UNEDITED REALTIME TRANSCRIPT

**Governor’s Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay**

**Board Meeting**

Held via

Zoom

October 16, 2020

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

*CART CAPTIONING PROVIDED BY:*

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**Governor’s Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay**

**Board Meeting**

**October 16, 2020**

**GABTR BOARD MEMBERS:**

Alfred Sonnenstrahl, Chair

Jason Corning

Allysa Dittmar

Betty Dodds

Ben Jackson

Deirdre Cheek Lynch

Lori Markland

Shannon Minnick

Alex Simmons

Darrin Smith

**HAMILTON STAFF:**

Rebecca Miller

Jenny Pearson

Tarita Turner

**TAM STAFF:**

David Bahar, Director

Donna Broadway-Callaman

Travis Dougherty

Latricia Lee

Kevin Steffy

**ASL INTERPRETERS:**

Anne Leahy

Anna Rose

David Sabala

**DEAF INTERPRETERS:**

Bradley Christlieb

Stephan Kennedy

**CART CAPTIONER:**

Natalie Ennis

**GABTR Meeting**

**October 16, 2020**

**9:00 a.m.**

TRAVIS: All right. I will start to let other folks in. One moment.

All right. Let's go ahead and open the meeting.

AL: We can't start without David.

TRAVIS: Well, we can do the roll call.

AL: I'll wait for David.

TRAVIS: Fair enough.

I'm placing a call to David now.

He's going to be joining us any minute, Al. I've gotten confirmation. So we can go ahead and begin, Al.

Just to clarify, let me reiterate the rules for running this GABTR meeting. We have a real-time captions link set for you. We also have Certified Deaf Interpreters, and we have hearing interpreters as well.

We're going to turn off our videos if we're not on. Thank you very much, Alex.

I'm going to ask everyone to turn off their videos and mute if they're not speaking, and come up if you have something to say. Use the hand-raising tool and we'll call on you. I'll keep an eye on that.

In addition, I'll be monitoring Facebook. If there are any incoming messages or questions, I will move them into this meeting and share them.

I'm going to spotlight the Certified Deaf Interpreters. When they spell one another, I'm going to ask everyone to go to gallery view after I have spotlighted the incoming interpreter. So that will take a little bit of logistics on your part, and that's just to accommodate one of our board members who is deaf and blind.

I think that about covers the ground rules that we have operated under thus far.

Al, I'm going to turn the time to you.

AL: Sure. I have a technical question.

TRAVIS: Go ahead.

AL: For Travis, I just want to clarify: The spotlight is on the signer?

TRAVIS: No. I'm sorry. We can't have any signers spotlighted because the backgrounds might not be amenable. Like for example the background behind you doesn't really work in a plain and contrasted way. So our board member who is deaf and blind is going to have access only to the CDI, who will be copy signing everyone. So unfortunately, the signer themselves won't be foregrounded.

AL: So the CDI will be copy signing for me as well?

TRAVIS: Correct. The CDI will reiterate anything that is signed, just to clarify it visually for our board member.

AL: Okay. So I see two interpreters on the screen. David and --

TRAVIS: Correct. The hearing interpreter will interpret anything that he hears that is voiced.

AL: If he's voicing, he doesn't need to be on the screen.

TRAVIS: No, if there is a voice, he is signing. He could certainly pop out unless a hearing person says something audibly and then he could pop back in. That does make essentials. Thank you for that.

AL: Just for the sake of real estate. Those who are signing would stay on the screen. Anybody who is going to be -- okay. Great.

TRAVIS: David has joined us, Al.

AL: Fantastic. Let's get started.

Good morning, everyone. I'm Al Sonnenstrahl. I am still acting Chair of the committee.

Before we go ahead and get started, can everyone see my shirt? I just want to draw attention to that real quick.

So vote!

Hello. Good morning, John. We're keeping everybody's cameras off who is not speaking just to preserve real estate, John. So thank you.

Okay. Can everybody see? Everybody can see the CDI clearly? I certainly hope.

Okay. Everybody hearing everything? Captioner okay?

All right. Fantastic.

We'll get started with roll call.

Alex Simmons, are you here? I guess you can either bring up your screen or...

All right. Good morning, Alex.

Allysa Dittmar, are you here? Your screen is black, Allysa.

Okay. She is here.

Ben Jackson. All right, Ben. Great.

Betty Dodds. Betty is here. Okay. I see that she's here. Fantastic.

Darrin Smith. Darrin, great. Fantastic.

Deirdre Lynch? Are you here? Doesn't look like she's on yet. Okay.

Jason Corning. Good morning, Jason.

Ken Putkovich? Is Ken here? Betty? Ken and Betty are usually together.

Okay. Seems Ken is not here.

Okay. Then we'll just move on down the list.

Lori Markland? Lori, are you here? Okay. So Lori is here.

TRAVIS: There are some people who are having video issues.

AL: I'm just following along with the captions, so when you type, it overlays the captions.

TRAVIS: Fair enough.

AL: Okay. And last one, Shannon Minnick.

SHANNON: I'm here.

AL: Okay. Great.

Now, before we proceed, I do want to remind everybody that those people who are using the chat box, please send chats directly to Travis if you're in need of something to a private chat, if you're having technical issues. That way we can continue to read the captions clearly. When you chat to everybody, it covers the captions and we're not able to read those. So thank you.

TRAVIS: Sonny, my suggestion would be to pop the chat out, to not allow it to be within the window itself. Pop it out to the side. If you are on a full screen or if you are minimized slightly, it doesn't have to overlay the captions. You can change the formatting of the screen.

AL: Okay. I thought I did that, and it's still covering the captions.

TRAVIS: Right. If you go to full screen, if you expand, maximize the size of the screen, then you can pop it out to a side panel. I have -- I agree, I've done that in the past. So if you maximize your screen, put the chat along a side panel on the right side of the screen, you should be good to go and nothing will get covered up.

INTERPRETER: Travis, if you will take care of the spotlighting piece for us, we are switching out the CDIs.

TRAVIS: Once again, now that I have respotlighted an interpreter, on the upper right corner, you need to switch to gallery view. Just make sure that you're set in gallery view. Thank you.

Al, you had a question? I'm sorry, I missed it.

AL: I was just asking about the pop out of the chat. How exactly do I do that?

TRAVIS: So don't be in full screen mode. Be just in regular mode. Click on the chat. And then it should pop right in and stay right where it is. It should be within your -- it's not going to be a separate window popped out, so to speak, but a panel within the same browser window.

AL: Oh, look at that.

Okay. Now I go back to full screen, right?

TRAVIS: If you go back to full screen, it will disappear.

AL: Okay. Well, then, that does impact the size of everything.

TRAVIS: It does indeed. So it's your choice. You could have a larger screen or you could have the chat popped out to the side.

AL: Okay. Give me one second. Bear with me, everyone.

Okay. Moving along on our agenda. Approval of the minutes from our July 16th board meeting. Any changes or corrections to our minutes of our July meeting? Any comments?

Hearing none, we will move to pass those minutes. Going once... Going twice...

Okay. Minutes passed and approved. No objections.

Okay. If none, then we'll move on to our staff report. I would like to introduce David Bahar.

DAVID: Good morning, everyone.

TRAVIS: We have attached the PowerPoints that you can download and watch separately during the meeting.

DAVID: All right. Hi, everybody. I'm David Bahar, Director of TAM.

For the quarterly report, I want to first introduce our new MAT specialist who just joined the team a couple of weeks ago. I would like to introduce Latricia Lee. She's from the Maryland Department on Disabilities. Hello, Latricia.

She formerly worked on the PROMISE grant, a program for the Department of Disabilities. Now that she's finished, she is coming under our auspice for six months, so we have a lot of process with her. She's working with Kevin, etc. There are a couple of other positions still vacant.

We are searching for people to fill those roles: Admin assistant for the front desk, handling incoming calls, managing email, etc. And a financial manager, who would be processing the POs and all of the invoices and working on the budget.

If anybody knows of anybody that might be a good fit for either of these roles, please contact TAM for more information.

The next slide is our financial update. At the last meeting in April, we did review all of these financials. And now for FY20, we have some updated numbers for the end of the year. Previously we only went through the May numbers. Now we can see the full set of numbers for fiscal year 20.

We have a little less than we had last year, but we have some reasons behind that which we will go through. Before I continue, I will give everybody a few seconds to look at these financials.

AL: How would we see those on the screen? Are you going to share the PowerPoint?

DAVID: You should have a PDF for the presentation, the slides. Can you bring them up separately?

AL: Have you shared it?

DAVID: You'll have to have your PDF along the side of your Zoom window.

TRAVIS: Okay. So just to clarify, the PowerPoint slides were emailed to all of the board members. We cannot share them on the screen right now due to the logistics with the CDI, same as in the last board meeting.

AL: So I thought they were already on the screen. They're not. We have to open them separately?

TRAVIS: Correct.

AL: Okay. That's fine. That's fine.

