

**Telecommunications Access Program Advisory Board Meeting  
April 22, 2021  
Zoom Meeting**

**Members Present:** Ms. Gerry Gordon-Brown, Ms. Christa Cervantes, Mr. Lewis Fowler, Ms. Mindy McGirt, Mr. Tyler Campbell, Mr. Johnny Lawson, Mr. Jim Timon, Ms. Marilyn Fenwick, Ms. Jeannie Taylor and Mr. Jim Stevens

**Members Absent:** Mr. Jeremiah Ziehr

**Staff Present:** Ms. Jessica Endler Smith, Ms. Elise Kitchen, Ms. Toni Jo Stinson, and Ms. Virginia Moore

**Guests:** None

**Communication**

**Facilitators:** Ms. Shannon Grider, Ms. Theresa Lott, and Ms. Tracy Lundergan

The Chair, Ms. Gordon-Brown, called the meeting to order at 2:07 p.m., and Ms. Stinson called the roll. Ms. Gordon-Brown requested the Board review the minutes of October 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019, and October 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020, meetings.

**MR. LAWSON (Ms. McGirt) MOVED TO APPROVE THE MINUTES AS WRITTEN. THE MOTION PASSED.**

**Reports:**

Ms. Smith provided members with a statistical report of Telecommunications Access Program (TAP) activities since the last meeting in October 2020. TAP processed orders for July through December of 2020, and 386 applicants received equipment. Ms. Smith shared that iPhones and iPads, which have the FaceTime app, were in high demand due to in large part to COVID-19 safety guidelines that included social distancing and wearing face masks. She added that people need FaceTime more than ever to help communicate with their families.

Ms. Smith reported that there is a waiting list for TAP equipment, but January – March first time applicants are approved and ready to order. Reapplications are continuing to be processed. Ms. Moore explained that during our normal contract renewal period, finance efforts and government funding were directed almost exclusively to COVID-19 related concerns, and as a result, our vendor contracts were held up until they ultimately expired. She said that after she emphasized the importance of communication during COVID-19, she was directed to file for emergency contract extensions, which were subsequently approved, allowing equipment orders to be placed for applicants who were on the waiting list July – December 2020.

Ms. Stinson provided the outreach report, stating that Ms. Smith has been doing more training with consumers and audiologists via phone. Ms. Smith added that she will also be able to do phone installations now that she has been vaccinated; however, the

consumer and on-site interpreter must also be vaccinated. Ms. Smith shared that she has also been more in touch with audiologists and other professionals. She explained that she uses Sorenson Video Relay Service (VRS) to make those types of calls, and some people hang up thinking it is a scam. She often has to explain that she is a deaf individual that has to make those phone calls through an interpreter and then explain the equipment installation over the phone. Ms. Smith indicated she would like to do video recordings of how to set up the signaler system and phone equipment.

Ms. Moore stated that many rural areas still don't have good internet service, and that affects deaf and hard of hearing constituents who use captioned phones, iPhones, iPads and videophones. She expressed her appreciation that the Governor is working with the Education and Workforce Development Cabinet (EWDC) to encourage everyone to test their internet speed in order to provide the necessary data for research to see what work needs to be done and where.

Ms. Smith reported that the TAP Program will continue to distribute the same equipment that they have for the past five years. Ms. Moore added that there are six months left on the emergency contracts, but when new contracts are approved, she plans to introduce new equipment. Ms. Moore requested that the Advisory Board notify the Commission if they see any equipment that would be good for the TAP

#### **New Business:**

Ms. Gordon-Brown reported that three members' terms will soon expire: Mr. Timon's, Mr. Ziehr's and Mr. Lawson's. She thanked them for their outstanding service and dedication to the TAP program. Ms. Gordon-Brown and Ms. Moore encouraged the Board to look for people that would be interested in serving on the Board. Ms. Cervantes said she would be willing to post the vacancies on her website and requested that the information be sent to her. Ms. Smith stated that she is going to record a video announcing board vacancies and explaining the application process.

#### **Announcements:**

- Ms. Taylor announced that her term as Chair of the Commission will expire at the end of June and thanked the Board for allowing her to serve with them.
- Ms. Moore announced that Spire has broken ground on the Senior Citizens housing project in northern Kentucky, and a progress report will be provided at a later date.
- The next TAP Advisory Board meeting will be held on October 21<sup>st</sup>, 2021, from 2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. – Location TBD

**MR. TIMON (Mr. Lawson) MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETING. THE MOTION PASSED.** Ms. Gordon-Brown adjourned the meeting at 3:15 p.m.