UNEDITED REALTIME TRANSCRIPT

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

**Board Meeting**

Held via

Zoom

July16, 2021

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

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

**Board Meeting**

**April 16, 2021**

**GABTR BOARD MEMBERS:**

Alfred Sonnenstrahl, Acting Chair

Steve Cooper

Jason Corning

Allysa Dittmar

Betty Dodds

Glenn Lockhart

Shannon Minnick

Michelle Morales

Ken Putkovich

Alex Simmons

Darrin Smith

**HAMILTON STAFF:**

Jenny Pearson

Tarita Turner

**TAM STAFF:**

David Bahar, Director

Donna Broadway-Callaman

Travis Dougherty

Leslie Hannibal

Kevin Steffy

**HEARING INTERPRETERS:**

Anne Leahy

Anna Rose

Emily Dittmar

**DEAF INTERPRETERS:**

Bradley Christlieb

Stephan Kennedy

**CAPTIONER:**

Natalie Ennis

**GABTR Meeting**

**July 16, 2021**

**9:00 a.m.**

TRAVIS: I just want to let everybody know, by 9:15, if we have still not heard from David, we will go ahead and proceed.

Hold on one second. Looks like something is coming through right now.

He was under the impression it was at 9:15, so he's logging in now. We'll get started momentarily.

Thank you all for your patience. David had gotten word that we would start at 9:15, and ironically, it looks like we will start at 9:15, at the rate we're going.

There was some miscommunication. Some emails stated 9:00, some stated 9:15. Regardless, we're working out the logistics, and we will get started momentarily. Thank you all for your patience.

Good morning, Shannon.

SHANNON: Good morning, everyone.

AL: Okay. This is Al. David should be joining any minute now.

So it's 81 degrees right now where I'm coming from. We're expecting it to stay that way.

TRAVIS: Interesting. I'm north of you, in the Boston area, and it's about 90 right now.

AL: What brings you to Boston?

TRAVIS: Family vacation, actually. We've been in New England for about two years. We're just south of Boston. Near Foxborough. Not too far away from there.

AL: That's the home of the New England Patriots, if I'm not mistaken.

TRAVIS: All right. Looks like David is here.

The east coast is actually predicting lovely conditions for the next five days or thereabouts.

DAVID: Hello, everybody.

TRAVIS: There you are. Outstanding.

DAVID: Good morning. My apologies. I was under the impression that I was on time. However, I stand corrected.

TRAVIS: You are on time because the email did say 9:15. But then the agenda said 9:00, so there was conflicting information on the start. So you're totally fine.

DAVID: Okay. Well, I kept you waiting. My apologies.

TRAVIS: Well, you're not alone. A few people have just joined us because of the confusion. We've cleared it up.

AL: I give you Exhibit A, the agenda, which has our start time.

TRAVIS: All right. Are we ready to begin? We're going to get started now.

AL: Travis, if you would explain the logistics of today's meeting,.

TRAVIS: Firstly, I'll invite everybody, including our interpreter, to turn their camera off. If we could get everyone to turn their cameras off. Outstanding.

A very good morning to everyone.

If you can only see the pinned Deaf interpreter at the moment, Bradley --

AL: Wait one moment. This is Al. I thought we would have two side by side --

TRAVIS: Side by side what, Al?

AL: I only see one Zoom.

TRAVIS: You need to switch your view to gallery view. If you only see the interpreter, go in the upper right-hand corner of your Zoom screen and click "gallery view." You should see four videos on your screen. If you wish to see nonvideo participants, you need to choose that option.

AL: It says speaker and then it says gallery. And then it says exit full screen. That's all.

TRAVIS: One moment, Al.

Bear with me while we go over a few Zoom logistics. One moment.

I cannot locate the nonvideo participants at the moment, Al. On one of those black boxes that you see now, you should see the option of the mini menu with the dots. Click on that and see if it doesn't give you the ability to take them off screen.

Ah, we found it. Upper right corner, speaker and gallery view, there should be a show nonvideo participants option. Uncheck that.

Don't see that? Let me make you a cohost and see if that helps.

Very interesting. I only have four screens on mine. You have updated your Zoom software lately? That might be the source of the problem. It could be if you're running an outdated version of the software, you might need to update your app.

JASON: Wait, hold on, everybody. Could we take a pause for a moment?

AL: Should I remove spotlight?

TRAVIS: No, do not remove spotlight.

AL: I see gallery, I see full screen.

TRAVIS: Under that. I think that means you haven't updated your app or your Zoom account. You'll need to upgrade the app itself.

DAVID: I'm on a PC. I won't be able to help you.

TRAVIS: I have a Mac, and it's fine.

DAVID: Al, are you able to find "video settings"? Can you locate that function? This is David speaking.

AL: I found it.

DAVID: Now look for hide nonvideo participants.

TRAVIS: Or turn off nonvideo participants. If you see the video settings, turn off nonvideo participants. There should be just a click, and then they will disappear.

AL: I see 25 people on the screen.

DAVID: You might have to get on your other laptop, Al.

AL: Yeah, let me switch to my other laptop. Bear with me for one second.

TRAVIS: We thank you for all of your indulgence as we work through these logistics.

Looks like we have Alfred and Al.

AL: I'm seeing the same three settings on this computer as well. It says adjust for blue light.

TRAVIS: Al, if you're able to see me, this is Travis speaking.

AL: I see you, Travis.

TRAVIS: Excellent. In the menu, there's an option that says "hide nonvideo participants." This should be unchecked, and I want it checked for you. It should be at the bottom.

AL: Yes. It's not checked.

TRAVIS: Check it, Al.

AL: Check that box?

TRAVIS: Oh, yes. Check that thing.

AL: Ooh! I see!

TRAVIS: Voila.

Okay. Which connection are you going to use, Al, now that you know where the settings are on your computer?

Okay. We got there. Little by little, darn it if we didn't.

All right. This is Travis speaking. I'm going to initiate the recording. One moment.

All right. Now that the recording is underway, let me go through some logistics. Once again, to clarify going forward, we're going to switch between two working Certified Deaf Interpreters, and we'll have to spotlight them. We invite you to choose "gallery view" in your particular local copy of Zoom so you can have the best experience while the two working Certified Deaf Interpreters pop in and out.

That should cover the basics. If there are any concerns, please ping me directly in the chat.

If you have a question, put it in the chat and I'll recognize you and give you the floor. We're going to have a terrific session today.

I'm going to turn the floor over to Al and turn my camera off.

AL: I'll just wait for David to turn his video off.

Okay. We'll officially call the meeting to order at 9:27. My apologies for the rocky start and the confusion. I want to make sure everybody can see me clearly on the screen. If not, please raise your hand and indicate you're having some issues.

I believe on the "reactions," there is the option to raise your hand there. If you look at the bottom of your screen, you should see an icon that says "reactions." You can click on that to utilize the raise hand feature. Again, if you cannot see me.

And Travis, if you wouldn't mind monitoring that for me and let me know if anybody is having any issues.

All right. We'll begin with our agenda. Everybody should have received the agenda yesterday for today's meeting. Travis sent that out yesterday or two days ago.

We are going to begin with a roll call. I have the roster. I'm going to go through that. It is not in alphabetical order. I don't know how they decided on the order, but I'm going to follow what I see.

First person is one of our new members, Glenn Lockhart. If you wouldn't mind turning on your camera.

GLENN: Yes, hello, everyone.

AL: Welcome.

Michelle Morales. Is Michelle here?

MICHELLE: Hello. This is Michelle. Hi, everyone.

AL: Welcome, Michelle.

MICHELLE: Thank you so much.

AL: Allysa Dittmar.

ALLYSA: Hello. Good morning, everyone. This is Allysa.

AL: Welcome, Allysa.

Alex Simmons.

ALEX: Good morning, everyone. Hi.

AL: Actually, let me explain this. Let me count. Those were the representatives for the Deaf consumers. Alex Simmons is representing state government.

Next up we have Darrin Smith.

DARRIN: Hello.

