

November 7, 2023.

DAIL Subcommittee on Captioning.

>> Thank you for arranging all of this. My Zoom account is small. 40 minutes.

Captioner: Testing. One, two, three.

>> Not mild. We were both vaccinated. I don't understand it. Good thing, vaccinated. I can imagine.

>> I just got back last week.

>> We think we picked it up on the train. We went to New York for family reunion, everything was wonderful.

But we both arrived home two days later.

>> Kate, how you doing?

>> Good.

>> Hi Michelle.

>> Busy. If you want the captioning, there is a link but also you can turn it on if you want.

>> Can I turn it on now?

Because the link means I need another screen. I don't have one.

>> It looks like it's working.

>> You can put it on the same screen, you just have to shrink the size.

Sometimes.

>> Are there interpreters showing up?

>> Um ... I don't know who the other individual was.

>> I know Sabine is supposed to set it up.

>> I didn't get any -- I think it was Sabine. I didn't get confirmation.

>> Val is showing up.

>> Who?

>> Val.

>> I don't know. I don't know.

>> I think she was planning to show up.

>> Okay. Let me call. I want to make sure we're accessible. Since the subcommittee is about accessibility.

>> That's funny.

>> Yes.

What's wrong with you people?

>> I know. [laughing]. Well I've been really out to lunch anyway. Hello, Val. We're trying to find the interpreter.

We requested one. Okay.

>> I'm calling.

>> Laura is calling.

>> May have to sign and talk at the same time.

Can we do that?

>> Does everyone know sign?

>> Except Michelle and I can interpret for her if that -- I'm not a perfect interpreter but Val, is that acceptable. We asked for interpreting. But I'm not sure -- would that be fine? I think the rest of us -- again?
Laura is checking.
>> Laura is checking.
>> I just left a sign mail.
>> Okay. All right.
>> I can simcom. Bill, can you simcom.
>> And Kate can.
>> Okay. We need to take turns interpreting for Val. I can sign for Michelle. Okay. She is read the captioning, too.
We have to muddle. We'll have to muddle. I apologize. Topic of the subcommittee is accessibility and oh well. Let me start, I guess I am the chair but I don't mind if somebody else wants to take it on [laughing].
No volunteers?
>> We'll work together.
>> Let's make it an equitable team. Okay.
I made a couple of notes. I didn't send out an agenda. Did everyone get the emails, two emails I sent this morning? Okay. Two legislation proposed legislation.
>> Okay. Can you -- a little bit -- I didn't.
>> One is the READI act.
And that is the real emergency access for aging and disability inclusion for disasters act.
So that is proposed legislation in congress. I sent information about that because I don't know if we can piggyback onto that or it gives us a model. Because I think we need to maybe concentrate on setting up protocol for Vermont.
Really concentrate on that.
The other thing I wanted to say is that the title of the subcommittee is the subcommittee on captioning. But I really see it as accessibility. Captioning and sign.
Because we have to have interpreters standing, not in the back, we need interpreters standing and captioning. So if it's okay with you guy, we're going to broaden our mission.
>> Sure.
>> To have both.
>> Question. I have a question.
>> Yes?
>> Is that specifically for emergency preparedness or just for like anything?
>> I think emergency. That's really the lack. But I don't know. What does everyone else feel?

>> I would call it Vermont accessibility preparedness subcommittee.

>> Emergency preparedness. It doesn't talk about accessibility.

>> Maybe accessibility preparedness committee.

>> Bill?

>> Accessibility, I have concerned about the TV news captioning, too. Terrible.

>> Yes.

>> Sometimes they broadcast important information and you can't follow the captioning. So not only emergency, but I'd like to -- the news -- unless it's separated.

>> I don't know, part of the reason I think it's important to get together is to really sort of focus what we can do. And where the real need is, I mean it's all needed. But, yes, the captioning in general, there was a second piece of legislation I sent out. I'm sorry. My voice is not going to last but I'm going to try.

The communications, communications video and technology Accessibility act.

Is a second piece of proposed legislation in congress. And that is making both, it's for the blind and also for the deaf and hard of hearing. Make audio descriptions, they added to it. The old legislation only included for the blind and now they added so there is captioning for all video technology information.

