

Montana Telecommunications Access Program
Minutes: Full Committee Meeting
May 23, 2019
Billings, Montana

Committee Members Present: Drew Arnot, chair, Ron Bibler, vice chair, Cam Tulloch, Lisa Cannon, Tina Shorten, John Pavao, Tom Thompson, Chanda Hermanson-Dudley (both Tom and Chanda via webcam)

Committee Members Absent: Jay Preston

MTAP Staff Present: Mary Taylor, Lisa Gault, Richard Ballou, Mike Bouchard

Supporting and Contributing Persons Present: Connie Phelps and Emilie Banasiak, Hamilton Relay, Trisha Smith and Catherine Copeland, sign language interpreters

Meeting called to order:

Drew Arnot called the meeting to order.

Approval of Minutes:

Discussion ensued about which minutes to approve, the November minutes and the February minutes. Ron Bibler made a motion to approve the minutes from November 2018 and John Pavao seconded. Motion carried.

Mr. Bibler motioned for the February minutes to be submitted to the record but will not be approved. Mr. Pavao added that since there was no quorum at the February meeting, there cannot be any official minutes; instead we can call them “notes”. Mr. Bibler amended his motion to say that the February notes be part of the record. Mr. Pavao seconded. Motion carried.

Public Comment:

John Pavao announced that there will be a Disability Employment Awareness Conference on October 15 and 16 in Helena at Fort Harrison. There will be speakers from both the Job Accommodation Network, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, the Rocky Mountain ADA Center and many others. One of the key note speakers is Jason Corning with Three Monkeys Communication who is deaf-blind.

Joel Peden, representing the Montana Independent Living Project, made a public comment that he hopes that MTAP will continue to support the NFB Newsline.

MTAP Director’s report: Mary Taylor

Mary Taylor opened with the vacancies on the committee. She stated that Ms. Hermanson-Dudley was officially appointed by the Governor to be on the committee and there is one other applicant that has applied for one of our disability positions. She thinks he’s from the Missoula area, but the Governor’s office hasn’t made any official announcements yet regarding his appointment. There are two vacant positions still ongoing, the senior citizen one and a person engaged in a business other than a business in the telecommunications industry. Ms. Taylor has been reaching out to some agencies to try and get some interest, such as independent living centers, the AARP, and the Rocky Mountain Development Council in hopes of getting these positions filled soon. The other vacant position is for the largest service provider, which was changed during the last legislative session to a member from a public safety answering point. The legislation to change that officially went into

effect on May 9th, so efforts are underway to fill that vacancy. Three positions are expiring in July and those are for John Pavao, Tom Thompson and Ron Bibler. All three have expressed interested in continuing on the committee. In addition, the committee will vote today on a new chair and vice chair, to be elected for the next term.

Ms. Taylor reported that there has been about a 45 percent decline in new applications over the last three years. She reported that last year MTAP received 253 new applications and this year with 10 months behind us, there has been 169 new applications. She's concerned about this and working on strategies to improve this number. Ms. Taylor is meeting with advertisers to try to come up with ideas. She mentioned possibly advertising in more newspapers or using electronic billboards such as in Billings. Most of the advertising is through television and she feels that's good but would like to try other avenues. Discussion ensued among the committee members about options on how to reach more people. Ron Bibler made a motion to approve the moving of \$25,000 from some of the ancillary budgeted items that are not being spent to advertising. Tina Shorten seconded the motion. It was approved.

Ms. Taylor proceeded to report that the software has been updated as it was due for the Sockeye program that MTAP uses for their client files. Another update will be due towards the end of this year. She included additional information on the MTAP Facebook page, and she gets monthly reports on tracking people who saw the content and interactions (people who liked it or reacted to it). Ricky Ballou will have a captioned training video that will be put on the state's YouTube page. Discussion ensued about outreach regarding the Facebook page, what people would like to see posted on there.

The equipment contract that MTAP has with Teltex expires on May 26th but has been renewed for another year. The contract can be renewed up to seven years. Teltex staff will be coming to the MTAP Helena office in June to do a training on iOS devices and accessibility features so that the MTAP staff is aware of what is available.

The federal poverty levels are in the process of getting published as well and staff members have been involved or will be in a few trainings such as distracted driving, deaf culture and hopefully ICanConnect. Ms. Taylor is also in the process of getting travel funding approved for the upcoming conferences, NASRA and TEDPA for Ricky Ballou and Mike Bouchard as well as Ms. Taylor.

A motion was made to approve funding for Mr. Bibler's registration at NASRA as well as hotel accommodations by Ms. Shorten; seconded by Ms. Cannon. Motion was passed. Mr. Bibler made a motion that the council support the willingness and ableness for other committee members to go to the Phoenix meetings this year. Cam Tulloch seconded. Motion is passed. A motion was made by Mr. Tulloch to approve Mary Taylor, Ricky Ballou and Mike Bouchard to go to the conferences. Mr. Pavao seconded. Motion was approved.