AL: Hello, Darrin. He is also Deputy Chair or Vice Chair of our council. He will be assisting me in making my job a little bit easier, so thank you for that. He is also representing the Deaf community.

Next on our roster, we have Ken Putkovich. Ken, are you here? Hi, Ken. And he is representing our senior citizen constituents. Thank you, Ken. You can turn your camera off now.

And actually with him is Betty Dodds. She is our former Chair. She is now attending just as a visitor, as an observer. Good to see you, Betty.

Thank you both.

Steve Cooper.

STEVE: Hello, good morning. Good to be here to join GABTR and also the Zoom tutorial on how to add nonvideo participants. Thank you.

AL: And Steve is representing our speech impaired consumers.

Next up we have Lori Markland. Lori, are you there? Second call for Lori Markland.

TRAVIS: Lori isn't with us.

KEVIN: I believe she's on vacation.

AL: Oh, okay. Thank you for letting us know.

Next we have Jason Corning.

JASON: Hello, everybody. Good morning.

AL: And Jason is representing our deafblind community. And it's my understanding that you actually moved out of the area, is that true? To the very, very windy city?

JASON: Indeed. Next week.

AL: Basically meaning this will be your last meeting.

JASON: That's correct.

AL: Okay. Well, we will certainly miss you, Jason.

JASON: Yes, I will miss all of you.

AL: Good to see you. Thank you.

Shannon Minnick.

SHANNON: Good morning. This is Shannon Minnick. I'm representing Independence Now.

AL: So Shannon is representing our mobility impaired community.

Next, myself, Chair Sonnenstrahl here.

Next we have Deirdre Lynch.

TRAVIS: It doesn't look like she's here.

AL: Okay. Next we have William Jackson.

TRAVIS: He's not with the board anymore.

AL: Okay. We'll need to remove his name from the roster.

TRAVIS: Yes, we will make that update.

AL: So that concludes roll call. And according to my calculations, we have met quorum, so we can now proceed with the meeting.

Any objections?

Seeing none, we will proceed with the meeting, and we'll take a second to change CDIs.

All right. This is Al speaking. Now we're going to turn our attention to the minutes from the April session. I'll invite any comments.

DARRIN: This is Darrin. I move to accept the minutes from last April.

AL: One moment, Darrin. Let's allow folks a few minutes or at least a minute to enter any comments that they might have with respect to the minutes.

Going once. Going twice.

All right. We will accept those minutes from our April session as written. They are approved.

Do I have a second for Darrin's motion, please?

GLENN: I'll second.

AL: Seconded by Glenn.

If anyone holds a contrary opinion, we'll allow you a second for that. Going once, twice, three, four, five. Motion has carried.

Moving along the agenda, then, let's start off with the TAM staff reports. We'll invite you on screen. We'll begin with David Bahar, if you could turn on your camera. And I will go off camera.

DAVID: Thank you very much, Al, and a very good morning to everyone. I hope that you have been faring well. It is lovely to be here with you again at the GABTR session. Once again, it is remote. We have not yet gotten to the stage where we are meeting in person, but we are going to be talking about that a little bit later this morning, about hosting the next meeting in person. That will come certainly sooner than you think.

There's a few things that we can go through at this stage. I'm very excited for everyone to see how our team has been performing. The last occasion we met, we were hot and heavy at many different things, and we had a positive outlook with respect to the new structure, the programs that we're able to provide, and the services that we delivered to the community. We're very excited and proud of the work that we've done on our team.

It seems that every GABTR meeting will have new faces. And you've already met some of them today. Certainly that is nothing different. We have a new finance manager at TAM that was onboarded maybe a month or so ago. He has been learning the ropes. We have beaten him into shape. And we begin to look ahead to FY23 and the budget that's already underway.

His name is Leslie Hannibal, and I look forward to having you meet him perhaps this morning. Currently he is a bit busy and he will be joining us a little bit later on this morning.

Leslie hails from an accounting background elsewhere in state government, and he has put together budget orders and financial projections, and he has now come to us. He is truly off to the races. He's got a tremendous amount of experience and a great relationship with folks in state government, in the Office of Finance Administration, or OFA.

So we're very excited indeed. We see from the roll call that there are new members of the board with us. We have Glenn Lockhart, we have also Michelle with us, so we're very happy to have you all today. We look forward to having a fruitful board discussion in the coming years, getting their ideas and their perspectives. And we do welcome them.

There are two board members who have transitioned off the board. Our representative from the Maryland Commission on Disabilities being one, the adviser that we've had in Ben Jackson. He has left there and therefore left us as well. So we are working to get his replacement to join us. We have also just learned that just after we distributed this PowerPoint, that the great Jason Corning has left for Chicago, and we hope that he remains in touch with us. He is going to build community certainly wherever he is, because that's the kind of person he is and we will miss him.

JASON: This is Jason speaking. I just wanted to add too that I will be in the Maryland area still working, still teaching, working with deafblind clientele, working with the community. But I did not want to feel as though -- again, I will be here in the Maryland area, but I will not be a part of the board any longer. Thank you so much.

DAVID: We'll move on to my report with respect to some finance matters. We're not going to put the PowerPoint on to Zoom. I am just going to deliver my remarks.

In terms of the financial update, I'm sure as you know, the process came to fruition in calendar year 2020 for FY21. Transitioning from the Department of IT finance team to ours. So the Administration of Finance transferred to the Governor's Office of Financial Administration, which indicated that all of our budgetary concerns which had historically seen revenue from the TRS fund had built up to the point where those funds were in transition. And due to that reason, we had sort of an apples to apples comparison of revenue.

Okay. That being said, to give you an example, if we're looking at FY20, our revenue was approximately $2,868,000. Now, if we look at FY21, it's 515700. Now really and truly, that's a reflection of only the transfer of those additional funds that have now been applied to this new account.

Our expenditures have increased, as I'm sure everyone can see in comparison to last year. If you look at FY18, 2.7 million. And if you compare that to FY19, 2.3 million and FY20 is it .5 million and FY21, 2.8 million. So you see a gradual increase in expenditures. The primary reason for that increase is really twofold. The first piece is the new telecommunications relay service contract that went into place with the same vendor, Hamilton Relay. That being said, it adds two additional services previous to the previous contract, RCC and RTT. RTT has not been fully implemented. RCC however has seen exponential growth in recent months, 16,000 minutes, so there is a price point associated with that.

So overall we're seeing that growth. Now, the new contract --

AL: Point of order. Leslie, would you be so kind as to take your camera off screen for the moment?

DAVID: We'll be turning things over to Leslie in just a second.

So again, related to the relay services contract, one additional, our new contract also has a higher cost per minute associated with it in comparison to previous contracts. So all of these factors are contributing to the increase in our expenditures.

Now, the second factor that's impacted our expenditures is the senior call check program, which we refer to as the SCC program, housed under the Department of Aging, where they call to check in with senior citizens who have signed up for that service, who want to get a daily check in phone call just to be sure they're okay, just to familiarize you with that.

Now, the USTF funds that program, which is codified in Maryland state law, our COMAR. So FY21, we noticed an increase of 150% in terms of what their previous costs were. It was $200,000. That was the growth we've seen compared to the previous year. For the next year we are projecting their budget will be an additional $200,000 above that. So that is the second factor contributing to the increase in our expenditures.

And Leslie just came on board. Leslie, if you wouldn't mind bringing up your camera, I want to take an opportunity to take a minute to let you introduce yourself to everyone. And I was just explaining a little bit about our financial update and that piece of PowerPoint, and I touched on it very perfunctory. If you would like to add anything to that, please feel free. And we'll just give a minute for the interpreter to come up as well.

LESLIE: Hello, everyone. My name is Leslie Hannibal. I have just recently joined TAM agency. I formerly was at MEA. I was a staff accountant there with MEA for about a year and a half. And this opportunity came available, and I'm very glad to be here with the TAM agency.