>> Deb does that relate to TV news or just You Tube videos?

>> Good question.

Well, I can read the email.

>> We would have to read the details of that. I'm wondering, in terms of the scope, the scope of what deaf hard of hearing, deaf/blind council, what we can do, recommending -- in terms of the council can't force WCAX to be accessible.

>> Yes, we can.

>> Good. [laughing]. Where's the guns?

Um, in terms of recommending to the governor. We have a report that is going to be written in the next couple of months saying there needs to be a point person responsible for Accessibility.

>> I thought there was -- something related to TV news. Maybe Laura knows more? But I thought --

>> This is where it's so fuzzy.

>> And TV news, sadly, they don't pay well so people leave. So if we train a staff person, they will probably leave soon. They need to be accountable to take care of that.

>> If there's a state-level person under the office of governor, and say, there's an emergency. Who is the person who is going to make sure -- who is going to go to WCAX and say you must stand the interpreter there and you must have arrangements for captioning.

>> That would solve.

>> One person, right. So instead of trying to chase down different venues, you know, we as a council, can we recommend one person. Doesn't mean a new position. It just means find someone and add that responsibility to that specific person. And have contact information. So if I'm watching emergency announcements and Tony, he is late deafened, he uses captions, that's all.

He can't access it. Who can I call and complain?

Because, you know, frankly, who I contacted, governor's office, two, three times, WCAX, FCC, I filed a complaint. The AGE's office who said blah, blah, blah. About consumer protection. And I have filed a complaint with DRVT and disability law project.

I said if you need a warm body to blame, me. And that is grinding forward. So I was curious, I know Val, in the last meeting, council meeting, you said you had made contacts. Who else? I want to see how big the list is. Because that way we can prove we need one point person. So Val?

>> I agree. And we called WCAX as well and we called other news stations. And we called the governor's office. Same list as you, Deb.

>> Very frustrating. Just like la, la, la, la. Laura?

>> I did two things. One, I wrote up a letter of leadership to go through the channel to get to the governor's office. I contacted Vermont broadcast association. The person I contacted gave me the name of the four -- channel. But there is nothing I can do. I found out I'm not allowed. What am I allowed to do? I have my limitations but I can share that information with you before. But they told me the news channel and community TV station run individually. Independently. They don't -- so like, for example, say -- proposed a pip with an interpreter. No one can force them to use the pip.

>> What's a PIP?

>> We would love to use it.

>> Yes.

>> There is no, like, collaboration.

>> Bill wants to know what is PIP?

>> Picture in picture.

>> Oh. Okay. Picture in --

>> The right corner, the left corner with the

interpreter. So they won't disappear from the screen.

>> Okay. Bill didn't see on his phone. PIP means picture in the screen.

>> Picture in picture.

>> Okay.

>> Okay.

>> They said they refused?

>> They're not required. And some people give me the brush off. Like -- saying, oh we don't have the equipment. New York is doing it. Colorado is doing it. What's your excuse?

>> Yeah.

>> I think for -- maybe if we create a protocol, we can include a step by step instructions on how. But they told me they don't have to teach people to do it. And I'm like really. Maybe we need to ask them, can you share that guide and we can add it to the protocol.

>> Hum.

>> What else did I do?

I contacted Vermont emergency -- what is happening with the flooding. I contacted and somehow got roped into a meeting with commissioner Jennifer Morrison (ph.) who is the commissioner for, I think it's the department of public services.

And I kept telling her, you need to provide access. This is not trivial. This is emergencies can effect people if you don't deliver equal. And they're like, we're working on it. I got the vibe they didn't fully understand how crucial it is to provide the access. And if you notice, it took me two weeks to get authorized to be permitted to create that one ASL video that I created.

That I created. I did all the work. No help, nothing. I just wrote a script and asked for FEMA. That was the other thing, it should not take a federal agency to intervene with the State and say, come on, bring on the access.

I mean we have strong Allies. Kate McCoffee (ph.) who is FEMA disability integration special list for this reason, Vermont, New England. She was my Allie and my voice to the State saying, come on, we have to keep doing. But she is a nag. She had to say come on, bug them, repetitively.

