



Telecommunications Relay Service Council of Maine

*John Post, Chair
Benjamin Frech, Executive Director*

160 Capitol Street, Suite 4 Augusta ME 04330



Quarterly Meeting Minutes

June 6, 2025

9:30 AM EST - 11:30 AM EST

Governor Baxter School for the Deaf (Cafeteria)

1 Mackworth Island

Falmouth, ME 04105

Welcome & Introductions

Present: John Post, Chair (Maine Association for the Deaf); Riley Albair (Disability Rights Maine); Michael Johnson (Maine Public Utilities Commission); Terry Morrell (Director of the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened); Megan Garrity (Maine Educational Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing); Sylvia Most (Maine Office of the Public Advocate); Jessica Perez (Maine Connectivity Authority); Simon Thorne (Consolidated Communications).

Absent: Eric Conrad (Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened).

Also in attendance: Allison LaBrie (Hamilton Relay); Andrew Brenneman (T-Mobile); Mary Beth Mothersell (T-Mobile).

Call to Order (Benjamin Frech) at 9:45

Review of the Minutes of the Council Meeting – March 6, 2024

Terry requested his job title be corrected in the March minutes.

Motion to accept the minutes by Michael Johnson, seconded by Megan Garrity. Unanimous (w/ Jessica Perez abstaining).

Public Comment re: Council Remote Meeting Policy (3 min limit per person)

No members of the public in attendance. Ben explained background regarding in-person meeting process and guidelines.

Motion to Approve Remote Meeting Policy by Michael Johnson, seconded by Sylvia Most. Unanimous.

Council discussion regarding communication and distribution of Council materials. Council is satisfied with current system and process and Council members are appreciative of Ben's efforts to keep Council members informed.

Reports from Officers

- Report from John Post, Council Chair
No report, echoed appreciation for Ben's work.

Other Reports:

- Maine Public Utilities Commission (Michael Johnson)



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No report.

- Office of the Public Advocate (Sylvia Most)
Sylvia had no report specific to the OPA, but did highlight a piece of legislation (LD 1975), that may have an indirect impact on the Council. The bill was carried over to the next legislative session and the Council will continue to monitor.
- Maine Connectivity Authority (Jessica Perez)
Jessica explained MCA's funding comes from the Federal level and the impact of the Trump Administration's termination of the Digital Equity Act funding, \$35M of which was for Maine. MCA exploring legal options. Funding for the BEAD program also in question, \$272M for Maine on hold.
Simon echoed that Consolidated was also facing challenges w/ the BEAD program.
- Disability Rights Maine (Riley Albair)
Riley highlighted spring Outreach events (detailed in Outreach report, which was distributed prior to the meeting), DRM's busiest Outreach time of the year. Riley also detailed the different kinds of conversations DRM has with people in the community who have questions about relay equipment and services.
*Also discussed training at Gray/New Gloucester high school. Megan added that the program said training was a part of was not funded past this year. Megan went on to discuss the benefits of the program and that it's unique in the State. **The Council discussed the importance of the program and is interested in writing a letter in support of the program addressed to the district's school board.** Megan and Riley also discussed partnering for Outreach events going forward. John echoed the importance of education regarding similar programs and Council continued to discuss.*
- T-Mobile Relay Communications (Mary Beth Mothersell, Senior Customer Relations Manager for Maine Relay)
Mary Beth echoed praise for DRM Outreach efforts. Updating marketing materials and providing Ben with updated services information for the Council's website.
FCC Complaint Log Reprt due July 1 (Ben asked for confirmation).
Call volume: TTY is 77%. VCO is 11%. And voice is 12%.
- Hamilton Relay/CapTel (Allison LaBrie)
Allison walked the Council through Hamilton's quarterly usage report (detailed in Outreach report, which was distributed prior to the meeting). Michael clarified the low number of users recently and the Council discussed the analog to digital transition. The Council requested any information Hamilton could disclose about the remaining CapTel users (location, frequency of repeat users, etc.).