DPHHS Report: Chanda Hermanson-Dudley

Chanda Hermanson-Dudley reported that the 2019 legislative session has wrapped up. The MTAP savings account went flat to give some money to the extended employment programs. The revenue will continue to go to MTAP and be built. The DPHHS had a reduction of 117 full-time employees and the Disability Employment and Transitions division was facing a reduction of 16, but due to the advocates and people they serve, one of the committees gave back seven out of 16 positions that were to be eliminated. Other legislative decisions that impact the division is that there were some provider rate increases for rehabilitation providers, the extended employment providers and independent living service providers. For the first year it's a .0019 percent increase over the next biennium and the next year it will be a 1.2 percent over the next biennium.

Nationally they are keeping an eye on the Disability Immigration Act, but Ms. Hermanson-Dudley has not seen an update on the voting as of this date. There are also ongoing discussions on competitive integrated employment for disabilities due to the passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Vermont has done this successfully and the people from there are coming to Montana and there will be an open discussion on this issue on June 14th in Billings.

Hamilton Relay Report: Emilie Banasiak and Connie Phelps

Connie Phelps opened with the statistical report –

- Montana Traditional relay service answered within 10 seconds 98 percent of the time.
- Session minutes, within the last quarter 2,200 then down to 1,600 in February, then came up to 2,400 in March.
- TRS quality scores in most recent month, 97% in the Georgia center, 92% in Louisiana, 97% in Maryland and 94% in Nebraska. Overall, average is 90%. The previous month average was 96%.
- Words per minute, the FCC requires the operators to type 60 wpm on a call, Hamilton Relay is well above that.
- Typing accuracy – 99% in Georgia, 94% in Louisiana, 98% in Maryland and 97% in Nebraska so average is 97%.
- Customer care report - February and March one general information call in each month respectively; one call in March regarding equipment, no new customer profiles, no service complaints, no questions about outreach and no external complaints. Wrong number hang up – three in March. No compliments or commendations to share and no malicious calls.
- Relay conference captioning minutes – January, below 400 minutes; February, almost 600 minutes; March, a little over 600 minutes.

- CapTel relay service answered within 10 seconds – for the last year it's been at 100%.
- Session minutes, currently for March about 6,000 – trending lower.
- CapTel quality scores, average words per minute are 160.50 and the requirement from the FCC is 130. The average rate of accuracy is 99.46 and the error rate is .54.
- Customer care report – none as the CapTels have a customer care button that calls directly to CTI (Captioned Telephone, Inc.,) who is the maker of the CapTel phones.

Emilie Banasiak discussed an outreach event that occurred that she was unable to attend due to being out on maternity leave - the Montana Women's Fair at the University of Montana which John Fechter, her boss, and Ricky with MTAP covered. For the next quarter, there are two events that Hamilton Relay will be involved with; the Family Learning Weekend at the Montana School for the Deaf and Blind in Great Falls and the Montana Association of the Deaf state conference in Great Falls.

Ms. Phelps and Ms. Banasiak conducted a demonstration of the RTT telephone. RTT stands for real-time text telephone and currently Hamilton Relay is doing a trial with some states. The phone will connect and be processed like a TTY call. It's a feature that allows users to see text instantly as it's typed. One can also hear what is being said if the microphone is on and read what is being said. The benefits of RTT is that it's text and voice that can coexist together. The FCC has come out with a report and order about RTT that they are in support of RTT because in the future, analog lines will be going away. The big four carriers, AT&T, T-Mobile, Verizon and Sprint will need a downloadable app or a phone that it will work on. So far AT&T, T-Mobile and Verizon have complied but not Sprint. RTT can be used in four different ways, RTT to RTT, a deaf person

types and a communication assistant voices it, a person can voice and have the communication assistant type and lastly the hearing carryover where someone who can hear but has difficulty speaking, they would listen and they can type back and the communication assistant is reading what is typed. (three are relay, one is direct). If using RTT with calling 911, it will look like a TTY call to the 911 center and the voice aspect will be lost. The FCC has no jurisdiction over the PSAPs (public safety access points), the Department of Justice does. There is no requirement on the PSAP side for text to 911.

During the trial period, Hamilton Relay will be offering technical support to the participants of the pilot program, and they will be accepting up to 100 trial participants combined from all states. Ms. Phelps thinks it will be a 90-day trial and first Hamilton Relay will need state approval to move forward to it and then figure out what the contract need is, if it is an amendment or such. A billing and reporting system will be set up so minutes can be reported like a regular traditional relay service. Hamilton Relay will develop communication assistant procedures and trial participant manuals. During the implementation plan, a launch date will be set, identification and education of the trial participants will happen, contracts developed and work station development for allowed call types such as scripted and unscripted calls.