>> Yeah. I think we're not going to be able to influence on a federal level. But I think if we come down to the grass roots and say, these are the steps.

>> The State.

>> Yes, the State level. Really the buck stops with the governor. If it's important, if the message is important for the governor to announce it, it's

important for it to be Accessibility to both deaf and hard of hearing.

>> Yes.

>> Of the key people that were involved during the legislation for the hearing aid bill, are they still involved? Remember when COVID, all of the legislation meetings with the -- they had to set up captioning, live captioning because they noted words. There was just, the automatic was messing up whatever they were discussing.

But all those point people, are they still around? Maybe we should rope them into -- I feel like if there is a call lead that emphasizes the importance and explains, look how they develop that process.

>> I think --

>> I mean ...

>> In watching the COVID coverage, when it was on the television channel, it was captioned. And we had interpreters, you know. David Kruger was standing there. You could see him and Patrick Harris. You could see them. That was fine.

When it transferred off the mainstream television channel, WCAX.com, they dropped the captioning. There was no captioning. I was complaining about this before the emergency.

And then when the floods happened, they didn't even have interpreters. You know, they had no interpreters the first one, two announcements.

>> Let me give you the back story about that. They did put the request for the interpreters to come but the roads were flooded. The interpreters couldn't get there.

>> Okay. That would explain.

>> That is why I'm suggesting the PIP.

>> But you can remote interpreters.

Well, that's why we need one state-level person and say your responsibility in addition to what you already do, and I don't know if that person is housed under the governor. Or housed under emergency management. I don't care who, needs to be a knowledgeable person who is going to follow up and make sure that any announcements, emergency announcements, disaster announcements are accessible to both deaf and hard of hearing people.

>> I just sort of -- I think Deb, you mentioned we can, people, come on. Provide Accessibility. But I think it would be nice if we provide a guide book or guidelines how the steps would support. Our encouragement and guidance being involved to help them figure it out.

I think they're going to need our help.

>> Guidance. Yes.

>> I think some of these people, they're afraid of, oh, deaf, hard of hearing, what am I supposed to do? They don't see that every day. I think they're a little overwhelmed or afraid maybe. We need to -- gentle, hold their hand a little bit. Guidelines. This is what you do.

>> Hold hands.

>> Hold hands. Okay. Once in a while check on them. Oh, the news staff getting involved again. I think that's just the norm that's got to happen.

>> Yes. Yes. There will be more disasters. There will be more emergencies.

>> Yep.

>> And putting it off is not going to help. All right. So moving forward, because it seems like we have all advocated many different places and gotten the run around.

We still don't have captioning. Oh, one comment made by someone at WCAX, they said we gave you -- we gave you people an interpreter. So what's your problem? Okay.

Thank you for the interpreter. Good move. Now, we need captioning. But it's just like, it was just a burden to give you an interpreter that we don't need to give you captioning in addition. Val, did you hear that message also? Did people tell you that?

Val? People tell you, we already gave you an interpreter, that's enough? No? Okay. Because I was getting that message like, you know, never satisfied. We gave you an interpreter.

Yes, thank you? I'm grateful for that.

>> Both captioning and interpreting, you know, you need both. Because, you know, they have -- I missed that -- you tag team with the interpreter and the captioning. People use both. Is that what you're saying? Yes, people use both.

>> Okay. So yes, Kate?

>> We also need the community to speak up, too. Maybe we need to create a petition and send it out. I have signed complaint about it. Because many people, not only hard of hearing but many, like, new to the state. They moved or you know, different languaging, they need access to the captioning, too.

So I'm just wondering if we have more, we need more voices complaining.

>> Yes. Yes. I agree.

I wonder if AARP and COVE might be interested in signing on a petition? Because that does affect them.

Hands and voices maybe?

>> But even having the authority, all those people that live in the buildings that are older or disabled, I mean, it effects so many of the people that live in the building.

>> Yep. Yep.

>> To add to that, Kate, may want to keep all the audiologists around the state informed of what is going on because they see a lot of people.

>> Good point.