Old Business:

- Council Approval of updated Council By-laws



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Ben provided the final by-laws which included input from Council members and comments from the Maine Attorney General's Office. Ponce approved, the by-laws will be updated on the Council's website.

Motion to approve updated Council (approving future changes if necessary to adhere to State law) by-laws by Terry Morrell, seconded by Michael Johnson. Unanimous.

- Website Update (Ben, Michael, & Riley)

Ben provided an update on the website update's progress, the timeline provided by InforMe, and the updated information, links, and documents that will be uploaded. The Council will ensure updated information is available on 211.

- Formation of subcommittee to discuss future of CapTel Services

The Council continued discussion following approval vote at March meeting. There hadn't been any progress due to not having enough members to form a subcommittee. Riley suggested adding Lisa Penney from the deaf services team at DRM if there was still a shortage of interested Council members. Simon also volunteered to serve on the subcommittee.

Michael stressed that the Council needs to discover if these users simply favor the CapTel service or if there are other issues forcing them to remain with analog CapTel (internet access). Michael went on to discuss the challenges of getting the contact information for these folks and the FCC regulations protecting that data.

Megan and Terry added that they appreciated Lisa's perspective and expertise being on the subcommittee and Ben suggested Lisa be invited to the September Council meeting.

New Business:

- Outreach RFP Update

Ben highlighted the challenges getting the Outreach RFP and as a result, the need for a short extension of the Outreach contract w/ DRM (approved by Procurement and DAFS).

Motion to extend the Outreach contract with Disability Rights Maine through 10/31/2025 (four months) by Michael Johnson, seconded by Terry Morrell. Unanimous (w/ Riley Albair abstaining).

- Discounted Internet Legislation/Pilot Project (not discussed at previous meeting)

Ben introduced the issue, acknowledging the challenges regarding funding for internet expansion discussed earlier in the meeting and cautioned the Council to follow statute closely if the Council chooses to pursue participation in any pilot project.

Jessica happy to discuss and assist, but needs a specific scope. Suggested connecting to the work of the CapTel subcommittee.

Discussion around Affordable Connectivity Program (federal, now defunct) and the discounted TTY program at the state level (70% discount, will confirm dept).

Michael echoed the need for data, per earlier discussion.



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Council discussed possible avenues. John brought up an RFP from 2018, Ben asked for clarity around obtaining the data through a PUC inquiry. Michael and Terry suggested a survey to go out to the community for information regarding which services are being used. Some follow up conversation regarding information presented during GEA review. Allison then informed the Council that her supervisors had approved the release of certain user info, to be shared with the Council via a secure server. Council will share data from Hamilton and survey data w/ CTS Subcommittee and then plan next steps.

- **Budget Request to PUC Discussion & Approval**

Ben discussed budget process and input from DAFS when drafting the Council's budget request, which is due to the PUC on or before June 30 each year. Ben then explained where certain budget items differed from the previous fiscal year.

John asked about the Executive Director line item and Ben explained the Executive Director's contract is renewed on January 1 each year. Jessica supported John's inclination to plan for a slight increase in the staffing line for cost of living increase and/or merit increases.

Ben continued to explain the details of the budget document. Council agreed to a slight increase in meeting costs due to more frequent meetings in person and Ben continued to discuss logistics.

Michael provided some background on how the \$600,000 budget limit was decided and discussed the PUC's involvement in the process and that he will be abstaining.

John asked a clarifying question about how the Interpreting/CART (now meeting costs) was reached. Ben confirmed that he went back through a year of invoices and used the total. John suggested increasing that number slightly for the next fiscal year.

Further discussion followed.

Motion to request \$360,000 in quarterly installments of \$90,000 in the annual budget request to the Public Utilities Commission by Terry Morrell, seconded by Simon Thorne. Unanimous (w/ Michael Johnson abstaining).

Next Meeting: September 5, 2025

Adjourn

Motion to adjourn at 11:30 by Michael Johnson, seconded by Riley Albair. Unanimous.