And as David said, we have just basically been looking over the financials. I've been getting acclimated with the current year financial statement. And as David had mentioned, we see an increase in expenditures from '20 to '21, and those costs, as he mentioned, have increased over the last year from what I have seen so far.

And basically that's all I have for now.

DAVID: Thank you, Leslie. I would like everyone to join me in welcoming Leslie to our team.

AL: I did have a question for Leslie. This is Al. Does he work for MDOD?

DAVID: He is a TAM employee, yes.

AL: Then maybe his Zoom profile needs to be renamed, because it does look like he's MDOD.

DAVID: That's what all of our emails state. Really our parent agency technically is the Department of Disabilities. TAM is an agency that falls under the auspices of MDOD. We're a very special bird.

AL: At the same time, I do want to emphasize that we don't lose our identity in the transition, that we remain known as TAM. If you recall, we did have something of an identity crisis when we transitioned from DoIT to MDOD, and we do have to make sure and defend our own status and standing as TAM. So please make sure that you continue to represent yourselves in that way.

TRAVIS: Hi, this is Travis. Al, I wanted to address that. We are actually in the process of entering into a new email system, but the Zoom system automatically sets the name, which is why you see that under Leslie's name. But we will make that adjustment.

DAVID: That is correct. We are working on making those kinds of changes to have a more standard approach. And same thing holds as when we were with DoIT for our email profiles, they do still say that, and we're waiting for that transition to say MDOD. But in Zoom we can make those adjustments ourselves and we should be mindful of that.

Moving along, there's a couple of other things I would like to touch on before I turn the screen over to the staff reports, first of which is a policy topic that has had my attention for the last little while in addition to supporting other TAM staff. Specifically RTT and the ability to connect bidirectionally with 911 or with emergency services, which of course is technically a TRS function.

You might well know that our new contract add the RTT to the contract, and we are the first in the nation to do so. As we added RTT, we were very excited to see that, but we realized that the telecommunications network itself, which was operated by various carriers such as Verizon, AT&T, T-Mobile, etc., certainly had petitioned the FCC historically to allow them access and permission to use internet-based communication rather than a TTY. But TTY is codified in the ADA as the preferred method of communication. As you recall, places of public accommodation were to provide access to TTY callers, and 911 was one of those. So they had to have a TTY inroad into their services. And the carriers are required by law to do so. So we were at a bit of cross purposes when the internet came around and became in use. It certainly needs some revision. Nothing is perfect. But we have asked that that requirement be waived in favor of allowing internet-based services such as RTT to be used. And the FCC has indicated that they are fine with that, and they are putting out a rule or an authority to make it so, so that RTT can be used.

The problem remains that, well, the complacency of our carriers is such that they are reticent to invest in research and development of getting their networks able to support RTT in the first instance. And we have certainly observed that historically. If a Verizon client wants to place a call to a T-Mobile client or point to point, it should be a fairly simple matter. And it would look like perhaps a regular TTY call. But it wouldn't be able to handle that in this instance, and it causes all sorts of crash problems when that connection is not made properly. So we don't want to have any constraints on speed, on the transfer of audio data, text, etc., and we realize that it's really on the part of our carriers to pick up their feet and get going with that. And Verizon has been working with us quite closely, more so than perhaps their peers. And RTT is in place in name only and it should be supported, we're not sure, perhaps in the coming year.

They've only just realized that maybe the problems, the difficulties in making RTT an actual viable service is perhaps there are more problems there than they thought, so they're kind of kicking the can down the road and they don't really have an exact launch date.

Now, as far as supporting relay through RTT, that's one matter. The other piece of the puzzle is a level of confidence for folks who use RTT because they're so very accustomed to using text messaging and phone service. And if they were to enable their mobile phones to use it, they very well could. So the technology exists, but we have to wait until there's a level of confidence that in an emergency people will remember this of course, that the same kinds of apps they use in their everyday life can also be used for RTT to call an emergency call center. The same is true for 911. They need to update their ability to geo locate because text-to-911 doesn't have that capability. Once you move out of a satellite, they might lose you and can't patch your signal through. So there are benefits and there's also the ability to use the audio function. And in many ways RTT is the wave of the future.

I would like to make sure that you understand that we are working on this. That's still sort of in the vineyards of telecommunication and we are still harvesting those grapes. But at any rate, that's where telecommunications is headed. RTT is a large part of the future of telecommunications.

And the members of this body might have seen the TDI conference where we had a plenary session on this very topic, the future of relay. I encourage you to avail yourselves of that session. If you were there, share your thoughts. They touched on any number of things, RTT among them. Also the interoperability of video communications. That's one example of cross-platform video to video accessibility and how the telephony system has made adjustments and improvements in the experience for relay users.

You know very well that there's a tremendous amount of lingering inefficiencies, inequities, with respect to a relay user's experience vis-a-vis a hearing caller's experience. Certainly there seems to be more and more frequent struggles in this community as with many just everything. So I do recommend that you take a look at that. Let's see, the conference will be on the 27th actually, so that's when my presentation is slated for. It will be free to attend that session to members of TDI.

I'll turn the screen back over to you, Al.

AL: If there are any questions for David at this time, we invite you to do so.

Going once, going twice... seeing no questions, I have a question for you, David, with respect to --

TRAVIS: Looks like Alex has a question.

AL: Excellent. Come on up, Alex.

ALEX: Hello, everyone. This is Alex speaking. I have a question specifically for David. He was talking about the FCC's push towards carriers providing that RTT implementation. I recently received an email from Purple Communications, and Greg Hlibock pleaded with me to fill out or sign a petition that would force, then, the FCC to make adjustments with relay. And I'm wondering if this petition, then, would force those necessary changes for RTT implementation. Have you seen that email go out? And if not, I would be more than happy to forward it to you.

DAVID: This is David speaking. Thank you for that, Alex. My understanding of what Greg was referring to is such that it has to do with the per-minute rate that VRS services are reimbursed from the FCC and from the fund. Reason being, the FCC has I guess a 5-year plan for setting rates. I'm not sure if it's 5-6 years or something like that. And that is coming to a close. They're garnering support on comments to be issued from folks to the FCC about the level of reimbursement or about that rate. So Greg is drumming up support for input on that rate. And I think that it is a separate issue from the one that I had been discussing.

However, I would say to that that from, say, Sorenson, Purple, and Global, that they were in support of the use of RTT. Those are the three that we know of. And you see on their respective apps that there is that functionality and that technology that is available.

As far as the VRS companies, I don't know about Convo. It seems like it would work well in that environment, but the carriers are far behind our population of VRS providers, I would say.

ALEX: So would that petition impact Maryland Relay as well?

DAVID: Well, the Maryland Relay permanent rate is set by way of contract through Hamilton. And that includes all traffic in the state of Maryland. We are in the RFP process for state government that is wholly separate from the FCC TRS fund.

ALEX: Wonderful. Thank you so much for the clarification.

DAVID: Absolutely, Alex.

AL: For your information, this is Al speaking, the FCC has a minimum standard set forth, and the states do seem to adhere to that. Maryland has exceeded that standard by far and gone far above what the minimum expectation is.

Also, Greg's presentation, if I could clarify, mentioned that of course the FCC has a contract with a company by the name of Rolka located in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. I happen to be a member of the advisory board there. And there is a finance subcommittee which does gather the numbers from the carriers, from the providers, and with respect to interstate relay calls that does include VRS services, in addition to the other IP or internet-based services which are offered.

And in the past there have been areas to cover in terms of legal matters, policy matters, matters of interpreting, also research development, etc., to go into calculating that per-minute reimbursement rate. It's been almost 10 years now that the FCC issued an order to remove research from being a reimbursable cost collapsed into the rate. So now they can do research independently in their given company, if they want to make their equipment or services or software offerings in some way differentiated or upgraded. So the result of that is that the providers simply don't have a budget for research and they kind of stick with the status quo, and things are just not moving in an upward direction as we would like.