>> And there are more and more hearing aid users now. I see them, small, silver. Many, many. I'm sure they might want the captioning, too. Or better access. So I think the audiologists might be another source of information, contact.

>> Good point.

>> And --

>> Let me just --

>> Trying to think of something else, maybe the assistive technology team.

Assistive technology team, they work with a lot of people who rely on captioning technology.

I think we can get a lot of people, we just need to figure out -- do you want to keep the subcommittee small or bring in more players? Like, the Here2Hear -- that group is so powerful, they're able to get the hearing aid bill to pass. It might be worth asking the same people if they're interested in this type of work.

>> What group? I missed it.

>> Here2Hear.

>> Who?

>> Here2Hear?

>> Here2Hear Commission. Might be worth asking them again if they're interested in helping us with this type of work.

I don't know if all of you know, I'm the one who created the hearing aid petition.

>> Yes. Yes.

>> I did the first letter. Everything else, and then once I became a State employee, I was like.

>> Well, I think, I think having coalition is really important. But also I think we need to be targeted and I think, yes, there should be complaints and a petition showing interest. But who do we want to show the governor? Because we're going to try to convince him that he needs to assign one person responsible.

And set up a protocol. So I wonder about, you know, we can invite a whole lot of people, but you know what is our actual goal? You know, we have two things. One is to show there is a lot of people effected and secondly,

is to actually set up something that is going to work.

>> I wanted to mention something. I was looking up the legislative section last January, somebody did introduce a bill regarding a point person for ADA accommodations but it fell through. It didn't make it through the first round. I need to look that up again, if I can find it. I will share it. I don't know who introduced that. I'm not sure. But I do remember two years ago when the hearing aid bill was happening, Mike Ferran (ph.) and I met repetitively but one of the meetings we did, he did ask me is it worth having an ADA coordinator for each branch? And I said no. Because, if we look at the State of Massachusetts, there is only one guy, Karl. And Karl -- and their legislative is year round. Ours is only six months. If one person can do that workload exclusively and it's not trivial. It's a lot. So I think one person can handle it.

It does make sense to have it under the governor's office. The question is, I need to find that bill. And see if I can figure out who introduced it and what happened.

>> I'm curious, I'm curious, do we really need a bill if we're not asking for a position? We're not talking about money. We're only talking about assigning a responsibility to a person. You know --

>> That's my next topic I wanted to share with you. I don't know if it's related but I feel it could be related. Do you know EEO officer? Have you heard of EEO.

>> Equal.

>> Equal employment opportunity. I'm looking at a project where my team and I are trying to locate each department and see if they have an EEO officer. Guess what? They all don't. So -- if an EEO officer could take on that responsibility.

Because they're trying to make sure.

>> Is that emergency.

>> -- preventing discrimination. Preventing harassment. Among also, plus, with the public.

>> The only thing that might get in the way is money, right. Are we going to hear from them, oh, money. Who pays for that? How? Where is the budget?

>> Right.

>> That is probably why we want legislation involved. Because then they have to designate or create a budget for this purpose.

>> But if it's for emergency, that's the issue. You know, if it were under emergency management, you already have people who have responsibilities. You

know. You need to contact the fire departments. You need to contact state police. You need to -- and if you just assign and say, you need to make sure that all public is accessible. Then it doesn't cost more money. It gives a person a specific task and it's not an every day task. Once the person is trained and understands what the resources are, he is not going to do it every day, I hope. I hope to god we don't do it every day emergencies. You know, it is once in a while. Irene was an emergency. The pandemic, emergency. The flood, an emergency.

So you don't need a full-time person sitting in an office, being the accessibility person for emergencies. You need a person already on your staff, already involved in emergency planning or whatever. And that person gets the hat that means when there is an emergency and everything is blowing apart, they are responsible to be sure there is accessibility.

That way we don't have to argue about money. Bill?

>> Also, Deb, good point, also Laura made a good point. It doesn't mean creating a position. We're talking about money from the governor's office and legislature. They see the word "money" they're going to drop it. Have no interest. We need to avoid the word budget.

>> Yes. No. It is -- it's responsibility that was dropped. It was a responsibility that was dropped with COVID and with the flooding.