DAVID: For the benefit of folks that don't have the PDF in front, I can go ahead and just announce some of these numbers. Fiscal year 19, we could start with the 13 million we started with in the USTF. Fiscal year 19, we broke even, ending the year about, if I'm doing my math right, $25,000 less than we had. The 13.9 million.

Fiscal year 20, the end of year balance, we have 14.2 million. So a slight increase of about 300,000. And we'll explain why that increase is there. We broke even and then we had an increase, but we can see more why on the next slide.

Let's go ahead. Slide 5. USTF update. We had some projections. One of the huge costs here in the USTF is covering right now is the senior call check program. So we have put projections here based on historical growth from 2019, '20, and '21 years respectively. And we're going through 2026 with those projections. So you can see how this is going to be impacting the USTF going forward.

First, in 2019, there was a typo. That should say 58,000. So for 2019, it's $58,663 for the senior call check program costs. And for FY20 which just ended for the senior call check program, it's 302,000, which is an increase of about 500%. Quite significant.

And then looking at 2021, in the current year budget it's 416,900, which is 104% increase over what we had the previous year. So the program is growing quickly, and our projections, assuming an average annual increase of 150%. That's an assumption.

The next year should be about 620,000. And you can see these numbers on the screen.

Now to the sixth slide. This provides a chart for the projected balances in the USTF fund. It is a line graph. We see that the decrease in the fund is significant over the years. We're looking at this trend very closely, to make sure that our expenditures are on track and those expenditures are reasonable. I know several people here probably have some questions, but I'm going to hold those questions until the end, just because it's easier to work that out with the Zoom platform.

The next slide, slide 7, is our GABTR updates. We have some updates with the recent bill that was passed to transition TAM from Maryland Department of Disabilities -- sorry -- DoIT, from Department of IT, to Department of Disabilities. We have a few new board positions established, one being the GABTR board member who will represent GABTR on the Maryland Commission on Disabilities, and that person will be Darrin Smith. He was appointed by the Chair, Al Sonnenstrahl. So I believe that the first meeting happened yesterday.

The second position is the Maryland Commission on Disabilities is sending somebody, a representative, to GABTR, and that representative will be Benjamin Jackson. Hopefully everybody will get to meet everybody. Hopefully we can get the cameras on so people can see them.

Ben, can you bring up your camera real quick?

Hi there, Ben.

Ben has been an attorney at the Disability Rights in Maryland for the past 3 years, providing legal representation for people who receive social security. So if there are any barriers to employment, to voting policies, he works on removing those barriers for people with disabilities.

Ben previously was a leadership fellow, working on policy at the Association of University Centers on Disabilities. He has a JD degree from Pennsylvania State University, graduating in 2014, and he's on the Maryland Bar Association.

So I just want to officially welcome Ben to the committee. It's wonderful to have you representing here and supporting our work. I appreciate your willingness to do so.

All right. The third slide that I'm looking at is the member of the Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing who will be serving on GABTR. That position has not been appointed, and we hope to have some updates in future meetings.

That concludes my report, and now I will receive questions.

Seeing no questions or comments now, I'll turn off my camera and get ready for the staff report.

TRAVIS: Excellent. I just wanted to make sure we didn't have any questions for David?

AL: I do have a question. So I was perusing the report, and I do have some concerns about the senior call check program and the projected growth to the potential $300 million in 2026. Can you define the role that we have in that program? Has that been improved at all? My understanding is that they have not included us in previous years, and if we have been included, it's been on a very limited basis. Could you update us on that, please?

DAVID: Yes. So what role does GABTR have in this. Well, in the law, the senior call check program was written by regulation. The Maryland department on aging wrote that regulation. For other parts like Maryland Relay and MAT, GABTR is supposed to advise that part of it, and we create agreements with Maryland Department of Aging. But senior call check really was under the auspice of the Maryland Department of Aging only. They designed this program, they designed the regulation for it, meaning GABTR is able to provide some counsel to MDOD, to TAM, on how we run the programs. They can advise on the use of the USTF fund.

But the second question that you had in terms of communication is very crucial, I agree. But the senior call check bill, once that was passed, it was put into Maryland law and it said that Department of Aging shall give us estimated budget numbers, just so we can make sure that we have that funding ready for that senior call check program. So it is important that we set aside the money, but some of the budget we are unable to project. So that's a problem. But senior call check, the managers and the Secretary Kramer, we have had communication, but they have emphasized in sharing the budget needs going forward, we need to adjust our budget in accordance with their advice. So we do need to make a commitment to share more information going forward, and they have committed to that also. So we're going to hold them to that on an annual basis. At least that is what our expectation should be.

AL: So my concern is more about the programming side of things. It's my understanding that the senior call check program is not compatible with relay, and I feel like it must be compatible.

I also feel like we should not give them one red cent until they make the program fully compatible with relay services. So what exactly is the process in terms of that piece?

DAVID: Unfortunately, we have no legal authority to take any of that money to support relay services unfortunately. But we have been working with the department on aging for testing relay equipment, for testing devices, for example the iWatch, the Apple Watch, to make sure that the senior calls can go to an Apple Watch. They're willing to test those kinds of pilot exercises with us.

For somebody who uses relay service and they apply for the senior call check program, they do have to put down whether they're Deaf or hard of hearing and that they use relay. If they don't do that, then those auto calls are not going to work through relay and it creates problems. The relay operator will pick up the message and hear the last two words of that message, of the auto call, and then hang up. So this is the issue that we have not yet solved.

The vendor for senior call check program, for example, for Maryland Relay, our vendor is Hamilton. They do the call centers and they provide agents. Well, their vendor for senior call check, their auto calls don't go through relay. It doesn't work. So we're starting some kind of process on making that happen, working on meetings with the vendor to discuss some options, how we can make that technology work and how we can make it more accessible for relay service, because right now people have to put down whether they're relay users, but it shouldn't be. It should be equitable for everybody regardless of what service they use, they should receive the auto calls equally. So we're trying to work with them to meet that goal.

Okay. This is David. We're going to switch interpreters.

TRAVIS: Yes, let me do the spotlight first, and then we can get you on, Darrin, for your comment.

At this stage, I would like to ask everyone to switch to gallery view, and I will turn the floor to Darrin for his question. He was next in the queue. And then Alex to follow. Thank you.

DARRIN: All righty. This is Darrin. Can everyone see me all right? Okay. I just wanted to make sure my lighting was right.

With the budget projections for the next couple of years, I think we said there were some concerns. Personally, my concern is such that paying for a program that we have no control over. Secondly, what exactly does the budget justify paying for the operations of a program, for example, paying for the majority of staff salaries. I mean, I have lingering concerns about the sort of break down, the itemized break down of what exactly we're paying for.

So that's my concern. I just wanted to make sure we're not shelling out for a bunch of stuff that we didn't know what the details were under the hood, and I wonder also if TAM would be able to go back to the table where it does kind of itemize or give a little bit more of a breakdown of the 3 million. And I think that maybe we're in a posture of decline at this stage fiscally.

So I just want to make sure the charges for USTF is not going to change and SCC is going to be increasing. I think that the law indicates that SCC is not going to be able to go over 18 cents, in which case I would have some concerns about the drop off in the coming 6 years of the 3 million. And I think that based on that projection, that schedule, there might be 10-15 years out we're going to be out of money.

I'm wondering if there's any justification for that expenditure in the program. That's where my concerns are, David.

DAVID: Darrin, that's a good question. For the USTF trust fund and SCC, the relationship there, the trust fund currently is under what is the current law. It's managed by the Secretary of MDOD, Secretary Beatty. And technically TAM runs it. But the official responsibility is under Secretary Beatty.

The secretary is well aware that it's crucial to look at these costs and projections. We're looking at the declining balance, and we might end up having to increase the rate. Right now it's 5 cents per account. It could go up to 6-7 cents to cover the increased costs.

Now, we do have to recognize that the law allows the senior call check program to use up to 5 cents per account, and that's technically 100% of the universal trust fund. So that is something that we see as an issue and we need to address in the future. So we do recognize that the issue exists, and at some point in the future, we will have to take action. However, we do believe that it's difficult to change the law. The law is already there. The program is established and running. So we are trying to work on how to make it accessible, the program that is, and how to give us access to the budget break down. For example, different invoices, information on where those expenditures are going. We have been having some conversations, and we are seeing these costs increasing. But it doesn't mean that the program isn't any good and that we should take it away.

To your other question, the concern of the decline in USTF over time puts pressure on the financials, and it's a significant issue for us. TAM also has programs that are costing more and more going forward. And Travis will give us a little bit more information on the remote conference captioning program.

But we also see the bill covers the deafblind CF, communication facilitator, program. So we're trying to balance the issues out. We're trying to make it sustainable without significant change. So the question is, can we manage that growth that we see, can we manage it better with the 150% increases annually, for example? That's quite an increase. Our programs are, what is it, 300 million in just a few years. That's a significant growth. But is it compatible with the growth in relay and the growth with the deafblind CF program? So it will impact our management of the USTF, but we feel that the political environment is supportive of us to increase the USTF. Again, for example, from 5 cents possibly higher. So we have that in mind.

And I hope that answers Darrin's questions.