And the FCC continues to promise that they will have a research contract with a certain company, and finally they did so with MITRE. And the contract was signed maybe 2-3 years ago. And frankly I haven't seen word one of results. So we are still waiting to see the technology get better for this population. And I think what Greg was indicating was the desire for us to get back to the time when the rate would have included research and development reimbursement in order to improve the experience of this population, rather than some consultant company in MITRE who doesn't know anything about this population. So I think that's what he was putting forward.

Chair recognizes David.

DAVID: My apologies. I hit the wrong button.

AL: You're fine, David.

Let's move along, then. Consulting my agenda. Travis is up. And there you are.

TRAVIS: Yes, thank you. Al, I'll just wait for you to take your screen down, and I'll begin my report.

Good morning, everyone. I hope everyone is having a lovely summer so far. It's been a very exciting, productive time for Maryland Relay. Things have improved. Our outreach team is actually starting to do in-person events again, and we're able to see more people in the office. It's so fascinating. Most of the staff that I've worked with for the last few months, the first time I'm meeting them in person has been just recently. We've been working together for over a year and it's just in the last few months that we're actually meeting each other because I came on board after the lock down began, so I never had the opportunity to meet everybody face-to-face. So that's been my experience recently is having the opportunity to meet everybody in real time.

To begin my presentation, and before we move forward talking about RCC services, remote conference captioning, I do want to take a minute to recognize the other trends that have been growing, which is speech to speech services. We've seen very strong growth, pretty much triple or quadruple in the last few months. And that's really in part we want to recognize our board member Steve Cooper for getting the word out there to the speech disabled community and really helping our team to network with those members of the community that we really haven't done our due diligence to connect with before. So that's contributed to those numbers increasing and services being provided, so Steve, thank you for your work in that area.

Moving on. RCC. As you notice on the chart that was sent out, there's been some really exponential growth, which we expected to a degree. This is the first time that it has been included in the Maryland contract, which started March of 2020. So really the service began in April of 2020. And if I'm remembering my dates correctly, so yes, March of 2020 was the initiation of the new contract. And we had the service there. But at the time, to be honest, we were still working out the logistics of marketing that service, so on and so forth, so it took a couple months to iron out those logistics. There was a learning curve in terms of how to really get the word out about RCC.

Late fall I would say, we really became active in terms of our marketing. We developed a PowerPoint presentation, and some slides were added to the general outreach presentations to get the word out about RCC. So I would say that was around late fall.

And then aggressively in the winter months we started reaching out and networking with people because it was a perfect opportunity with everybody being home to utilize this particular service.

I just want to recognize Steve's comment in the chat saying thank you so much. It is a valuable service for the speech disabled community. Absolutely, I would echo that sentiment, Steve, and thank you again for your help.

So getting back to RCC. Like I said, in the winter we became very aggressive through December, I would say December-February with our outreach, marketing, with spreading the word about RCC. You could see the word get out there. I started getting emails from various constituents, some religious-based organizations, churches, temples, nonprofit organizations. We were contacted by different entities hosting events. We were contacted by some government entities as well as commercial companies inquiring about RCC service.

We also noticed some people reaching out, and to give you an example of one situation, I got a question asking if RCC could be used in legal settings like the court system. So we had to be very, very clear about where RCC was appropriate and where it wasn't. And we did that through our outreach and education. The outreach piece has been critical when it comes to RCC services because it was a little bit ambiguous in terms of what RCC is appropriate for. A lot of people think it is akin to speech recognition software. It is not. We are paying a live person to do that transcription service. So the education piece was where we had to work to make sure the community was well versed in what RCC was all about.

We've added our Maryland partner training, which is essentially teaching organizations and commercial entities how to utilize Maryland Relay and understand how to use it, when it is appropriate, the dos and don'ts, understanding the rights of the users, and so forth. We added RCC to that presentation as well. And again, just in an effort to get the word out there.

We want to make sure that people didn't think they had to use RCC to be in compliance or that RCC could be a replacement for other types of accommodations. We had to make sure it was clear that it had to be requested by an individual. Because we also want to avoid situations of misuse.

So as a result of all this, we have seen the numbers grow. In addition to that, we've had RCC focus groups that we have hosted. We've begun those not too terribly long ago. We had an RCC panel discussion that was open to the public where we were able to have the conversation about it with everyone back in April. Again, part of our outreach and education efforts.

And since then we have noticed some steady growth.

Now, some external factors that really concern me. Federal relay, as you all know, has been ended. It was supposed to be ended in May and they have postponed that cut off of federal relay service. GSA will be closing that out in October. And then it will be up to the individual agencies themselves to provide that accommodation because it's already available as a public service. At least that is the perspective from GSA. So they are still in talks and negotiations with that. HLAA is involved, NAD is involved, and they are trying to fight that. That is something that we have kept abreast of for the last several months.

And we have noticed that since that order came out, several government workers, NIH, for example, SSA, government entities that are located within Maryland have been inquiring about RCC services because of the impending cut off for federal relay. It's not a large percentage by any means. We've noticed that typically religious services are our primary users and the ones that use RCC on a consistent, ongoing basis. The growth now is sort of unregulated. It's not being monitored too terribly closely. We're able to see things after the fact, not before, when it comes to RCC service. We're hoping that's going to change, and I'm going to talk about that on the next slide. I'm not showing the slides, but on the next slide you were sent. So first was the updates. Next I'll talk about the RCC approval process.

So Hamilton Relay has made upgrades to our approval process for RCC. We looked at the current approval process. We had our focus group where we gathered feedback. We also had other opportunities for brainstorming and feedback. And essentially what we gleaned is that they want TAM or Maryland Relay to filter those RCC requests prior to approval. So getting that feedback, we had to work on a process to create that. So moving forward we would be able to do that capacity and do it in a formal way. Nothing solid as of yet. But the concept is that we will be taking on a supervision capacity in terms of vetting those requests. And if they don't meet specific criteria, we will reach out to the requesting entity for clarification before we approve that request.

We also have a plan in place, if I'm not available, who would be the backup person. And I'm going to explain about that a little bit later in the presentation.

And we're developing basically a final criteria and set of policies and procedures that we will present to the board. Basically right now we get the request, we approve it, and we move forward. And we're looking at streamlining that process which of course we will then pass on to you.

Now, our RCC focus groups. One-third of the folks have not yet completed the testing and/or the survey. So we're going to postpone things till August. And we'll host another mock meeting then to have the opportunity for them to experience RCC and experience making those mock requests. We want to make sure people have the opportunity to interact with the service hands on.

We're also going to have some other focus groups that will be meeting relatively soon because we want the opportunity to collect some very specific information in terms of feedback, and we have some very specific questions that we're going to be asking.

From there we'll be developing a set of draft guidelines for RCC for the state of Maryland. Basically rules, policies, regulations, any type of limitations, expectations for use, qualifications to utilize the service. In addition to that, I also did ask other states who were already providing RCC service to send me their guidelines. I've gotten them from two states so I've had the opportunity to look over those to just give an idea of what things look like. There is no standardization, I can tell you that right now, but it gives me a general concept that I can work from.

Therefore, it is my hope that by the next board meeting the council members will have the final draft of the RCC guidelines ready for you to review.

That addition to that, I will also send out the draft when it is close to completion for your feedback. And we'll hold questions until the end of my presentation, if you don't mind.

Let me double check where I am on the agenda.

I am part of the DAC with the FCC, the Disability Advisory Council. I was selected to be part of the emerging technology work group. You might be wondering what that is. It essentially focuses on developing recommendations and guidelines for new technology as it emerges. For example, artificial intelligence. It's also looking at VR, virtual reality types of technologies, AR which is augmented reality, virtual assistance, Siri, Alexa, for example. Let me see what other types of areas. Self-driving vehicles, and how to communicate with that type of technology. I'm trying to think if I missed anything. So any emerging up and coming technology. I've thrown out RCC and RTT as possibilities that need to be considered. I consider them emerging in my opinion, so they are being included as part of the oversight for that committee.