The responsibility was dropped. We need to find, you know, the governor needs to assign someone. He has the authority to do that so that maybe our role is to make that suggestion in the next report.

>> The council meeting report you mean?

>> The council report. We're going to be writing it this November. It's coming up soon. So it's a matter of writing up, this is what's happened. This is how many Vermonters were adversely effected. And this is what's needed. The governor needs to assign someone whose responsibility includes accessibility for deaf and hard of hearing.

We cannot have another emergency like this. This is crazy. I mean this is -- you know. I've heard all the excuses and it's not good enough. It's not good enough.

We can do it. You know, but nobody wants to take responsibility and I think we need to put the pressure where the buck stops and luckily, we are the governor -- the governor's advisory committee. Council.

That is who we are. So now we're going to advise and

say this is why. I think it's also, would be a nice side thing to do, just to have, is that petition. I'd like to see that sent out to all of our sister, brother, collaborative. And say, send this out to your members. Who was adversely affected by this? Who needed captioning and couldn't get it? Who was really tired of seeing half an interpreter? You know.

That's -- it makes no sense.

>> You can add that when you saw the emergency on TV, were you able to follow? Did you understand? Was it clear? Maybe a petition would be good. And find out who talks about bills and goes through the ADA or something.

>> Yes. Because my mentioning ADA to all of the people I contacted was like (shrugging).

>> It's weak now.

>> I know there is a federal law but like ...

>> It's just weak.

>> I think we need to get pragmatic. I think that there are steps that can happen locally Vermont. These two pieces of legislative action in congress are great. We could wait until we all have white hair and die of old age before they're going to get it accomplished. And right now we need to somehow have something set up before the next blizzard. Electrical failure. You know. Val?

>> And storm. Ice storm.

>> Ice storm. Right. Right. We know it's coming. We know it's coming.

>> Snow blower, make sure it works.

>> Okay. So I'm looking at the time. We have enough time.

Other ideas, comments, thoughts about this?

>> Thoughts about the petition.

>> Who would like to volunteer to write the petition? Can't be you, okay.

>> One of us can share an email with each other only for now to start the petition, the language.

>> To edit it or --

>> Val, do you want to start the Google doc?

>> Val?

>> You typed it. I assumed you volunteered!

>> Okay. Okay.

>> So Val is going to do the Google doc.

>> Just create the doc and we'll add different questions that need to be included in the petition.

>> Okay. Do we want to do preliminary outreach to COVE, AARP? Those people in our networks?

>> Should be you because you were involved -- I don't think any of us were involved before.

>> Okay.

>> But both were involved with the here to hear collision. So it makes sense that you or Val reach out to AARP and COVE. You can agree or disagree. You can take COVE and you take AARP, whatever.

>> Okay, okay. I can email Ruby baker, Hermina (ph.). And just say, here is what we're working on. We are drafting a petition and we'll be sending it out. Michelle, hands and voices, can you float the idea to them?

>> Yes. Absolutely. I was trying to look through my emails and it was getting too complicated for me to find all the here hear Vermont people. But HLAA Vermont was on there. But I assume you're their rep.

>> Yep.

>> Absolutely. And I think they'll be on board if for no other reason that we respect the kids and the teens and they need the same access, too. Same problem.

>> Okay. Great.

>> Can we add the blind to give -- for the blind? They need access, too.

>> Do they need the same kind?

>> I mean, some maybe. The hard of hearing that don't sign. You know. Because everyone's vision is 100% blind. So ... I don't know if the technology for the captioning is different for them. But again, I think they should be maybe --

>> Good question.

>> I just found the bill. I put the bill for the ADA coordinator, I put the link in the chat.

>> Okay. Okay.

All right.

>> It was in March.

>> So writing up the proposal to the governor, that is also a little bit --

>> I'm curious, when you write the proposal to the governor. How verbose do you want to go? Like how wordy do you want to keep it simple? Like the key points?