I know we have another question. Alex, I believe had a question, if you want to come up.

ALEX: Yes. Hi. Can everybody see me?

Hello, everyone. So I have a similar question to what Darrin just voiced. Now, I'm wondering if there's any possibility at all to maybe propose -- how do I say -- to find a different funding source for the senior call check program. Maybe propose a rewrite to the law. I don't know if that's a possibility. But just proposing, exploring a different funding source so that we can keep our program safe and the USTF safe. Is that a possibility, David?

DAVID: Yes, that is a possibility. To my knowledge, we haven't had a discussion to that end, but it's a possibility and it's something I think worth checking into. For community members, you should check into it. It's the community who decides. If it's important enough to assume that responsibility and go forward on it:

ALEX: Maybe we should bring that up as something to discuss at the next meeting.

Okay. Thank you very much.

DAVID: No problem, Alex.

Now I guess I'll turn it over to the floor.

AL: Stay there for just a second, if you don't mind, David.

Really I'm not as concerned about the funding piece. Reason being, for political purposes, I guess is the best way to put it. We're talking about the surcharge now of 5 cents, and if we don't have that senior call check program, there wouldn't necessarily be that same need to increase the surcharge. We may have more difficulty convincing the government and the Governor to allow that increase to happen. With the senior call check program as it is, I think we might have an easier time getting that increase, because I think people will be more sensitive to the need of senior citizens, they recognize the need for that program, and I actually think it's to our advantage to keep the program within our system.

That being said, again, I'm more concerned about the compatibility of those robo calls with our relay system. I think that we need to make sure that it's completely accessible. Again, in compliance with the ADA and the federal law and the federal statutes. To this day, I don't believe that it is accessible. I don't believe it's completely compatible. And I don't feel like it's aligned with the ADA. So what is happening right there now? We have to make those things legal. And I feel that we should I guess put a little more pressure on this issue is the best way to put it, to make sure that it is compatible and that senior call check is compatible with relay and that everybody has equal access. I mean, I'm a senior citizen myself. And if I'm alone -- I mean, I'm fine, but what if. There's always those what ifs. What if I were to fall and I was alone and I needed help and nobody is checking in on me and this program doesn't meet my needs? It's scary. It's scary to imagine what could possibly happen to some of the other senior citizens in a more fragile position than I am. It's scary. And we still don't have that within the program, and that program has been in place for several years and it's still not accessible.

So I think the time is now to address that. And how can we help you to make this work? How can we help you? What kind of recommendations can we make? Do we need to respond in a specific way to the Department of Aging? Do we need to respond in a more strenuous way, more serious to kind of make this move with a little bit more momentum? What do you suggest?

DAVID: There are two parts I think to this comment. You're talking about the political benefit of keeping the senior call check program under the USTF because we have more allies there. And if we need to increase the rate from 5 cents up, we have different groups of consumers and people who have similar interests. So we have mutual support with them.

I agree that is a very crucial benefit.

It's also important, secondly, to make the program accessible. You know, my goal is to make sure with their vendor that runs the call center, you know, I have to make sure that we have direct contact with the people who use relay, for example, who have TTYs, who are making direct calls without an agent involved, also making sure that the systems that are being used recognize relay numbers so that they function. And on the application form, whether or not you put down you're a relay user, there should be a way to recognize that proactively so that those calls, those robo calls aren't cut off right in the middle and are rendered ineffective. So I do want to establish a meeting with the senior call check manager to have this discussion more fully, but their perspective is on the application, when you put down you're a relay user, it sends you to a different call list, which is some kind of a manual process where people are sitting there making calls and it's not through the robo call. That's kind of their perspective. And I think it's separate but equal, that kind of issue. My goal is to make everything absolutely equitable. If hearing people are getting direct calls, it should be the same for our community.

So this is our goal with the senior call check program, and I encourage everybody to also set up your own meetings with the senior call check program manager, to better inform them of your desire as a Deaf senior citizen. How do you want to experience their service that they're providing? Explain to them how it could get better. Because right now I think we have some misunderstanding that relay callers are experiencing the same as everybody else, but we are experiencing major differences. So I think we just need to voice those opinions and voice that feedback.

AL: So in the past, if it was a relay call, you had to be in a specific room, like for example next to the VP in order to answer the phone directly. While hearing people have the luxury of being able to hear it from anywhere within their house and answer it from anywhere within the house. So for myself, I would have to rush over to where the VP was. And that doesn't equate to equal access to me.

Now, you mentioned earlier about the Apple Watch and the compatibility with that and whether it worked with their systems, so on and so forth.

I think maybe Kevin should get involved in working to make that system more compatible. For example, if a person has an Apple Watch, do they get an alert, or if they have a life alert that they wear, body worn something or other along those lines, do those things interface. I believe we need to work collaboratively, and is this something that the contractor would be willing to do and give us a report on what their plans are and maybe have that ready for the next meeting to explain what their vision is and what the efforts they are doing to work with us. I think they need to show us some effort, you know, that they're willing to work with the Deaf senior citizens in the state of Maryland. Is that possible?

INTERPRETER: We're going to do a quick interpreter switch.

TRAVIS: If I could have everyone click gallery view on the top right of your screen, please. Thank you.

DAVID: Just to answer really quickly, because then we have to move over to Travis for his updates. Mr. Eppel recently went to GABTR in the January 2020 meeting. We can ask him to come again to explain the process of improving the accessibility of the program. We can share some ideas. I think GABTR should go ahead and send a letter of invitation to the next meeting.

AL: So Eppel from the Department of Aging? I'm not speaking of that person. I'm speaking about the vendor, the company providing those robo calls. The contractor. Having them come and explain the technology, so on and so forth. Thank you.

If you're finished then, should we move on to Travis' report?

DAVID: I am done.

AL: Thank you so much, David.

Travis?

TRAVIS: Hello, everyone. Again, a very good morning to you.

All right. I'm going to pull up my slides so that I can show you the RCC chart for remote conference captioning. This is what it looks like, as you see, this very steep upward trend. You see the growth we've seen since March of this year. We inked a contract in March and we were trying to work out the logistics behind it, the way we would promote it and the rules that would be set in place for it. And we had a focus group for remote conference captioning, RCC, and we realized that there were any number of issues that we needed to address before we could do that focus group. So we put the focus group on pause, did some other work to improve the services. And I will certainly talk about that on the coming slides. And I can talk about what led to that and the precipitous growth that you saw in it.

In July I gave a presentation to Deaf in Government. They have a webinar series, and they invited Maryland Relay to participate. So I did so, and it was a wonderful result. There were several folks who contacted me directly for further information. I was able to share that with Deaf in Government, and they also got the word out to their folks. They are called of course DIG. We're using that Zoom account for that organization because we continue to struggle to get our own. But hopefully that will be resolved sooner rather than later. But I just wanted to give them a shoutout for that.

At that workshop event where I presented, it was very successful because it engaged folks about the sunset service that we have for Deaf people, and they were not sure that you could get captions in that instance. But through that outreach effort, you saw the increase in the number of minutes being used for that and other events availing of that service. So as the outreach coordinator, I wanted to make sure and get a slide in my presentation and put the word out for RCC. And the word did indeed get out. In May, we had 10 minutes. In June, we had 550 minutes. In July 5,000 minutes. So you saw that really steep increase. In August, we had 3,000 odd minutes more. And we noticed that more and more people were contacting us about that particular program and functionality.

And in the next slide, I can talk a little bit about the kinds of functionality and features that will be improved in that program. Firstly, you'll be able to download the text of the captions. In the past, that feature was not available, but now we've enabled it. If you fill out a request form, you can now attach documents such as the meeting agenda, such as a participant list, keywords, a glossary of some kind for the captioner to prepare with in their dictionary. So that is part of the contract now.

Also, captioners are expected to report 5 minutes prior to the beginning of a meeting so that all of the logistics and audio issues can be worked out rather than showing up at the actual meeting time on the dot and maybe having logistical hiccup and missing some of the content in the beginning of the meeting.

Also captioners are going to be able to embed the text directly into the video platform such as you see is going in Zoom right now. So we're going to be able to provide that service.

So as it stands, after we wrap this meeting, I have a meeting with the legal and contractual folks to really finalize a lot of that. So that's really right after we wrap, I'm going to head over there, make sure that is signed, sealed, and delivered to Hamilton. And in less than a week's time, all those changes will be in place. And certainly maybe in the coming week or two, we'll be good to go.

I'm hopeful that next month all of this will be resolved. It's a bit of a tall ask to have it done by next week, but that is my goal.

Also, we will see an increase in the rate from $3.75 to $3.94. And we are training CART writers and captioners in the way to embed the text into the platforms and all those other logistics. And we have a list of platforms that they are compatible with, working alongside. And as we publish out that list, I will share it with you so that you can also when you have web conferences, you can embed captions on those as well. It's a very exciting time.

I would entertain any questions at this time before moving on to RTT.

I see Al has a question.

AL: Yes, I do. Would this also be compatible with podcasts? Does there have to be a phone line involved? Could it go through a computer line?