So if you're experiencing any frustrations or pains related to any of these new technologies that you feel policies need to be established for, caption services, whatever the case may be, please pass that information on to me via email and I'll be happy to share that on with the emerging technologies work group. It's very exciting to be a part of that.

I'll follow up with you, Glenn, yes.

Okay. We also had the opportunity to visit the Frostburg call center. Kevin, David, and myself went to the call center now that things are beginning to open up. That picture, that particular day, was my first time meeting Kevin in person, if you can imagine, after working together for over a year. I finally had the opportunity to see him in real time.

That was also my first opportunity to meet Melissa in person as well. She's our Hamilton account manager, and she met us there at the Frostburg call center.

A week before that we actually gave an award to Miss Betty Dodds at her home to recognize her services, her years of service on the council. And that was my first time meeting Donna in person. So if you can imagine, it's just been of late that I've had the opportunity to actually see these people face-to-face. And in a lot of cases, people are not the heights I expected them to be. Some are taller or shorter. So it's been a funny experience. But it's been wonderful seeing everyone in person after all these many months of COVID. So it was great visiting the call center. Very quiet building. Most of the folks there are still working remotely. We saw maybe 5-6 staff there in the entire building, so we were able to have a tour, very nice tour. It was very nice to finally have a connection, a real-time connection to some of the work that I do, which is typically remote in nature, so that was nice.

We also mentioned the RCC focus groups, the deadlines. Also want to mention NASRA. We have been, as of late, participating -- I think we're on our fourth webinar. Actually, no, our fourth one is coming up on the 20th of July. We'll be talking about deafblind services specifically. That's going to be Bryen and Thor from Chicago who will be giving that presentation. I believe Jason is familiar with them. You guys might be working together in the future since Jason is headed that way. Who knows.

JASON: Yes, that's correct. If you wouldn't mind emailing me details, I can get those logistics figured out.

TRAVIS: Absolutely. And the last few things and then I'll open it up for questions.

We have noticed that when it comes to time lines, this December we're going to be approaching our 30th anniversary of the very first call that took place through Maryland Relay. That will be taking place this December. And the following April the TAM office was established. So we're coming up on the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the TAM office as well, so really the 30th anniversary of Maryland Relay Services. So we've begun the planning phases for that. We're thinking about having some type of reception. We're in the brainstorming phases of that now, and if you have any ideas, please feel free to reach out to me with those. We want to make this a really great event for anybody who has any history with relay. We've come a long way when you think about it.

Now, with that in mind, this kind of parlays into our TAM museum. We have, as you know, many, many antiquated pieces of equipment, many of which have been donated by current or previous board members, equipment that was utilized in the '60s, '70s, '80s. In the office, believe it or not, we have one of the old 1950s TTYs, the old monsters, several hundred pound ones. We have one in the office. So we want to convert all of this inventory into some type of display that we can utilize in the future, and we want to incorporate that as part of our 30th anniversary event. So we're also working on that right now. We of course very much want to preserve our history of telecommunications in the state.

And that concludes my report. We'll wait one second while we change Deaf interpreters, and then I'll open things up for questions.

Okay. Glenn?

GLENN: Hi, Travis. This is Glenn speaking. So my question -- first I want to say congratulations on the RCC increase and the increase with outreach. My part with research and testing and delivering equipment with people I know has been -- is the plan with RCC to -- currently with RCC and Maryland Relay, I'm just wanting a little bit more clarification on what's going on there.

TRAVIS: Actually, you want to reverse it. We weren't the first. Maryland. I want to say it was approximately 2 months ago that we created that. Really, to be honest, let me explain. Hamilton had all this verbiage, and we tried to create some type of URL, it wasn't very professional, so what we've done is created a completely separate web page, Marylandrcc.com, I believe, if I remember correctly, which has all the information, all the talking points, and we're going to ask our PR form to make sure the registration can be done via that, so that people can input -- I'm not really well versed in all of that, the SCM and all the mechanics that relate to that. But at any rate, that's what we're working towards.

GLENN: Thank you.

DARRIN: So my question is in regards to the RCC, with the new implementation. Will it become more well accepted? Will it be regulated under the FCC? Or will it be a state by state controlled process? What does that regulation process look like and how will it be implemented? With new telecommunication access programs that will pop up, I'm sure. So that being one aspect.

And another aspect, are other states going to be using that RCC service similar to that in Maryland or are they going to be implementing their own processes?

TRAVIS: That was really two questions so I want to be sure I cover both of them. If you can repeat the first one for me, if you don't mind.

DARRIN: Regarding FCC regulations.

TRAVIS: Yes, thank you.

Okay. So to clarify. Right now currently the FCC has no mandate for RCC services. It is state by state. There is no federal requirement. And they don't regulate RCC in any capacity.

That being said, actually, I would like David, would you mind coming up so you can add to this, please?

DAVID: Certainly.

TRAVIS: So the guidelines, I know there's regulations for our state of Maryland, but in terms of the other states that were mentioned, I want to say, what, 80%, 20% are not. Like for example, the length of the call, if somebody wants an 18-hour nonstop person to provide CART services through RCC, do we limit that. Some states do. Some states don't. Some states limit it to 12 hours. It kind of depends. I think that is the purpose of the focus groups, to see what we want to do in Maryland. And to be honest, there's a lot of gray areas, which is better and which is not. That's where we are right now.

David, could you add to that, please?

DAVID: Absolutely. That pretty much is the size of it. Because RCC itself is an emerging option, there's really no way for states to do so in a standardized way. It's historically been considered an interstate relay option for the federal relay and confined to that contract. But then with the sunset of that contract, it can be kind of collapsed into everything. So the federal RCC clientele is going to migrate to Maryland for obvious reasons for RCC services, and it seems like the FCC is not necessarily in a position to propose any revised regulations on RCC as a service. Certainly not that I've heard that they have any plans or anything in the works to do, which indicates that the individual states are in their respective driver seat.

TRAVIS: So it would then be incumbent upon them to look at that. Okay. So for clarification, the federal relay cut off, because that was mentioned, I'm thinking it. VRS, TTY, what are the services they provide? Caption phone. I'm listing everything that falls under that contract. RCC. VRI.

So the FCC, really GSA, not FCC, announced the end of that service because there's public entities available. The problem, the last two I mentioned, not all states have access to those, the VRI. I mean, I think there's no public service for VRI necessarily. And there's also no publicly regulated services for RCC.

Now, to answer Darrin's question, there are a total of nine states that currently offer RCC services. And I'm actually in the process of recruiting Nevada and California to add that to their next RFP. So we're very excite told see that type of influence on other states to continue to add RCC in more and more areas.

Any additional questions?

Okay. I'll turn things back over to Al.

AL: Thank you, Travis. Very well done. This is Al speaking.

Kevin Steffy is now invited to come on screen and deliver his remarks.

KEVIN: Thank you, Al.

Hello, everyone. This is Kevin Steffy speaking. Happy Friday. Good to see all of you guys again.

My current report is going to be over the past 3 months. This will be the last quarter of FY20-21, excuse me, for the future three months up until August. And we have three new applicants -- 53 new applicants in the past 3 months. We had 48, and we have passed out 50 new pieces of equipment.

The MAT evaluation can take place in person with the clients as of now. If the evaluation centers allow access and if the clients feel comfortable. Some evaluation centers are not allowing in-person due to the pandemic as of right now. But if those rules allow, they can go into the evaluation center or enter the client's home.

If both the evaluator and the client feel comfortable to meet in person, if both are vaccinated or feel comfortable wearing masks or not wearing masks, all of those decisions are up to the pair.

I'm going to give some statistics on the equipment that was distributed, and you can take a closer look at the numbers later. I will be referencing my notes here.

From April-June of 2021, these are the statistics. The amount of equipment that was distributed by county from April-June of 2021, go ahead and take a look at those numbers.

Moving on, again, the quantity of equipment distributed over the course of FY20-21 year. So August of 2020 to June of 2021. Go ahead and take a look at the PowerPoint to see those numbers.

Moving right along, same statistic over the course of one year, how much equipment was distributed per county.

