

**Montana Telecommunications Access Program**  
**Minutes: Full Committee Meeting**  
**August 20, 2020 - Via Zoom**

**Committee Members Present:** Ron Bibler, chair; Drew Arnot, vice chair; Jim Streeter, Sherri Odlin, Barb Varnum, John Pavao, Lee Hazelbaker, Cam Tulloch, Jay Preston, Lisa Cannon, Chanda Hermanson, Tom Thompson

**Committee Members Absent:** Tina Shorten

**MTAP Staff Present:** Mary Taylor, Lisa Gault, Rex Wolferman, Mike Bouchard

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

**Meeting called to order:**

Ron Bibler called the meeting to order.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Barbara Varnum made a motion to approve the minutes as amended and Jim Streeter seconded. Motion carried.

**Public Comment:**

Shawn Tulloch expressed her appreciation of the Remote Conference Captioning (RCC) services offered through MTAP as part of their contract with Hamilton Relay. She explained that one can download a raw transcript immediately after the call and a finished transcript with edits is usually available five days later. She uses RCC for the State Rehabilitation Council meetings as well. Mary added that anyone in the meeting can click on the RCC link during the MTAP Committee meetings to watch the captions coming across.

**MTAP Director's report: Mary Taylor**

Mary Taylor reported that all 13 MTAP committee seats are filled; the four members whose terms were expiring in July all agreed to serve another term and were accepted to continue serving on the committee.

Due to a large jump in COVID-19 cases over the last month, the Governor issued a directive on July 15, requiring everyone to wear masks in when indoors and at organized outdoor activities of 50 or more people. Therefore, there will be limited outreach opportunities and the staff will be continuing to contact and assist clients remotely.

Ms. Taylor briefly discussed the presentation that was hosted by Teltex that some committee members were able to attend and added that MTAP received a proposal for a pilot project that Teltex has been doing with other states. They are working with the ombudsman of the long-term care facilities in some of the other states, and are meeting with various facilities to get CARES Act funds to purchase iPads to connect the different facilities so

that the ombudsman could continue meeting with them and possibly let them know about programs such as the MTAP program, and assist them with signing up for equipment.

According to Ms. Taylor, the number of new applications has remained steady for the last two years. There were a couple months where a high number of applications came in that seemed to coincide with the Aging Horizon interview and a huge newspaper advertising campaign done through the Montana Newspaper Association. Currently, she is working on a letter to distribute to the tribal departments, the senior centers, the assisted living facilities and the area agencies on aging. Ms. Taylor hopes may have Hamilton Relay help follow up with that as part of their outreach.

Relay expenses have gone up a little bit and Ms. Taylor thinks it's attributed in part to the uptick in use of Remote Conference Captioning. She is working on a contract amendment as part of the budget to ensure that there is enough funding to pay for the projected increase through the end of the current contract period, which expires the end of February 2021.

There has been an increase of purchasing iOS devices, particularly for clients whose warranties have run out and they are requesting upgrades. Approximately 37% of the budget over the last twelve months has been on iOS devices.

The contract with Devaney and Associates for the MTAP Facebook page has been signed. This contract is for both management and advertising for the period of July 1 through June 30, and can be renewed annually, not to exceed a total of 10 years.

For updating the website, Ms. Taylor just got the third quote from another agency so she will submit all three quotes to everyone and see how the committee wants to proceed. One quote is from Devaney and Associates, one is from Edge Marketing and one is from Oaklin Creative; the latter two companies are located in Helena.

The annual business meetings for TEDPA and NASRA are coming up in September. Both will be online virtually. Mike Bouchard, Rex Wolferman and Ms. Taylor will be attending those meetings. Discussion ensued about how the schools are handling remote learning.

### **Budget Report: Shannon Little**

Shannon Little opened with the state fiscal year 2020 end budget totals for MTAP.

Personal services	\$249,054
Operations	\$657,726
FCC Mandate	<u>\$775,000</u>
Total budget	<u><u>\$1,681,780</u></u>

Actual expenses through state fiscal year end, June 30, 2020

HB2 budget appropriation (95% of the \$906,780)	\$859,544
Indirect costs (non-budgeted appropriation)	\$73,248
Prior year expense	\$18,971
Fund transfer HB669	<u>\$1,500,000</u>

Total expenses for program \$2,451,763

House Bill 2 expenditures through June 30, 2020

Personal services (104% of \$249,054 budget)	\$257,997
Operational expenses (91% of \$657,726 not including indirect cost)	\$601,547
Total expenses (95% of \$906,780 total HB2 budget)	\$859,544
Revenue collected as of June 30, 2020	\$1,410,797

Fiscal year 2021 budget

Personal services	\$254,543
Operations	<u>\$657,726</u>
Total	<u>\$912,269</u>
FCC mandate	\$775,000
Total Budget	<u>\$1,687,269</u>

Expenses as of July 31<sup>st</sup>, 2020

Expenses \$20,666 (2.27% of \$912,269 spent)  
No indirect costs yet or prior year expense – fund transfer is not scheduled until August 2020

HB2 expenditures

Personal services (5% of \$254,543)	\$12,757
Operating expenses (1.2% of \$657,726– not including indirect costs)	<u>\$7,909</u>
Total MTAP expense	<u>\$20,666</u>

Operating expenses:

Rent and utilities \$6,774 – total rent budget is \$45,000, left is \$38,226  
Travel expenditures \$316; total budget is \$10,685 leaving \$10,369  
Supplies and distribution \$646 leaving \$89,354  
Equipment \$150; total equipment budget \$10,000 remaining is \$9850  
Communications \$154; total communication budget is \$10,000, remaining is \$9,846

Currently, projected costs for state fiscal year indirect costs for SFY 2021 is \$73,000, no indirect or prior year expenses as of July 31, 2020

As of July 31, 2020, \$360,869 in revenue has been collected.