TRAVIS: Just by way of clarification, it is my understanding that, and correct me if I'm wrong please, Melissa, you have to have a phone number. You have to have a high-quality audio line. That is about it.

For a podcast, you know what? I'm not entirely sure. If it is a live podcast, then no. If it's not live, I don't know. I don't think so. But if it is indeed live, then yes, for sure, you would.

You know what, that's kind of where I'm trying to figure out and evaluate different kinds of logistical situations. If there's an audio link, maybe there's a website to a livestreamed event, for example, some people post YouTube Live events, is that something that we would provide RCC for? That remains to be seen. I think we have to bear in mind that the focus groups are coming up, and once we lay the groundwork, we will be able to talk about the legal vagaries, maybe what is right, what is wrong, etc., and maybe we'll have to figure that out in a next step.

I don't know, Al. We've not really come across every possible situation, and as we test, I would love to see your evaluations as well.

AL: The reason why I'm asking is because there are webinars, webcasts, things that come out occasionally, that are live and they're not captioned. So I'm just kind of wondering, how, whether we could make these compatible with RCC.

TRAVIS: So for public events, not by invitation only, but for public events, that should not pose a problem. If it's a live event, if Al Sonnenstrahl as a resident of Maryland was requesting services, absolutely, that should be covered with RCC. We have to bear in mind you need two things: High quality audio and a telephone number. That high-quality audio could be a link. If so, certainly it is possible. Once again, I don't know logistically how that would work, how you would find the audio link. I mean, we have to experiment with that. And that is a great question. I'm going to make a note of it.

AL: Okay. Could you speak to the procedure for getting this done? Like for example, if I see something advertised, who do I call? How do I set that up? Do I need to contact the person providing the conference? Or what happens?

TRAVIS: Let me talk about two possible scenarios for making a request. One of which is a public event. You would make a request, pass along the information to a CART provider, and you're off to the races. You don't really have any other dealings with them. You would just have it in and of yourself. You could of course share it with other residents, but really as a Maryland resident, this is being provided for your benefit. Whether or not anyone else avails of it as a piggyback, that's up to you.

Also as a resident, you could contact the host if it is a private event and say, well, in this situation, I'm going to need RCC. You could come to some agreement and coordinate the request such as a report time 15 minutes prior to the event, getting access to the space for everyone to be able to pass along logistical information.

Once your CART writer gets in, the RCC web page will be a separate site and you will have a chat direct capability with that CART writer to kind of run interference between you and the host and everyone else. There are layers of challenges, I will concede.

AL: Okay, so to clarify, I would have to contact the producer of the program to set up RCC or do it on the web? How does that work?

TRAVIS: I guess where you're coming from with that question. I would prefer that you would initiate the request as the individual requesting needing the services. All the other contact would be in the role of coordination. If you would hook the provider up with the host. That does create an extra step of work for you, to be sure, but that's how you get access to the event, to the webinar.

Does that answer your question, Al?

AL: Okay. So I would ask the producer of the program to contact whom? Contact you? Me? Who am I reaching out to to get RCC?

TRAVIS: There will be a web page. There will be a web form where you make an RCC request. On that form, you, Al Sonnenstrahl, as the Deaf person who is initiating that request to get the services receives the information. You share that information with the host, hook them in to the process. The host will, in turn, make sure that that CART provider has access to the event. So it is upon you to make that request. And as Melissa just shared a link -- oh, she shared it with me. I'm going to reshare the link to everyone else.

Thank you, Melissa, for sharing it with the entire room.

So that link will also be shared on Facebook after we wrap, after my report wraps, excuse me, so make sure that you have that.

That's how it works, Al. Does that answer your question?

AL: Okay. So there's a link that I need to go to. Okay. Thank you for the clarification. That's what I was looking for, where to actually make that ask. Gotcha. Okay. Thank you.

TRAVIS: There is, indeed, and you'll see the link in the chat. I'll send it to everyone. It was on the RCC flier about 2 months ago, but let me send you a copy of that so you can see it and you can share it with all of your address book to get RCC underway.

AL: I think it would be fabulous if we could develop a one pager of the procedures. Just kind of outlying all the logistical things so that people know the process for reaching out and setting up RCC.

Does that conclude your report?

TRAVIS: Agreed, it does not conclude my report, but just want to make sure that we're all good with RCC. If there are any further questions, I'll entertain them at this time.

Seeing none, let's move on to RTT. New exciting things in that universe.

All righty. There's a whole lot afoot in the RTT world. It was germinating for a while, and it has truly just exploded. It's very exciting. We have just actually added a new RTT outreach coordinator. That is Rebecca Miller. And I'm pleased to have her, if she would like to pop in. A great addition to our team, Rebecca. Thank you for doing that.

All right. So as we've been meeting for the last 3 months now, we've been facing some challenges with RTT in terms of PSAPs, calling 911, making sure that that works, making sure that the carrier issues are worked out, etc., making sure that the technology is ready. There's a whole host of challenges that we are facing as we bring RTT relay to the state of Maryland and to a national level as well.

So as we have kind of assessed those challenges, we know that the state of Maryland is the first state to offer RTT relay services. As we kind of navigate that brave new world, there are some large accomplishments that we have to brag about. In the last maybe month or two, in the state of Maryland we have been able to text-to-911. I don't know if you were aware of that. That means that we are at the NG911 platform phase. We have upgraded in order to handle that. And we have to make sure that the entire state can do so, because RTT needs to be included in that capability as well. So we met with the director of the PSAPs in Baltimore, and we had a discussion, and, indeed, we can confirm that is the case. It's quite interesting. The reason that the state of Maryland is 100% accessible for E-911 is because it would have been -- I could be wrong with that, but it would have been 27 primary PSAP 911 call centers in the state, and there was a network of 40 plus secondary PSAP call centers who would have served smaller areas. Those 27, they are operating with NG911. The secondary, the 40, however, are not. So what will happen is, those secondary ones will automatically route to one of the 27 primary PSAPs to be able to handle an NG911 call that comes in.

Jason has a question. I'll give the floor to him at this time.

JASON: You were just talking about the announcement in Maryland about text-to-911 being ready to go. I'm wondering, since we had been discussing this in the past, were law enforcement on board at these meetings? Was the school for the deaf on board to talk about this, etc.? And were tests conducted? Is there any possibility for those to be done as well with our board members so that we could get in there, see how calls are made, maybe even be in an advisory role to make sure if they do it in the right way, that we can iron out any kinks at the outset?

TRAVIS: Excellent question, Jason. That is certainly where we're headed. And we do plan to run some tests. We just frankly need to figure out the right way to offer RTT services and E-911. Well, actually E-911 text-to-911. There are a couple of mission critical facets of this, materials, education, outreach, etc., to the public as well as internal education to PSAPs. Those are the two audiences that really need to get up to speed. Absolutely. We are still underway, figuring out those kinks that you referenced, and as we continue to manage RTT calls, making sure they go directly to an operator and get a relay connection. There's going to be audio and text but not video as yet. It's experiencing some barriers. But we just need to make sure that the audio and text are ready to go, getting you in touch with an operator. Unfortunately video is not yet a capability with those call centers due to security and firewall reasons. If you send something with a virus to a PSAP, you're going to tank the whole system. So we can't afford to put our emergency response system at that level of risk, so we have yet to figure out a solution for that.

Interpreter switch. One moment. As a reminder, if I could have everyone switch to gallery view.

Jason's question is from the perspective of a deafblind person -- oh, let me make sure everyone on this call is switched to gallery view before you proceed, Jason.

JASON: I would like to be involved with the testing, you know, doing some of the video or doing some kind of involvement or explaining different perspectives from a deafblind point of view. I would like to be involved in that process. Can somebody be involved so that a format for a deafblind person could be included?

TRAVIS: I think that would be fabulous, Jason. Let's just get it worked out. I completely agree with you. Let's just get it worked out.

I'll carry on with my presentation. So we've seen that in the state of Maryland there's a huge support for this. Also there are issues with the carriers. I've been working closely with folks on those carrier issues, and I would rather call in David to talk at a more granular level about what's going on there, some of the limitations that we have faced. And I'll call on David to talk about that, if you could rejoin us, David. I'll have you talk about the issues with the carriers if you're here. David, I was just going to ask you to pop in for a bit because the carrier issues is a whole laundry list. If you could indulge me in talking through those.

DAVID: Thank you, Travis.

For some people who are not familiar with RTT, it is an IP-based system, to replace the old TTY technology. The TTY technology is based on analogue phone lines. It's a slower process and slower exchange. It's unidirectional. So RTT, with the newer technology, is IP-based, internet-based, so we have much greater speeds. So conversations can happen almost simultaneously.

It does not work well when you're trying to go from TTY to RTT. You'll see some errors come through. You'll see some chatterings and noise, so that creates complications with turn taking. In sum, it should be compatible with TTY, but in reality, there are some limitations. It's not ideal.

Now, the FCC passed an order a while ago that said if carriers out there cannot support TTYs on an IP line because of the garbled messages and the unclear signal, then you can switch it out for RTT or ought to switch it out for RTT.