Budget Report: Sheri Vukasin

Sheri Vukasin reported that MTAP is about 83 percent of the way through the state fiscal year and the program has spent \$674,000 total program expenses out of \$903,000 available, not counting the \$775,000 appropriation set aside. For the traditional relay, 57.82 percent of the projected costs has been spent and for the CapTel relay it's about 84 percent of the projections. On the outreach budget, it's at about 71 percent of the projected costs. For equipment that is purchased for distribution to clients, only 36 percent of the projection has been spent. Equipment purchases were projected at \$110,000 and the program has only spent about \$40,000. MTAP is lower on equipment distribution than on outreach. The biggest change is the legislative bill that is taking \$3.5 million by midnight on June 30th out of the fund. Back on July 1, 2018, the beginning fund balance was \$3,722,000 and when the \$3.5 million is taken out, including a reduction of \$909,000 in projected expenses, and projected revenue of \$1.38 million added when the new fiscal year starts on July 1, 2019, the program is going to have a fund balance of approximately \$697,000.

The last two state fiscal years, 2017 and 2018, the program expended \$851,000 and \$793,000 respectively. The program is projecting to spend \$909,000 this state fiscal year. Since the equipment purchasing is low and traditional relay service is low at this rate, the fund balance will be more than \$697,000 after July 1st. There will be about \$50,000 between what is projected and what might end up being left based on spending. The program continues to collect between \$1.35 and \$1.38 million in revenue for the last four to five state fiscal years and those revenues usually come in around October, November, February and June, when taxes are collected on those revenues.

Ms. Vukasin shared a few scenarios on what would happen based upon the program doing certain things and whether the program has to pay for those costs that the federal government is currently paying. 1) if the FCC doesn't mandate, the program continues paying as they have on everything including the outreach increases, the program will be fine. The start of fiscal year 2020 will be low but by 2022 the fund balance will be up over \$2 million again. 2) if the FCC does mandate that the state must start paying for the costs of relay services, the fund balance will never get as high as it was, but it will hover around \$600,000-700,000. Discussion ensued on clarification of the budget and the start of the new two-year biennium which is July 1, 2019 and the possibility of hiring part-time employees and doing an EPP process to justify hiring extra people and Ms. Vukasin stated that the EPP process starts next January 2020 for the next legislative session in January 2021. Outside of the EPP process, MTAP can hire a temporary employee for up to 480 hours or do a modified position that is not

approved by the legislature but is approved by the Governor's office during the interim between legislative sessions.

MTAP Equipment Report: Mike Bouchard and Richard "Ricky" Ballou

Mike Bouchard opened by reporting on outreach that he has done to date, such as the home show in Billings which he felt was good and did outreach with Ms. Taylor in Fairfield for Mid-Rivers. In addition, he has visited the hospital in Billings a few times handing out brochures and applications. Mr. Bouchard also did the Women's Expo, but he felt that it wasn't worth the expense for MTAP, he suggested attending every few years.

Ricky Ballou reported that he enjoyed working with John Fechter at the Women's Fair in Missoula as he mentioned that John is good at engaging people. Mr. Ballou also attended the gerontology conference in Helena, but the turnout was not very good and the set up did not encourage interaction with the vendors. Mr. Ballou partnered up with staff from MonTECH, the state's assistive technology program for that conference, sharing a table. Mr. Ballou also attended the 911 advisory council's quarterly meeting and found it interesting as the council discussed how to get grants, as each county must apply for a grant to purchase their equipment. The council posts their agenda about a week ahead so he'll check and see if there's anything interesting that might relate to MTAP and attend. Mr. Ballou added that he stops at senior centers, agencies on aging and community centers and just checks to see if they need extra applications or brochures on his trips.

Unfinished business:

No unfinished business

New business:

NFB Newsline

Jim Aldrich, National Federation of the Blind of Montana board member, demonstrated how to use the NFB Newsline via his phone to the committee. Scott White, Director of Technology Programs for the National Federation of the Blind, also explained what the Newsline is used for. Discussion ensued and questions were asked of Mr. White and Jim Marks, NFB of Montana President, who also joined via webcam.

Vote on NFB Newsline

After some discussion, Mr. Bibler made a motion that the NFB Newsline not be funded by MTAP for fiscal year 2020. Mr. Tulloch seconded. Majority voted aye; Tom Thompson, voted nay. MTAP will not fund the NFB Newsline for fiscal year 2020.

Reelect Chair and Vice Chair

Mr. Arnot nominated Ron Bibler as chair for the committee and Ms. Shorten seconded. Vote passed, and Ron Bibler is chair for the next two years. Tom Thompson nominated Jay Preston for the vice chair, but there was no second. Motion failed. Mr. Bibler nominated Drew Arnot for vice chair and John Pavao seconded. All in were in favor. Drew Arnot is the vice chair for the next two years.

Discussion took place about outreach for the tribal reservations and picking potential locations for the MTAP Tech Fair in conjunction with the next May meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:37 pm