Discussion ensued about leasing a vehicle which will most likely occur in the spring of 2021.

**DPHHS Report – Chanda Hermanson**

Chanda Hermanson began her report with how COVID-19 has affected business as offices are still closed to the public and the department staff are doing their best to serve everybody virtually. Travel within the state must be approved by the DPHHS director, Ms. Hogan. Any out of state travel must be approved by the Governor's

office. If people are approved to travel, they are allowing only one employee in a car at a time due to the circulation of air and spacing. The division has done a lot of education within the department and out in the communities about masking practices that can be a barrier for deaf and hard of hearing people, stressful for people with cognitive deficits, and makes communicating challenging in noisy environments. The department has purchased an inventory of clear masks for people to use.

Currently, Ms. Hermanson has nothing to report regarding the upcoming legislative session, but she will have more to report at the next committee meeting in November. There are still questions about how the legislative session will be conducted this year with the ongoing pandemic.

For the division, the biggest project that has occurred is a program named Extended Employment which provides long-term support for people with significant disabilities after they exit the vocational rehabilitation program if they don't have other funding resources. The program was contracted out for a long time but now it's been brought in-house, and the division decided not to seek the RFP on this program. Bringing it in-house saves about \$50,000. The program is fully funded through the funds taken from MTAP but that is a one-time funding so next July 2021, the budget will be cut to \$900,000 instead of the traditional \$1.4 million. The division is planning for the budget cut to ensure the program is sustainable.

Ms. Hermanson added that the department has been putting in a lot of measures to ensure that the employees in the Disability Employment and Transitions Division do not end up on close contact lists for COVID-19 and be able to continue serving people.

**Hamilton Relay Report: Emilie Banasiak and Asia Johnson**

Asia Johnson stated that on March 16, 2020, a temporary waiver for the COVID-19 pandemic was put into place by the FCC, for the period of March 2, 2020 through May 15, 2020. This waived the requirement that TRS providers answer 85% of calls within 10 seconds, but with the condition that the TRS providers make sure that 85% of calls are answered within 120 seconds monthly. This waiver has been extended several times with the latest due to expire on August 31, 2020. Ms. Johnson expects waiver will be extended again.

The calls have increased in volume for April through June for both TRS and CTS as follows:

TRS	CTS
June session minutes 2,315	June session minutes 3,072
May session minutes 2,107	May session minutes 3,923
April session minutes 1,805	April session minutes 3,322

Ms. Johnson mentioned that she was pleased that the customers are not waiting 120 seconds and answer performance has been between 99 to 100% meeting that requirement.

As for outreach, many events have been canceled or converted to virtual platforms such as the MSDB Family Learning Weekend which was conducted via Zoom. Hamilton Relay has not yet announced if travel will be reinstated for September, but Ms. Johnson feels that will still be on hold.

**MTAP Equipment Report – Mike Bouchard and Rex Wolferman**

Mike Bouchard opened with how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected his ability to see clients, but he has been able to take care of them remotely and has done a few training webinars such as Alzheimer's communication which helped him understand the thought processes and what happens with a person who has Alzheimer's disease. He continues to attend the Senior Coalition meetings online and he and Rex Wolferman conducted an MLEA training in May in person, but the latest MLEA training in August was canceled due to someone testing positive for COVID-19.

Rex Wolferman commented that he has quite a few clients that have opted to wait until the COVID-19 visitation restrictions are lifted. He has been able to contact and assist other clients remotely. He has been in touch with representatives at the Missoula Aging services to see how outreach can be done.

Discussion ensued about doing virtual 911 training presentations for the dispatchers at the 911 call centers.

### **Unfinished business**

No unfinished business

### **New business – Action item – approve 2021 budget**

Discussion ensued about the equipment line item at \$90,000 with the previous two years being 73,000 and 63,000. Ms. Varnum asked if money can be moved around since money won't be spent as much on travel and reduced trainings and outreach events to cover equipment costs. Ms. Little answered that money can be moved around in the operational category if some categories are underspent and funds are needed in other categories.

Ms. Little presented the projected budget as follows:

Administrative and staff	\$254,543
Other services	\$35,000
Relay services, traditional	\$50,000
Relay services, CapTel,	\$228,310
Outreach,	\$158,231
Supplies	\$12,500
Distribution equipment (Teltex)	\$90,000
Communications,	\$10,000
Travel	\$10,685
Rent/utilities	\$45,000
Repairs/maintenance	\$8,000
Other expenses and equipment	<u>\$10,000</u>
Total	\$912,269

Barbara Varnum made a motion to approve the proposed budget and John Pavao seconded. Motion carried.

**The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.**