This order became effective fall 2017, a few years ago. So carriers did agree to be in compliance, but we do recognize that they need some support. For example, with 711, 911, it can't be a toll free 1-800 number or hearing carryover TTY numbers. Basically those toll-free numbers that are called the 8YY numbers generally speaking, those toll-free numbers, some carriers find that they can't support RTT on those toll-free numbers. That's what they have found. So it's been a challenge for everybody, and many of our relay services are under those 800 toll free kinds of numbers.

So while we're having those conversations now with the carriers on how to get around this problem on how we can provide those RTT services. Some of the big carriers like Verizon, AT&T, are one issue, but we also have other smaller carriers. And I think the biggest of them is probably Cellular One. They're the cheaper, lower cost carrier. And they're more local. So with those smaller carriers like Cellular One and others of those ilk, they can get a waiver for this RTT rule. And I think it's this December 31, 2020, at the end of this year. After that, they say they have problems with RTT and supporting their systems, they're still having problems, they're fixing it. They still said that. So the carriers obviously, you know, are still working on their networks and working on the infrastructure.

So to answer Travis' question, I hope that sums it up.

TRAVIS: It does pretty much. So the challenges remain.

That being said, I'll turn any carrier questions over to the floor, if there's anyone else who has another question with respect to carriers. I'll give it a minute.

All right. Seeing none, let's proceed.

The next issue will be the coalition of RTT relay. And there are some things stewing in me about dealing with all the issues with carriers and all the things that we've faced. And I think that we need other states to be involved. So I have invited them to do so, and several have consented to be involved.

The chair and the vice chair of the NASRA, National Association of State Relay Administrators, are a couple of people with whom I have already met about RTT relay and the impending expansion and general lack of readiness and dragging of feet in getting underway.

I'm wondering if other states are having similar issues, and they indicated that there are. Some states have technology on board and they're good to go. There are some states who don't even have NG911 or E-911 yet. So the level of infrastructure varies from state to state. Maybe there's a way to access it but there's not an app to access it. The because we are porting over to RTT from TTYs, that's coming next year, it's impending, in 2021. So I think that it was high time that everyone got together to strategize.

So I did meet with the NASRA folks, and we talked out these issues and we decided that it's on the part of education within the states to get folks involved, because a lot of the states simply don't know what's happening at all. So we have some webinars for RTT in mind. We're still coming to an agreement for holding two, specifically the third week of January, being the 21st. Also the first week of February. So stay tuned. We'll be inviting ODHH folks from all over the U.S., from state offices, state associations, we're inviting TEDPA, NASRA, any number of stakeholders to the table to talk about RTT and where we are and where we're headed.

And that concludes my report. I'll entertain any questions at this time.

Seeing none, I'll turn it back over to you, Al.

AL: All right. Kevin should be next. Thank you, Travis.

KEVIN: Hello, everyone, good morning. Before I get started with my report, I want to introduce our new specialist again, Latricia Lee. David already introduced her to the group at large, but I just wanted to say a special thank you to David and to John Brennan, who is with us today, just for working coordinating bringing Latricia on board to contract to work with me.

Since the state hiring freeze, I've had a lot more responsibility, and it's nice to be able to delegate some of that now to Latricia. She's a fantastic person to work with, and I'm really enjoying having her on board since October 1st.

So moving right along to my slides. Our report is of course related to the MAT program. Since first quarter, July-September 2020, we have received 78 new applications. In addition to that, we have distributed 35 pieces of equipment in total. 95 pieces of equipment have gone out telecommunication related. Now, that is a 35-piece of equipment increase from last quarter, just to clarify. And of course with COVID, we saw some slow down but now we're seeing gains in equipment going out.

Our evaluators are doing evaluations, reevaluations, troubleshooting, training, and the like remotely, again, due to the current pandemic. Now, even though the state of Maryland is currently operating in what's called phase 3, we are very concerned about the health of both our clientele and evaluators. The so health and safety is paramount until we have better measures in place such as a vaccine. So we will continue to operate remotely.

However, there are instances where supporting our clients remotely is not possible, and as a last resort, we do go and serve those clients face-to-face. However, we make sure we have all the proper procedures to remain safe in place, 6 feet of social distance, for example, the proper PPE, for example, hand sanitizer and the like.

I've been in conversations with a few of our equipment vendors for a variety of reasons, and come to find out it's very interesting that in the state of Maryland, we are one of the only state equipment distribution programs, one of the very few states whose equipment distribution programs are still operating. The majority of states out there have tabled and closed those programs due to COVID. Or they've been suspended on a state level due to funding. Maryland's is still operating in an alternate format, so I think that's something we should celebrate.

Moving on to our next slide. You can see the equipment break down here in terms of how many pieces were distributed, of what kind. Again, this is July-September, 2020's break down. I'll give everybody a few seconds to read over that.

The next slide shows a breakdown county by county of which counties have received equipment from us, again, July-September of 2020. I'll give you a few seconds to peruse that slide.

Moving on to the next slide, this shows the fiscal year total of distribution. So from July-September, you see first quarter and second quarter are basically the same. The next GABTR meeting, you will see that increase in our fiscal year number totals.

Moving right along, the next slide speaks to the focus groups. So we had received a good number of volunteers and interest participating in our focus groups. We were planning to host seven different groups, and we had a variety of interest for each. Some were full, some had a waiting list, some had a few who were interested. However, as it got closer, we were planning on hosting those in September, we're still operating during a pandemic and a lot of the volunteers backed out and expressed concerns about possibly being exposed to COVID. And we totally understand that. We have ordered PPE and sanitizer, and we explained that we were going to proceed with caution, with those cautions in place, but of course a lot of our volunteers are part of those vulnerable populations and have different health concerns such as cancer and the like, and we understood that.

So I had a conversation with the evaluator team and we decided it would be best to transition to a webinar format for our focus groups, so not doing them in person. Now we are currently working on developing those webinars, again, for each of those seven focus groups for different pieces of equipment that we would like each group to test or at least to look at. We're hoping to have that rolled out by the end of the year if at all possible.

We are also working with Devaney, who will help us develop the webinar materials and videos we will be showing, different collateral, polls and surveys, that will take place during those webinars. So we're working with Devaney on that.

Next slide. We have been hosting trainings for our TAM team and evaluator team. One in particular is called the Nest Hub Max. And the other piece of equipment is the S10. These are both new devices that are going to replace the Lenovo, which is no longer being manufactured by the company anymore. So the Nest Hub Max and the S10; which is developed by Samsung, will be replacing that Lenovo technology. So we just completed training on both of those pieces of equipment.

Now, the next siting piece I want to speak to is our MAT application. Donna, our outreach manager, and I have been working very collaboratively on revising the MAT application. It is not finished yet, but we're making great headway, partnering with Devaney on that. I'll give you a sneak peek here of what it looks like.

There's a few final revisions that need to be done, but we feel it should be ready to be sent out very, very soon, in the coming future, hopefully, again, by the end of the year as well. I'm very much looking forward to that.

Now, my next and last slide is -- one second. We're going to switch out our interpreters. I'll pause for a moment for that.

Okay. We have a new point of contact for the senior call check program. Her name is Susanne Forno. Arnold Eppel is no longer our point of contact with senior call check. He is still working with the senior call check program, however, the person that we will be interfacing with going forward is Susanne Forno. So if you have any concerns or anything that you want to discuss related to the senior call check program, that's who you will want to reach out to in the Department of Aging.

At the previous meeting, I don't know if you remember, Al had mentioned should we do some testing of the iWatch, the smart watch, and I took that feedback. I had a meeting with Arnold as well as with Susanne, and I mentioned maybe doing some testing of the iWatch. They agreed to that. They asked for volunteers, so I was able to find two Deaf volunteers, one from the Frederick area and one from the Columbia area. We passed on their VP information to the senior call check program. We mentioned that they needed to use a live manual caller and not the robo callers, because, again, these were Deaf individuals.

I reached out to both of those individuals to find out how the testing went, and they reported that they did not receive any senior call check calls. So I again reached out to them, we tried it at different times throughout the day, I passed on the preferred time that they would be available to the senior call check program to make sure they didn't miss the call, and unfortunately they reported not receiving any calls from the senior call check.

So then of course is the investigation of why isn't this working with the smart watch.

Come to find out the senior call check person did not use a live person. They used the robo calls, and we reiterated again, you have to use a live person with them. And their response was make sure the two individuals put down on the form that they are relay individuals. So I went back to the two individuals and told them it was up to them if they wanted to register or not.

Since then I haven't done any follow up with that. But that's where we stand with the Apple Watch testing.

That concludes my report. I'll entertain any questions at this time.

AL: Thank you, Kevin. I'm still not quite happy with where we are with the vendor contracts. I simply don't think they are complying with the ADA as it is written and I'm not happy with it. I'm wondering, how long have we had a contract with SCC? How many years have we had that?

KEVIN: A few years.

AL: Maybe David would know. David, do you know the answer to that question? Certainly there was plenty of time, adequate for them to work on this, and I didn't think that they needed any more time. So I think this is serious, and it's important that the vendor would give a report to this body at our next session in February, if I'm not mistaken.