All right. Next, I'm going to talk a little bit about our focus group. We have two different focus groups, one Deaf focus group, one deafblind focus group. The Deaf focus group has one participant, and that is Alex Simmons. Really grateful to him for his participation in that.

In regards to the deafblind focus group, we have three participants, Jason Corning, grateful for his participation. The Deaf focus group focused on iPhones, Pixel 4as, mobile detection devices through vibrations and the like, or light sensors, SquareGlow which is a Deaf-owned business, or fingerprinting phone and providing feedback on devices and uses a total of seven different colors within that device system. So red means a door is being opened, blue means a phone is going off, green means a person may be crying. So it's a color coded system, and each color can be set based on the user's preferences.

The deafblind focus group focused on the iPad Pro, the iPhone Pro Max, the Pixel 4a, the page receiver, which is a device that can be put in your pocket and vibrates, can connect to phone devices, can connect to doors.

So these two focus groups give us a tremendous amount of helpful feedback and perspective about these devices I just listed. And those pieces of equipment really, truly can apply to all different individuals of different backgrounds and experiences. Maybe a Deaf individual prefers an iPhone, whereas another Deaf individual prefers another device. Depending on if they have a cochlear implant or not. Some devices allow speech. Maybe some deafblind people are super tech savvy where others prefer devices that are more user friendly. It's a very individualized experience, and we wanted a bunch of diversity within that program. And being able to evaluate a whole host and find the right match for individuals.

Moving right along to the MAT application form. This is an example of what the form looks like. It's recently been revamped. You saw in the past meeting we discussed it. We've been gathering your feedback, and it looks like there needs to be a couple accommodations and additions: A Spanish translation, larger text, a Braille translation, and an electronic signature are some adaptations that we need to make to the document. Donna and I have yet to set up a meeting with Devaney and test it with different focus groups. That meeting will be coming soon. So that is for the form.

Next we have the RFP, which finished about 3 months ago, or was supposed to finish about 3 months ago, but that didn't, in fact, happen. We realized we did not receive enough bids from the vendors, so we were inquiring why there hadn't been a whole host of bids for the MAT program. We have a couple reasons why that we received. Because of the MBE, Minority Business Enterprise, the veterans small business owner, as well as the mercury disclosure statement, those were three reasons why bids were of lower number. So we have been having frequent meetings, thinking about making adjustments specifically to the RFP to adjust for those hesitations, and we're thinking of removing those three, in addition to the functional areas, there is 11 different categories or 11 different functional areas, one being the captioned phone, accessories, and the like, which equals a total of about 11 different functional areas, but we decided to remove all of those and do not need a list within that document.

Now with the new IFB, the invitation for bid, we're discussing a transition over to that instead of the RFP. The RFP is a little bit more complex and requires many more aspects. The IFB is a little bit more streamlined and seamless. It would be wonderful to be able to save time on the bid order with the IFB in particular. It requires -- to go back a little bit, the bidding process happens on an annual basis. Instead of ordering with the RFP, instead of that going on on an ongoing basis, it would be an annual basis.

When the IFB is finalized, we will be sending that out. But in the meantime for FY22, we do have to extend our current contract, which then does mean we will still be proceeding with the bid order for every individual order for this fiscal year.

Moving right along to communication facilitator or CF. That is a new program that has been added. MAT will be overseeing that program. We have implemented a committee, being Jane Hager, the evaluator of that committee, Rachel Horowitz, who is particularly knowledgeable about deafblind individuals, Steven Collins from Gallaudet, also knowledgeable about the deafblind population, Eddie Martinez, who is a deafblind individual and President of NWBA. Nai, a hearing blind individual and works for lighthouse of the blind, Columbia Lighthouse of the Blind and has since moved to San Francisco, Nai Damato, and myself, a total of six individuals on this committee who will be developing a list of trainings for communication facilitators. And determining rates for the communication facilitators, whether that be through contractors or hiring state employees, and the scheduling logistics of that, as well as QR codes. You may be thinking to yourself how that is relevant to this discussion. QR codes are those black and white boxes that you can hover your phone over to pull up information on that device. Let's say a deafblind individual requests a communication facilitator for a specific amount of time, let's say 9:00-12:00. The scheduler will send that assignment information to the communications facilitator. How do we verify that that communication facilitator follows through on the assignment and shows up on time and the like, that QR code will tell us. The deafblind individual has a QR code with them and the communication facilitator will then show up to the location and use their phone or device to scan in sort of like a clock in system, proceed with the interpretation, and once the assignment is finished, we'll scan the QR code again and clock out.

The committee has been working on these things that I just listed. And the implementation of the CF program will hopefully begin in the fall if all goes according to plan.

Next up for the evaluation center. As I mentioned in our previous meeting, Lori, one of our board members, is the director of MDTAP. We are under the same department as that branch, MDOD. So Lori and I were envisioning -- excuse me, realized we serve very similar disabled populations, and we utilized very similar types of equipment. Her centers are all over Maryland, as are ours, so we're thinking about how collaboration can start taking place and how we can create an integrated center or centers around Maryland to have sort of a one-stop shop. There's a big need in the northeast region as well as the southeast region, so we have been looking at some different properties over the past while, and we found out that we do have to go through DGE, the office of real estate, in order to secure that property. So it's a different sort of process that I've been learning that I didn't know before.

So we found different locations that we're interested in, and I will be proposing those to the office of real estate, and then that office then proceeds with the property and real estate negotiations, and the requirement for the lease. But it's not on our end that that happens. So we will have more information on that front in the next meeting that we have.

And that's it for my report. Do we have any questions?

AL: Ladies and gentlemen, I do have a question. I'm actually very excited about the CF program at long last. I couldn't be more happy. You say it will kick off in September thereabouts?

KEVIN: In the fall. September or October if all proceeds well, if we get the trainings of the communication facilitators lined up. If that extends longer, we may have to delay the program. Again, we have to hire a scheduler as well, contract with that individual, and then we can start the process. But we don't want the burden of scheduling and logistics to be only on the committee. We want to be able to have individuals who can take the reins on that, as well as having Donna continue with the marketing and advertising of the CF program. Deafblind individuals who are interested in getting those services then have to go through the process of the application, the database that we have needs to continue to be developed, and information inputted into that system. So there's a whole host of aspects that need to be finalized.

AL: All right. So you're also working out the budget for that. I'm wondering the level of that.

KEVIN: About 75K for the year is what we project. But we do expect expenditures to increase. So it will probably increase.

AL: Outstanding. I am utterly thrilled. I would like to hear, though, about whether other states have such a program.

KEVIN: Yes. As a matter of fact, Washington State being the first to set up such a program. Minnesota, Louisiana, Virginia -- no, excuse me, Vermont, Florida, and others that I may not be aware of.

AL: So you're making all those considerations. Outstanding.

KEVIN: Yeah, we're making those comparisons with the Washington State program. The QR code aspect is something that we actually implemented based on Washington State. And just making sure that we have that accountability for the communication facilitator assignments.

AL: And there should be, I suppose, some instructions so that when a CF enters a deafblind individual's home, they have a moment to get acquainted. And there should be time built in for that. It shouldn't be just sort of off to the races with the work bit.

KEVIN: Correct. Once the QR code is distributed to the deafblind individual, there will also be instructions, and then when the interpretation is ready to start, when the CF shows up, that's when the QR code will be scanned and they will be off.

AL: And I suppose we have to be sure fraud, waste, and abuse are monitored. With VRS we thought there would be none, and to our great surprise, there was. So we cannot make any assumptions that everyone is going to act with integrity. But that is lovely.

KEVIN: In Washington State, as a matter of fact, when they implemented the QR code, they noticed that there was abuse that happened between lengthening assignments, not showing up on time, reducing the amount of interpreted hours, and they didn't know how to handle that. So we are aware that implementing this aspect may cause those issues.

AL: Certainly. Keep up the good work, Kevin.

KEVIN: And I also want to thank the committee members who have been a part of this implementation.

AL: Excellent.

