, 2021.

Personal services	\$221,783
Operations	\$634,961
FCC Mandate	<u>\$775,000</u>
Total budget	<u><u>\$1,631,744</u></u>

Actual expenses through June 30, 2021

HB2 budget appropriation (95.47% of the \$856,744)	\$817,905
Indirect costs (non-budgeted appropriation)	\$76,308
Prior year expense	\$(6,604)
Fund transfer HB669	<u>\$2,000,000</u>
Total expenses for program	<u><u>\$2,887,609</u></u>

House Bill 2 expenditures through June 30, 2021

Personal services (97.24% of \$260,384 budget)	\$253,202
Operational expenses (94.69% of \$596,360 not including indirect cost)	<u>\$564,703</u>
Total expenses (95.47% of \$856,744 total HB2 budget)	\$817,905

Revenue collected as of June 30, 2021 \$1,485,169

For the fiscal year 2022 appropriated budget total is below:

Personal services	\$255,643
Operations	\$627,677
FCC Mandate	<u>\$775,000</u>
Total budget	<u><u>\$1,658,320</u></u>

Actual expenses through July 31, 2021

HB2 budget appropriation (2.05% of the \$833,320)	\$18,138
Indirect costs (non-budgeted appropriation)	\$0
Prior year expense	\$0
Total expenses for program	<u><u>\$18,138</u></u>

House Bill 2 expenditures through July 31, 2021

Personal services (5.07% of \$255,643 budget)	\$12,971
Operational expenses (0.82% of \$627,677 not including indirect cost)	<u>\$5,167</u>
Total expenses (2.05% of \$883,320 total HB2 budget)	\$18,138

Operating Expenses – YTD \$5,167 through July 31, 2021

- Rent/Utilities: \$4,962
(total rent budget \$42,500; remaining budget \$37,538)
- Equipment and other expenses: \$205
- (total other expenses budget \$7,500; remaining budget \$7,295)
Expenses include: dues, education/training, meetings, parking fees, and Hometown Leasing (copier lease)

Indirect Costs and Prior Year Expenses

- Projected costs for SFY 2022 indirect costs are \$76,500
- No indirect or Prior Year expenses as of July 31, 2021

FCC mandate – no expenses projected at this time

Revenue collected as of July 31, 2021 \$363,866

DPHHS Report – Chanda Hermanson

Mary Taylor noted that Chanda Hermanson was unable to attend today's Committee Meeting, but asked Ms. Taylor to report that the DPHHS offices are opening back up to the public on September 7th, at which time staff who have been working remotely will be expected to return to the office.

Hamilton Relay Report: Emilie Banasiak and Asia Johnson

Asia Johnson opened with the answer performance in Montana for the traditional relay service. The requirement is that 85 percent of all calls must be answered within ten seconds. Montana is well within that required range and for CapTel, still answering within ten seconds or less. Discussion ensued about dips in rates of answering during certain months during the COVID-19 pandemic, this is attributed to higher call volume. For call volume relating to session and conversation minutes for both traditional relay and CapTel, there has been a decline on CapTel minutes.

For the traditional relay quality scores, the current month average was 93 percent, and the previous month was 95 percent. The communication assistants typed 82.3 words per minute with a 98 percent accuracy rate.

Emilie Banasiak reported that for outreach, they participated in the Family Learning Weekend and the Montana Association of the Deaf Biennial Conference during the summer. Ms. Banasiak added that she and Lisa Gault worked on a video that the MTAP technicians can use for the quarterly trainings they do with the Montana Law Enforcement Academy on Deaf Culture. Upcoming events will include the annual Governor's Conference on Aging and doing a state-wide webinar on relay-friendly business and one more 911 training webinar. Contractually, Hamilton Relay is to commit to six outreach events from February to February of each year.

MTAP Equipment Report – Mike Bouchard and Jeff Haley

Mike Bouchard shared about the outreach that has been done, such as going up to Sheridan County Fair, and the baseball games in Great Falls, Billings and Missoula. He also discussed what the requirements are for to qualify for assistance through the MTAP program. He explained that the potential client needs to be within the income guidelines (based on 250% of the Federal Poverty Level), be a resident of Montana for more than six months, be a minimum of five years of age or older and have a type of disability (such as hard of hearing, deaf, speech, or mobility). MTAP also assists clients with vision disabilities that are tied to one of the other disabilities. If a current client application on file was completed five years ago and they request additional assistance, they are to fill out a new application to ensure that they are still meeting the requirements, and that the information on file is up to date, such as address, contact info, etc. If a client moves out of state, they are required to return the equipment that MTAP has loaned to them.

Jeff Haley introduced himself as a new staff member from Missoula who is in the process of learning the system and the program. Jeff shared his background; he explained that he has a brother who was hard of hearing and got a cochlear implant. He is looking forward to learning about signing and educating himself on the products that can help people.

Barbara Varnum asked Mike a question about outreach on the reservations and Mr. Bouchard mentioned that MTAP was in talks about setting up a meet and greet on the Blackfoot reservation, but this was pre-COVID and

that got canceled. He deferred to Ms. Taylor, who had been organizing this event. Ms. Taylor added that the reservations have been strict about letting people in to do any presentations because of the pandemic, and confirmed that plans were underway in Browning, but had to be canceled due to shut down of the reservation and COVID restrictions. She explained that she did talk with a Tribal council member of the Fort Peck Reservation and provided her with MTAP brochures and applications to distribute. The council member, Patricia Iron Cloud Runs Through, was very interested in having MTAP to do a presentation to the Tribal Executive Board when they open back up.

New business –

Action Item – FY 2022 budget: Lee Hazelbaker made a motion to approve the FY 2022 MTAP Budget, and John Pavao seconded. The budget \ was approved.

Ms. Varnum noted that there are a number of new members on the committee, and she would like to have Ms. Banasiak lead a training on “Deaf World,” an in-person simulation where one would communicate without their voice, to give an idea of what it is like living as a Deaf person. In the coming year she would like Hamilton Relay to do that with the committee. The committee agreed.

Mr. Bibler added that since there are a number of new members, he would like the technicians to demonstrate some of the equipment they distribute during the next committee meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:15 p.m.