KEVIN: Like David mentioned, we can ask them to have a meeting with us again to bring them into the next GABTR, and I agree, also the vendors as well.

AL: Yes, the vendors, not the Department of Aging representative, but the vendor themselves. The Aging rep wouldn't have any visibility on what the vendors would have to say. If they do meet, I would like to be included in that meeting.

KEVIN: Absolutely.

One moment, John, while we pop your interpreter in.

JOHN: Hi, this is John. I have a question about the registration process. Does anybody know if when you go through setting up an account with the senior call check in program, whether or not you have to answer yes or no as to if you are a relay user or not? Or is it just something where you can self-identify if you choose to? The reason I'm asking is I'm just wondering if that's an optional question as opposed to a required question in order to complete the application process. I'm just wondering how many, trying to get a sense as to whether or not there are relay users who potentially didn't self-identify when they filled out the application. Thank you.

KEVIN: That's certainly something we need to keep in mind. Really David has been doing the primary meetings with SCC, more so than myself. I've been involved more on the testing equipment and devices side of things, just making sure the equipment is accessible in terms of application and so forth and so on. David could speak to that better.

JOHN: Also, I think Al actually is a participant and filled out the application. Do you remember, Al, if it was -- if you just had the option to check whether or not you were a relay user, or was it a mandatory yes/no answer?

AL: Yes, I did fill it out. I indicated that I was Deaf. I did not receive any calls. And then after a while, I responded again, and come to realize they didn't have it marked that I was Deaf. So again, I tried to make a personal call and I basically had to be, as I mentioned before, sitting in my office right next to my video phone at the exact time, 10:00, in order to answer their call. If I wasn't in the room at that moment, then the call would go through the operator, or my girlfriend is coming and telling me I've got a call and I'm running to the VP, and by the time I get there, I've missed it at that point. And then they call the third contact person, because she's the second person, if they weren't able to get ahold of me. It's unnecessary confusion. If my call isn't received, they start calling my backup people.

KEVIN: I believe Al filled out the older registration form. At that time, there wasn't any place to put down whether you used a video phone, a TTY, or a caption phone. On the newer registration form, they do have that, so that helps to differentiate whether you're getting a robocall or live call.

AL: Exactly. In the past, they put the TTY information without exception. But we don't have TTYs anymore. So I needed to make a note that they call us through VRS, call me through VRS, so it caused some confusion. And I think the issue, John, is that with my set up, there's a video phone here in my office, just the one. And I live in a townhouse. So the kitchen, the living room are on the first floor, and my office is on the second floor. We have to run up and down the stairs to answer a phone call. And it's, I would say, more of a hassle to do so. While hearing people can simply have an extension or a cell phone or something nearby where they are physically standing or located. And I certainly wish that the iPhone that is with me could work that way, but it doesn't.

So that's kind of where we're at. That's how it works. And I think the vendors should sit down and hash out these issues which apply to Deaf people and how they live their lives, how they use the equipment, making sure that there is a level of compatibility putting the equipment with the person in the right place, rather than forcing someone to go zipping all over the house to try to answer the phone. And I think that people certainly can answer a phone anywhere in the world. Someone like you could do so.

KEVIN: If I may, Al, I believe that if you are using a video phone and you use the video phone app on your iPhone, that should work as well. I've done some testing with that in the past, and it should go through via the app.

That being said, I do want to test the smart watch, because some Deaf individuals aren't carrying around their smartphones on their person all the time. That watch is how they get indicators. So that's how they're answering things. Either the VP or the smartphone, they're utilizing that watch.

AL: Yeah, the smart watch is with me 24/7. I even sleep with it.

KEVIN: It's very much the equivalent of that life alert. People are using it in the same capacity now. So it should function similarly.

ALEX: Hi there. I just wanted to respond to Al. You know, the concern about different floors, running around the house. If you do ask Sorenson, they can connect your iPhone, the app in your iPhone, so that those calls will go simultaneously to the VP and your app. So for what it's worth, I'm hoping that will help with those logistics.

And Purple --

AL: I do have, that Alex. I do.

ALEX: Purple VRS added the app also to your phone for 911, etc. So that kind of helps the functional equivalency per se. Just putting that out there.

AL: I do have that, Alex. But the thing is, it's not like -- it's like Kevin mentioned. I'm not carrying a larger piece of equipment with me all over the place. It's just a watch. The watch would be lovely. That would be really cool.

KEVIN: Hi, Jason. Go ahead.

JASON: I just wanted to add to that comment. Convo also allows you to sign in to your phone, your tablet, your computer, anywhere, so you don't have to add another phone number or another customer line or something like that and do all of that work. So Convo allows you to sign in to any device simultaneously. So you should be able to receive calls on all those devices.

KEVIN: True.

Also, if you remember, the FCC was working on ensuring the use of one number regardless of which VP company you were using, be it Sorenson or whatever the case may be, having that one number that goes across each company. So it should work regardless of what company you're using if the number is the same.

TRAVIS: If I could ask everyone, I'm just popping in right now to identify yourselves so that the interpreters can identify who is speaking. If I could just ask everyone to do so. Everyone is guilty of not doing so. So don't worry. This is not in any way about you, Jason.

Jason, we'll have you ask your question and then turn it over to Donna because time is wasting. Thank you.

We'll switch interpreters now. And then Donna will come in for your portion.

DONNA: Good morning, everyone. How are you doing today?

So my name is Donna. I am the outreach manager for Maryland Relay.

Updates, outreach update is we have successfully transitioned into the Maryland Department on Disabilities. And with that we are working with the communication director for DOD, John Brennan, and a few others from the state to transfer our website in a platform from the DoIT platform to the DOD platform, and we're changing a few other things we're using to distribute our PR items such as the delivery. As Travis stated earlier, we have also added a full-time RTT coordinator, Rebecca Miller, and part of her task will be going to PSAP centers and training on text-to-911. The text-to-911 program. And then other protocols related to taking 711 calls and calls from the Deaf or hard of hearing.

We are currently going through rebranding with new logos and program materials. And Hamilton has been selected. That will be in the upcoming newsletter.

As you may know, we are not doing in-person events, and we will not be doing in-person events at least for the duration of the year. And the idea is that we're not going to be doing in-person events at least until all the restrictions are lifted. So even though we are in stage 3, the Governor still has a few restrictions, like the amount of people that could be at events. So until all the restrictions are lifted, we are not doing in-person events.

So how are we staying connected during COVID-19? We're doing advertising, webinars, we're doing virtual events, mailings. We are updating our Maryland Relay partner program. We're networking and we are making new contacts.

And so, upcoming, we have our 2020 newsletter that has been mailed. There's a bit of a delay. Since we were working on rebranding, we had to transition a few things that were under the Department of Information Technology to the Department of Disabilities, and we are going to start working on our winter 2020/2021 newsletter in November, and one of the things we will be doing is welcoming Rebecca in an upcoming newsletter. We will be promoting that text-to-911 is available in the state of Maryland, and then we will also be informing people that the MAT focus groups were delayed due to COVID-19 and they are being held virtually and in person, and we will be sharing more information about that.

And in addition to our virtual presentations and networking, here are a few fall events that our outreach coordinators will be attending. Like I said, we will not be doing any in-person events until Governor Hogan has lifted all restrictions, but we are going to be attending the PG Senior Provider Network, the Howard County emergency services, the Maryland Library Association, Walk4Hearing, Maryland Nurses Associations, NARFE, the Maryland Communication Action Partnership, and then we'll be promoting training and education. And then we will also be promoting the next GABTR meeting which is in January.

So that is pretty much it for me. Do you guys have any questions?

TRAVIS: Any questions or comments for Donna at this time?

All right. Seeing none, Al, I will defer to you as the Chair. Is it now time to take our 10-minute break?

AL: Yes. It's 10:50. Let's come back together at 11:00.

TRAVIS: Yes, we'll see everyone on the hour. Thanks to everyone. Enjoy your break.

[Break]

TRAVIS: Hello, everyone. Travis speaking. Just getting our CDIs set up and spotlighted.

I will ask everyone at this time to go to the upper right-hand corner and switch to gallery view on your window.

All right. All right. I will ask Jenny to give her presentation first. You have the floor, Jenny.

JENNY: Good morning, everybody. I am Jenny Pearson. I am the caption telephone outreach coordinator, and I'm here to tell you what we've been up to in the last couple of months. So we have done 13 webinars, 12 meetings, and 18 networking events, which has led to other opportunities coming up in the next couple of months. At this point, I am going to turn it over to Tarita to give her report.

TARITA: Good morning, everyone. My name is Tarita Turner. I am the TRS outreach coordinator, and as you know, every year Hamilton Relay sponsors several community award programs. The latest one was DAW, the Deaf Community Leadership Award. This award really shines a spotlight on the Deaf community and Deaf Marylanders who are doing amazing things in this tiny little state of ours. We are small but we are mighty. The Deaf community, we are jam packed with amazingness in this state.