The Chair is calling for any further questions. And I'll recognize Darrin.

DARRIN: Yes, I have a question for Kevin. So the communication facilitator program, that year round 75K, where is that money coming from? Is that coming from the state? From the USTF?

KEVIN: USTF. I'm actually going to turn it over to David to let him elaborate on that question.

DAVID: Yes, it's coming from the USTF funds.

KEVIN: Which is under MAT, correct?

DAVID: Correct. And the reason for that is the communication facilitator program is codified in state law, which was, oh, Lord, that falls under the MAT program section. So the language is written there. Therefore, it utilizes USTF funding.

KEVIN: Thank you.

AL: Chair recognizes Jason.

JASON: So I can elaborate, essentially what happened 3-4 years ago is that the National Federation of the Blind wanted us to add funding. Of course the federal government and the National Federation of the Blind were involved with that. So they actually proposed a bill to utilize USTF funding and apply it to things like those Google glasses, and there was an outcry from the community on that. And the legislation did not allow for that to move forward. So there was further talks to figure out what could be the work around if they are not going to fund something like Google glasses, what kind of funding can be created and can be used to provide support for the deafblind community because they weren't going to allow the USTF to be utilized in that way. So they moved forward with the CF program instead and the legislation took care of that 3 years ago.

However, that was under the previous director's leadership, and they weren't able to move forward with it at that time. And it seems like now the logistical concerns have been worked out to be able to move forward with that program.

AL: So in other words, we owe a thanks to the hearing blind community for having done the groundwork so that we could have CF services set forth. Ah, the irony.

KEVIN: Yes. I wanted to add one more note about the CF program. It's not only for deafblind individuals who sign. It could be deafblind individuals who are hard of hearing, who use speech to communicate. The CF providers have a range of abilities, whether it be protactile, using a microphone for amplified speech for hard of hearing users. It is a range of accessibility issues.

AL: All right. This is Al speaking. Excellent.

Let's move on to the next item on the agenda. I'll invite everyone else to turn their cameras off.

Our next report is one that we will hear from Donna Broadway-Callaman with respect to the outreach program. Donna, the screen is yours.

DONNA: Good morning, everyone. So my name is Donna Broadway-Callaman. I am the outreach manager for Maryland Relay. And I am here to give my outreach report.

So it is summer conference season. It is my favorite season. We have so many conferences, conferences in Ocean City. We get to go around and outreach, we get to share about Maryland Relay, the MAT program, and this year we get to do it in person because last year we did not get to do it in person. So recently we attended, so myself and Tarita Turner, we attended the Maryland Municipal League conference, MML. We attended that in late June. Tarita got to meet the Governor and take a picture with him and the First Lady. We got to meet a lot of great contacts from different municipalities. We got to talk to communication directors, people that dealt with certain populations that we deal with. So we made a lot of great contacts from MML. It is a great conference, and we are following up with those contacts that we got.

There's also a virtual MML, so it was two elements to this conference, the in-person element and the virtual element, which will be happening on July 19-20 of next week.

We also will be attending MACO, Maryland Association of Counties, and that is another big conference. The Governor attends that one too. We also have senators, we have representatives, we have state senators, state delegates, we have representatives from all 24 counties in from the city as well as different state agencies, so it's a great opportunity to get out there and promote Maryland Relay and promote our products. And that is August 18-21. We have five representatives that can go. And then there's also a tech expo on the 18th which is at MACO but it is separate from the regular expo. And Kevin Steffy will be attending that as well, sharing MAT equipment, and we will also be sharing RTT as well. So that's the big thing we're preparing for.

So I attended NACO with an N. There's a little bit of confusion because there's MACO and NACO, the Maryland Association of Counties and National Association of Counties. So I attended NACO and that was a good opportunity to network and share a little bit about Maryland Relay and the telecommunications aspects of Maryland. So they did have a session related to telecommunications which I was interested in. And so Jenny will be going to the Eastern Shore in August. That is picking up. And the Governor, as of when I wrote this report, he did not require us to wear masks anymore. However, there is a rise in the delta variant cases so I'm not sure what that means for outreach, but as of now, we do have in-person outreach. We do have PPE and will be wearing masks and using those safety protocols.

And there's also a meeting for Mid-Atlantic expo. And Rebecca will be attending that today. And there's also a conference she is looking to attend. And there are many events going on, the world of disabilities in October. There is Mid-Atlantic ADA which we'll be attending with Department of Disabilities. There is the Maryland conference in October. And the echo conference which we will be looking to attend in October. Those are actually the same week. Like Travis said earlier, it is the 30th anniversary of TAM so we are looking to do a hybrid event. So we want to do something in December to celebrate the first phone call. So we'll probably do like a video, like a short presentation, maybe something on Zoom, but then we want to have something bigger in August to celebrate the opening of the TAM office.

We are also looking to do some renovations to our office as well as the museum.

So those are the big things we are working on. In-person outreach, renovations to the office, 30th anniversary, and the museum. And our newsletter just came out, so we are reviewing that as well.

I think that's pretty much it. I'm just looking at my notes. So we are doing the lunch and learn programs, and we are still working on creating the wrap for the new van that we have recently received. And then post pandemic outreach because there is a new variant so we are not sure what that means for our outreach in person if we're going to continue outreach or if the numbers are going to go up so high that we have to scale it back. I'm sure we'll have more of an update next meeting. I will let you know if anything has changed. But we are continuing with the events, with advertisement, webinars, mailings, networking, and in-person field visits.

So that is my report. Are there any questions?

AL: I do actually have a question, Donna, but I'll cede the floor to others if they have a question first. Do any other members of the council have questions to put forth at this time?

Okay. Then you'll hear from me. Sounds like a really good program and some excellent networking program effort as food. Tell me you're working closely with Devaney and my understanding is that Hamilton does have a contract with the PR agency in place. How is that being managed in your office, Donna?

DONNA: Actually it's being managed great. We all three work well together. We work well with Devaney. The turnaround time is great. We put in requests. We have great communication with Melissa and meet with her weekly. I meet with her weekly and I meet with the outreach coordinators weekly, so everybody has great communication. We turn out great products. If we have any feedback, they are very receptive to it and they make any changes as we see fit. So that relationship is being handled great.

AL: Excellent. The reason I would have posed that question, Donna, is because of the sessions of the focus group and the town hall meeting which had been opened to the public. That was, what, a month or two ago, and we are still grateful to those who made those arrangements. Thanks to Darrin for spearheading that. There were only about 20 people, however, who participated. 20 people after all of the statewide promotional information went out and all of the networking. In the past, in person, we had upwards of 100. But now we only saw 20. So I'm wondering, and one can only assume, that among the team that would have been a lot of those participants. So maybe there were only 3-4 members of the public. I'm wondering if you have put any thought into how we can move that forward, get those numbers up? Obviously we're not doing something. There is something where there is a disconnect.

DONNA: We definitely do advertise or Facebook. So we do that advertisement. We advertise on our website, keeping our website updated. And we do have a mailing list, an email mailing list and a physical mailing list which has recently been updated. But we will definitely go through, when I speak to Melissa, we have a marketing meeting coming up in a few weeks and we will put that on the agenda. And then we will definitely see that engagement grow in the next few months and have an update for the board in October.

TRAVIS: Just to let everybody know, that town hall, I just want to emphasize that that was a state event. That was not a specific outreach event. So they're very different animals. That was facilitated by the state program, not outreach. So that then falls on me. If there's any issue, I will accept responsibility for it, just for the point of clarification.

However, we do want to clarify Devaney's role, but that specific event falls under the state.

AL: I wanted to recognize Darrin. I would love to hear what he has to say on this.

DARRIN: I would say, first of all, I had been involved in promoting the event and getting other folks involved. And I reached out in the process to MDAD, to the other organizations that serve this population to get the word out so that they were aware of the town hall. I don't know that PR was the problem. From Donna, David, Travis, and the rest, certainly we were able to design promotional materials, and I don't think that's where the disconnect laid. I think that if there was adequate interest, we would have seen folks. If not, then we can't force them to come. I don't want to lay blame on PR. I don't really think that was the problem. I just don't think there is the level of interest, firstly.