>> I think keep it simple. I think simple. Because I think if the poor legislators reading through pages and pages. I'd like to propose that it's at the beginning of the document instead of at the end. It's not an after thought but that's something that I'm going to have to talk with Spencer and Will and Monica. Just to say, this is an issue of such importance. It's all important. But this is an immediacy kind of issue. You know, there's been an absolute failure from the governor's office and it needs to be addressed before

the next emergency.

I don't know, what are your thoughts on that?

>> Again, I was, when Val creates the Google doc, maybe two, one for the petition and one for the outline of what we can -- we can all throw out different ideas and talking points that we need to bring up to the governor.

>> Val, do you mind doing two Google docs? It's always easier to start with something.

>> Yes.

>> Okay.

>> That way you can advocate.

>> Thank you.

>> Who has any contact with emergency management services?

You do?

>> I do. Remember I contact the director Eric Ferran (ph.) and asked him if he is interested in presenting with the council and he said yes. My last contact with him was -- I'm looking -- when was that -- hold on, let me look.

That was October 19th.

I just followed up in an email to him asking him if he is still presenting in January.

Because the agenda for this month is full. For January, I will let you know if he responds yes.

>> Right. I don't know if ... I'm thinking about, you know, is it possible to have a meeting with the governor. I think that's outside of the rule of the advisory council. It's one thing for a coalition of disability group to meet with the governor but we, you know, we already have an in and I'm not sure we can abuse that with a different meeting.

>> New York City because -- New York City because the other subcommittee is the same thing. We would need to create the quality checkers, you know. Get together several times. It's going to be the same for us. When we meet regularly, how often do you want to meet?

What's a good time to meet for everybody?

>> Okay.

>> Like right now, is this a good time? The beginning of the month? How often do you want to meet? Once a month? Every two weeks. It became once a month.

>> I think to begin with every two weeks makes sense because we have that report to write. We have a petition to send out. So if we can meet in two weeks, what date is that?

>> In two weeks that is Thanksgiving.

In two weeks it's Thanksgiving week.

>> Right. I can't do Tuesday in three weeks.
I can do Monday.
>> The 27th? I can do Monday the 27th.
>> Bill, can you use your voice, too, please?
>> Do you mind possibly how you feel to pick a
different day of the week. Tuesday is really hard for
me. If it's all right for you. But like a Monday or a
Thursday or Friday is better for me. If that's okay
with you.
>> Fridays are good?
Fridays are good?
>> Good.
>> Good.
>> 11 o'clock on Friday, that would be December 1st.
>> Oh. December 1st.
>> At 11 o'clock?
Val can't do Friday. What about the fourth. Monday,
December 4th.
>> At 11? I can do 11.
Monday.
>> I think so. I can't, my iPhone, I can't get in to
look at the calendar now. But I can check. Monday
should be fine.
>> Monday the fourth at 11 o'clock.
>> We can email Sabine about the interpreter. I
don't know what happened to that. That is Deb's
responsibility to email Sabine.
>> I will: But I need someone else to be the host.
Because I have --
>> I can be the host. I can be the host. I was the
host for the other subcommittee. I can be the host.
>> I will contact Sabine.
>> And cc me. Cc me, Deb. And then we can go ahead
and put in the captioning and the interpreter request.
>> Okay.
>> I think we have good ideas.
>> This is really good.
>> Good start.
>> I'm very encouraged because I feel like I've been
spinning my wheels now for months and getting nowhere.
I node everybody else has been feeling the same way.
So yes, that's good.
>> I just want to propose, do we have a deadline for,
how soon do we contribute ideas for the petition and
for the talking points? Do we want to have a deadline
that we want to complete it by? I like deadlines.
They help me accomplish something.
>> Okay.
If we have a deadline of the 20th.
>> Okay.

>> The 20th.
>> Say that again, Deb?
>> There's a deadline for the 20th for writing the petition and the proposal.
>> December 20th? Or November 20th?
>> November 20th.
>> November.
>> November 20th.
>> Okay.
>> So you know, get your ideas to, well, Val is going to send out that. We're going to feedback. Any other ideas. I will contact coalition, see who else is interested in joining the petition. Yeah. Great start.
We did it all in less than an hour! Woe! Good team.
>> Take care, y'all. Good to see you.
Captioner: Zoom meeting ended.