We could only pick one. It is my great pleasure to announce that we picked Dr. Michelle Morales. I am working with her right now to schedule a virtual award ceremony. Be on the lookout for those posts that will be on Facebook.

On the heels of that amazing announcement, I have another one. You've heard her name a couple of times. You know, Maryland has always been a dynamic duo. You've had a TRS person and a caption telephone person, and we are so lucky and fortunate to announce that we have added an RTT outreach coordinator as well. Her name is Rebecca Miller. You've heard it a couple of times. I am going to turn it over to her so that she can introduce herself.

Take it away, Rebecca.

REBECCA: Hi, everyone. My name is Rebecca Miller. I am starting as the RTT coordinator. I'm so excited for this opportunity. I was with Hamilton about 9 years ago doing outreach in a role for CapTel for Maryland, so I'm excited to be back with Maryland Relay. And there's so much opportunity with RTT, and I'm excited to take that opportunity on.

TRAVIS: All right. If there's any questions in response to Hamilton's report, we will entertain them at this time.

All right. Seeing none, Al, I will turn the floor over to you to introduce the next item on the agenda.

AL: It's going to be the GABTR report, it looks like. We've finished with the Hamilton reports. Did we do the GABTR reports? We're moving right along. Let me see.

Has everybody had a chance to read the Hamilton reports? Travis shared those out to the members of the board a few days ago:

TRAVIS: I did indeed.

AL: Has everybody had the opportunity to read those? Any questions related to those Hamilton reports from members of the committee?

TRAVIS: I'll confirm that there are no questions from anyone. We're good. All looks good with the reports. Thank you to everyone for doing that.

AL: Okay. Thank you for that.

Next agenda item, it looks like my report.

I've already shared my concerns about the senior call check program. I've also let you know that Darrin Smith is going to be our GABTR representative on the Maryland Department of Disabilities Commission on Disabilities. So he'll be sharing his report forthcoming.

Other than that, there's nothing else from me. I'll turn things over to Darrin.

DARRIN: Hello. So yesterday was the first meeting for the MCOD, the Maryland Commission on Disabilities. It was very interesting. They did cover a lot of information, and I took down copious notes. And they talked about everything happening since the last 7 months. They did have a statewide disability plan, which looked at a bunch of disability proposals, different objectives, goals. And I think that should be approved either today or perhaps Monday.

This is going to Secretary Beatty for approval, all those objectives and goals. And then it will be made available to the public.

I think it's a great fit for us, this group, to be involved with. There's a variety in the constituency. And secondly, I agree with Al that there are concerns with the senior call check program. The idea that we're paying for something that we, first of all, have no oversight or management of. Just a little policy advisement. So basically we're paying for something without additional information. So I would like more information on this. As a community member, I think we should ask for a legislative audit. Maybe we could have some time to adjust the law to make sure that we have more of a voice in the operations and funding decisions for this program.

We have the budget projections for the next 6 years which we just looked at and I'm alarmed to see the USTF declining. So if this continues to be an issue, we're going to have to be more involved, more aggressive. And community members really need to voice their concerns and ask for a legislative audit on this, because we know looking forward this money could be gone. So we need to figure out some solutions.

That concludes my report.

AL: Okay. This is Al here. I'm going through the list basically alphabetically to see if any committee member has a report. Please let me know if you do.

Alex?

Allysa?

Ben?

BEN: I don't have a report for this quarter's meeting.

AL: Thank you, Ben.

Betty?

Deirdre?

DEIRDRE: Good morning. I don't have a report for this quarter as well. Thank you, everyone.

AL: Thank you.

Jason?

Ken? I don't believe he's here.

Lori?

LORI: No report for me either. Thank you.

AL: Shannon?

Okay. At this point, then, that brings us to public input. I don't know if we can do that online. Travis?

TRAVIS: Al, I've checked all of the incoming ways for the public to contact us, and there have been no questions or comments.

AL: Okay. Should we then make a motion to -- oh, Darrin, go ahead.

DARRIN: If I may, I just wanted to -- I don't know how I should phrase this. I wanted to move that we conduct a legislative audit, but I don't know how to phrase it appropriately and clearly.

I move that we discuss the possibility of investigating a legislative audit for the senior call check program.

AL: I mean, I completely understand your concerns. Do we need to maybe get involved with legislation? Or how exactly do you see that happening? Maybe the first step should be to suggest -- I mean, I believe in taking baby steps. That's my philosophy before we jump to taking any drastic measures, I guess, or drastic moves.

So my feeling is that we should maybe come together, as we discussed earlier in the meeting, and possibly get a little more involved with the Department of Aging, with those individuals, maybe have a conversation or a meeting with those vendors, come together at the table and have a more in-depth discussion and see where we are and what efforts are being made to ensure, as we've mentioned, that Deaf people have full access to those senior call check services. So that would be my suggestion in terms of baby steps, and maybe doing that before the next GABTR meeting. How do you feel about that, Darrin?

DARRIN: To be quite honest with you, Al, I think that we have given them more than adequate time and we've tried to have them involved in terms of coming out to meetings. I think I remember instances where they did maybe -- well, they came once and gave us a very brief presentation on their program. And when we have asked them repeatedly in the past for their involvement, we were met with that response. And it is an ongoing source of frustration. Certainly I want our minutes to reflect that we have attempted to work with them, and it seems to have found no purchase.

So I think that if we are expected to pay with no participation, frankly, I'm at that point now where I just am at odds with what to do.

AL: Okay. I understand how you feel. Let's see how John Brennan feels. What are your thoughts, John?

JOHN: Thank you, Al. This is John.

I just wanted to suggest that possibly you might do both at the same time, just because the timing of everything and with the session coming up, if you -- if members of this group or the community at large wanted to try to get the legislators to look at this, then I think you're going to have to approach individual legislators within your respective districts. So I guess all I'm saying is to keep that timing in mind, and that maybe you continue to pursue both tracks.

Maybe in the meantime, if you continue to invite Aging to participate and maybe they make another presentation and we are able to actually meet with the vendors, some type of accessibility solution can be put in place, or we can make headway to the point where maybe you don't feel, the group may not feel that a legislative audit is necessary. But that way it doesn't -- you're not tied to either approach. It gives you some flexibility. So it's really just not advocating either way for one. Just suggesting that maybe how to look at it.

JASON: This is Jason speaking. I wanted to make mention that ODHH, certainly the board there have been talking about this issue with some other government agencies, similarly so. Not necessarily interfacing as much as we would like. It's an ongoing struggle to get intergovernmental participation with ODHH. When they meet, it's a source of quite a bit of discussion in the recent week or two. And I don't want you to feel that you are alone in this. It is an ongoing effort that we have to encourage collaboration. In my term with ODHH here in Maryland, we certainly still have this on our plate, and I think it would be appropriate for not GABTR but ODHH to undertake leadership on that particular front.

AL: For clarification, MACDHH. Could you clarify what that is?

JASON: The Maryland Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. By what other name would it be known?

AL: Oh, the Maryland Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing under the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Thank you for the clarification.

We're going to switch interpreters.

TRAVIS: I want to remind everyone as I switch and spotlight the next Deaf interpreter, that you switch to gallery view.

AL: Okay. So it's clear that GABTR has some responsibility for the funding for that system. However, our direct involvement, we can't back out and let another agency take over the USTF, if I'm understanding you correctly. So I think what John Brennan suggested is that we do both, we do a two-prong approach and have it be a two-prong effort. On one side of things, we do go ahead and move forward with calling for a meeting with those vendors and with DOA, the Department of Aging, to have that discussion; and simultaneously, we can maybe draft a letter and send that on to various legislators stating that we need to be more heavily involved, something along those lines. And we can work on the details of that after this meeting.

TRAVIS: I will call David to pop on his video as he has some remarks that he wanted to make.

DAVID: Hi, everyone. This is David. So I just want to add that for any one of you who wants to learn more about the senior call check issues, what we've been working on so far, what work has been done, what conversations have been taking place, what planning has been done, we're more than happy to include you as board members. We certainly want you to feel invited to the table.

I think it's important that you have full access to all the information so that you have the opportunity to make the most empowered decision as possible in terms of how to advocate for our program. So just please, let me know. My door is always open. Thank you.

AL: Thank you, David.

Can we have a consensus as a board to move forward in a two-prong approach, as I mentioned, and set up a meeting with the Department of Aging alongside the vendors who are providing the senior call check program, either vendor or vendors? And at the same time, can we have a discussion about legislation through possibly the department legislative group or legal group. Any concerns? Any comments? Should we move forward in that direction?

I see a chat from Ben saying he is in support of that.

And I'll turn things over to Darrin who has a comment. I concede the screen to Darrin. We no longer have a floor...

DARRIN: I would like to object to this dual approach. I think the question is, if we invite Department of Aging to meet with the vendors and they don't come to the table, then what? Because we've asked them repeatedly to come to our meetings, again and again, and we still don't get any participation. Not that I can recall at least during my tenure, at least the last three times. And I've been on this committee for almost three years. So I am wondering, if they don't participate, if they don't show up to the meeting, then what do we do? Suggestions?

AL: I would like to request David to come on and join this meeting.

DAVID: I can give you a bit of a back story. I would like to add a disclaimer, however, that this will be limited to my own personal experience as the director. I don't know what happened prior to my tenure with Brenda Kelly-Frey or anyone else. But this pretty much incorporates my tenure here.

It was August of 2019 when I invited the secretary to our GABTR meeting to present about the programs for our benefit. The secretary was unable to make it. That was fall of 2019. Again, they were invited and again they couldn't make it. I think it happened to be a Jewish holiday. That's more than understandable. Mr. Eppel was invited to attend the subsequent meeting, January 2020, which he did, and he did give us the presentation that was referenced. At that time we were able to ask our questions about the level of accessibility in that program and why relay users were held to a different standard in terms of the criteria.

So they were not invited again to another GABTR session. But we have held interim meetings on a staff to staff basis and interagency basis, and certainly for the most part, they have been amenable to listen and to conduct tests with Kevin. And I think that where the source of disconnect or conflict might have originated from is a belief that maybe checking a box on an application form was adequate. But it does not absolve the SCC program from making their program, services, technologies accessible to all citizens. So that could mean, for example, the use of a telephone contact would present one way that accessibility would be decreased. Would it cost a different level of expense to some seniors. It shouldn't be another expense for people if they use the relay. So we have been in disagreement about that particular item, just a check box on a form, providing them the accountability that it needs to be.

AL: Darrin, do you have any other comments?

DARRIN: Thanks for the clarification. Yes, thank you, David.

So again, I'm not against this two-path solution. I'm just putting myself in the shoes of a senior, because the department seems to do the bare minimum for what we're paying for, and we're paying for something that we have no involvement in. So I'm just putting myself in that position and having some kind of concern. With the increase in charging, the budget is increasing, what did we say, 150% annually? So I just really think we need to have more of a serious discussion. I mean, it seems like we have no choice but to pay for this, to keep being involved, but we are paying for something that we have no direct involvement in. Something that is not our program. And I still want to have on the record that the members of the board, we need to make clear that concern, that we want more serious discussions in the coming six years before the fund gets depleted. We definitely don't want that to happen because our programs rely on that funding as well. So I think we need to have a more serious discussion on how we can continue being involved, because with the USTF, I'm just worried about what we're going to do, because we are at the point of realizing, oh, jeez, you know, the community is now concerned and some of their concerns prior to the transfer seem that they were warranted because now we have concerns about the USTF. So we need to do something before that funding goes away. That is my two cents, Al.

AL: Okay. I think we're going to move forward with that two-pronged effort. Any objections now that we've had a chance for discussion?

Going once... Going twice...

Okay. It seems the committee is in consensus. No objections. We will move forward with that.

Anything else for the good of the order?

TRAVIS: I would like to make an announcement with respect to, if we're at that point on the agenda, I should say...

Okay. If there are any further announcements, I would like to also let the board members know that there are some terms coming to an end. We have to find some new recruits. Al and Kevin mentioned the necessity for replacements. Jason's term will be expiring and we'll need another appointee to represent the commission after Jason leaves us. Or it could be that he will renew a term.

Jason, do you plan to stand again, or are you going to leave with the expiration of your term?

DARRIN: Actually, one moment, Travis. My reappointment I think has expired. I sent that to you with my MCOD application.

TRAVIS: Excellent. Thank you for clarifying your role in that. You're not the only one. There are several folks whose terms are expiring. So we just need to make sure that everyone has membership in good standing.

Jason Corning, one more time, if you're still with us...

I'll turn the floor over to you, David.

DAVID: So currently all of the board members who are waiting for reappointment, as Darrin just mentioned, their applications have already been received with the exception of one board member. We're still waiting for their application, and I'll be reaching out to them offline about that. We still have three vacancies, three seats that need to be filled. One is for the speech disabled community representative; one is for the senior citizen community representative; and one is for a Deaf and hard of hearing community representative. So if anybody knows of anybody that you believe might be a good fit for the board, please encourage them to apply and join. Thank you.

TRAVIS: We're going to switch our CDIs. Just a moment.

AL: Okay. I would like to ask in terms of procedures, for a person to apply. Is it still a form? And where can they get that form? If we could have some clarification. And where does that form get sent to and so forth and so on.

David, if you could speak to that, please.

TRAVIS: I don't know if I can give a full answer, but I can give an answer. On the website, there should be a form that one fills out. Darrin, can you clarify or explain that procedure to us, walk us through it, if you're still with me?

DARRIN: Yes. So if you go to the govappointments.maryland.gov, there's an application. You click on applications and it should give you -- what's it called in there? People who work for the state of Maryland, you know, you have conflict of interest so you have to sign a certain waiver, a certain kind of form, especially with certain private entities, if you have a conflict of interest, there's financial disclosures, etc. So you need to send those in. And you have to send the application to the coordinating office too. They are the ones that are responsible for pursuing the appointments. And David is responsible for the GABTR coordination, maintaining that list.

But the website is govappointments.maryland.gov.

AL: Thank you, Darrin.

Now, David, is it possible for you to, how do I say, have maybe, is Donna the right person? Would she be responsible? She's responsible for the newsletter. To maybe announce those vacancies in the newsletter and an abbreviated explanation for the procedure of how to apply? David, is that something we could make happen?

TRAVIS: Go ahead.

DAVID: I'll let Donna take this one.

DONNA: So yes, I can reach out to Devaney and ask them to advertise those vacancies in our upcoming newsletter. I can also ask them to advertise them online with our social media platform, Facebook or Twitter. That will come out a lot quicker. But the newsletter is not supposed to come out until probably January. So if we start working on it in November, it will problem come out January-February. But yes, I can ask Devaney to advertise that.

AL: Donna, is it possible that could be posted on Facebook? I think I saw that yesterday. Also move forward with the newsletter. And actually, while we're on that subject, could you, Donna, include the application procedures as well? And not only the application procedures for that, but also the application procedure for RCC. Remember, I had to get some clarification from Travis on that. So would it be possible to also publish how to go about getting RCC set up, you know, maybe doing that, something I don't have to remember verbatim, so putting that in the newsletter as well, how to apply for RCC as well as how to apply for the vacancies. Thank you, Donna, if that would be possible.

DONNA: Yes. I'm taking notes on that. Yeah, I don't see why we can't put all these things in the newsletter.

AL: Thank you.

TRAVIS: All righty. At this time, I want to call Jason Corning back, if I now have your attention, Jason.

Our question for you, Jason, was with respect to your term expiring from the commission. Do you plan to stand for renewal or --

JASON: Nope, I've already served my two terms, and I'm done.

TRAVIS: Okay. So you're timed out, as it were. Maybe Alex has expressed interest in representing GABTR on MACDHH. The representative on MACDHH has to be from the GABTR board.

JASON: Okay. It can, but I guess it's not necessary.

AL: If I could jump in real quickly. I think there's a little bit of confusion. Go ahead, Jason.

JASON: So I was on MACDHH board as a deafblind member, not a representative of GABTR. I happened to just be on both boards. It was just a coincidence.

So here's an idea. We could have a new person, we could have Eddie as a new deafblind representative on the commission, the MACDHH.

TRAVIS: I would love it if you would make that introduction to me. Thank you, yes.

JASON: I will connect you with this other person. There's a lot of Deaf people on that board.

AL: Travis, this is Al. I just want to clarify, we're talking about two different individuals. So Jason is not the GABTR representative on the advisory council. He is representing deafblind constituents and he is suggesting replacing himself with Eddie.

Now we have to pick someone for our GABTR council to be on the advisory council for Deaf and hard of hearing. That's a separate issue. So aside from Eddie replacing Jason, it looks like Alex has expressed interest in being the GABTR representative on MACDHH, so just for point of clarification for everybody. Thank you.

TRAVIS: I guess that takes care of that. Thank you to everyone for the discussion.

AL: Jason, you had something else?

JASON: Alex, you can contact me after this meeting. I can introduce you to the chairperson and we can go from there.

AL: Alex, are you still there?

TRAVIS: He just sent me a message 3 minutes ago. There he is!

JASON: I was just saying, contact me after the meeting today, and we can figure out how to introduce you with MACDHH.

ALEX: Can do. Put it to me in the chat, if you would, Jason, and then I can email you and we can connect after this meeting, all right?

JASON: Sounds good.

ALEX: Awesome. Thanks.

AL: All right. Thank you.

Travis, anything additional?

TRAVIS: That's all from my end. Thank you, everyone.

AL: All right. This is Al. Don't forget to vote on November 3rd. Public service announcement. Again, gentle reminder. Everybody get it? My shirt says vote: Removes stubborn orange stains. Everybody get it? You see what I did there.

Okay. Seeing nothing else from anyone, all right. Thank you, everybody. We very much appreciate your time today. And that concludes the meeting at 11:43. Everybody please stay well and be safe.

JASON: I wanted to thank my interpreter team.

DAVID: Thank you to our wonderful service providers, all of our interpreters and our captioner and everyone. Thank you so much. Kudos to all.