Secondly, I think that maybe the weekend versus a weekday proved to have a big impact. I did want to actually talk through the next town hall logistics and see whether there wouldn't be the opportunity to have something else planned in terms of schedule. I think we need to bear in mind that telecommunication is not necessarily an exciting topic. If we're talking about law, policy, advocacy, etc., these are really completely separate and distinct issues. If we're talking about proposed legislation, that's something different. That might light a fire under people to participate. If we're talking about, you know, programs and projects, then we really have to make good and sure that the community understands it is their responsibility to make themselves aware. And if they choose not to, I don't know that we can lay blame with folks on the team or with PR. I was part of it, and I support and endorse what we did internally, but there are simply some hiccups there, and we have to bear in mind that this was the first of its kind, this town hall. So it was a learning experience. And now we're kind of filing that experience away for future use. Maybe next time we can see the full board, we can see other kinds of participation from different perspectives, and we can see new and emerging issues that might be appropriate to raise. We can't really play the blame game. It was successful insofar as we haven't had anything for a year's time. So we do need to bear that in mind.

That concludes my remarks. Thank you.

AL: This is Sonny speaking. I want to make it abundantly clear that I am not laying blame at anyone's feet. I am simply -- well, I used to be an engineer. So I pretty much stick to the facts, and the facts are that after all of the energy and effort that was put in to what was a wonderful program for a statewide audience, the fact remains that maybe just a handful of people, maybe upwards of four people from outside of staff and contractors, were attending the town hall meeting. So that says something. And it says that we missed the mark in some way. I don't know what that is, but what I saw was that Travis was responsible for that, and of course Donna has her outreach function as well. And it may be that folks never heard about it. Certainly in my social circle, I want to say maybe that's the case. I don't want for us to be complacent and sit back. I think we should look at the facts and look at what issues there were. I'm convinced that we can do better next time. And I know that Donna shares that sentiment, if I'm not mistaken.

DONNA: Well, I actually agree with you. PR is about gaining interest. And even if telecommunications isn't the most interesting topic, it is our job to make sure that people are interested. So the next meeting we need to make sure that people are interested and we need to make sure that we definitely have more than four outside people attending.

AL: Excellent, Donna. Thank you. Marvelous.

I would entertain any further questions. If not, then we're going to take a break of no more than 5 minutes. I am seeing that it is 11: 11 on the clock. We will reconvene this meeting at 11:16. We are now on a break.

[Break]

AL: Okay. I will consult the agenda, which tells me that it is now Hamilton Relay's time to deliver their reports, the first of which will be Tarita Turner. Tarita, you have the screen.

TARITA: Good morning, everyone. This is Tarita Turner. I am a Black woman with curly bangs, some pretty fabulous glasses, and I am currently wearing a white shirt with little birdies all over it. Oh, and forgot my mask. We have been talking about our activities and our outreach exhibits, and this is what I wear when I am out and about now. I have a clear mask on. It is totally clear. You can see my lips. It is starting to fog up a little bit with because I'm human and I produce warmth.

Behind me, I just want to remind you of what our exhibit tables look like. I have a black tablecloth over my table here, and there are some phones that include the caption phone, the TTY which is the best conversation starter in the world. I also have a table mate with a little purple tiger back here and she's holding another device. As well as some other phones, applications, and information for folks to pick up.

So I just wanted to remind everyone what we look like when we are out and about, because we are finally starting to go out and do in-person events. Travis mentioned, it Donna also mentioned it, and I did get the absolute pleasure of being with her at MML in Ocean City.

I'm going to take my clear mask off now.

I want to share with you guys some of our numbers for the quarter. I'm reporting on March, April, and May. So we had two exhibits, both of those exhibits were virtual exhibits this quarter. We had 24 presentations. So that is amazing. And one of those presentations was a new relay partner program. So just to remind everyone, relay partner is when a company contacts us, and in this case it was Life Health Home Insurance group, spearheaded by a young lady named Ellen Davis. But this is where a company, a business will contact us and say, hey, we want to know a little bit more about Maryland Relay, what it has to offer and how we can make sure that we are able to take phone calls with ease from anyone who is using the service. So we did have one new relay partner added.

We had 40 networking events, which is just an opportunity for us to meet people, to make sure that we are in this virtual bubble that we're still in, kind of one foot in one foot out almost, but we are making sure that we're still able to reach out to folks.

We had 34 meetings. And this is a little less than a presentation but a little more than just a phone call or a chat. So people asking for more information and us going into those deep dive conversations. So that's 34 meetings.

And we were also able to sponsor four different organizations this quarter. That's tremendous, right, so to sponsor, we may have an advertisement put in to their newsletter or have the opportunity to saint talk. And Jenny actually will tell you a little bit more about one of those sponsors.

And just to remind you guys, as we start to go back out and as we start to dip our toe back into the real world, please let us know if you have any type of event or a presentation idea or you're thinking, man, you know, this business really could use a talk from this outreach team. Reach out to us. We would be happy to work with you. We've already gotten the opportunity to work with Dr. Morales, Steve Cooper, and so many others. I'm sorry I'm drawing a blank because I'm just excited about all the opportunities that we've had with board members already. So keep them coming. We absolutely love it. I appreciate your time today.

And I'm going to turn it over to Jenny. Bye.

INTERPRETER: Jenny, my friend, you're muted.

AL: This is Al speaking. One moment. I would like to back up. I do have a question, if I may, for you, Miss Tarita. I would like to hear, of course I've noted that you have a telephone behind you with some captions streaming across it. What do you have running back there? You have a telephone -- let me describe what I'm talking about. You have a telephone with a monitor above it. Is that active? Where are those captions coming from?

TARITA: So this is Tarita speaking. This is the caption phone. Jenny just above her shoulder as well, she has two of the same. They're just on demo mode. So you can change the message, but it just basically says what caption telephones do, what they are. And when folks come up, now not so much, but they can actually pick up the phone and listen at the same time.

AL: Okay. I thought it was your voice. I thought it was real-time captioning your voice, Tarita.

TARITA: This is Tarita. No. There is nothing that fancy in my house currently.

AL: Well, thanks all the same.

TARITA: Sure.

AL: Are there any further questions for Tarita before we turn the screen over to Jenny?

The time is yours, Jenny.

JENNY: Okay. Good morning, everyone. My name is Jenny Pearson. I am the caption telephone outreach coordinator. I'm going to tell you a little bit today about some of our outreach highlights. And I wanted to explain real quick what my display is. Tarita showed you what's more of a typical display that we would use when we're out in the field, and as you know in the last year, we've been doing a lot of virtual presentations. People have gotten really creative with their conferences and their meetings, and a lot of times they do a theme. I chose the theme today of Baltimore Orioles baseball. If you're a fan of the Orioles, you will know we had a representative on our team of the all-star team for the home run derby. He came in second place. His name is Trey Mancini and he is a cancer survivor so I got permission to decorate my background with this. You'll see bobble heads, my bobble head collection. I've got two jerseys here. I'm dressed in orange. And I'm wearing baseball earrings. And believe me, there's much more in my house.

So we're trying to make it fun and visually interesting for people. It also helps with connections. People who are baseball fans may connect with me as we get to know each other and learn about Maryland Relay.

Also behind me as Tarita pointed out, you'll see two different models of caption phones. They are both running in demo mode. Those are captions basically showing an individual what that looks like. So when they come to our table, they can actually see what the caption telephone is capable of doing.

So thank you for giving me this opportunity to explain why I have all this orange going on behind me. And so let's get on to the highlights.

I want to talk first about the awards program. We do have a scholarship award winner. His name is Andrew. His last name is Photinakis. He will be attending RIT and will be studying disputing and information sciences. So we're very excited and thrilled to be a part of his education moving forward.

We also delivered the Better Hearing and Speech Month recognition award to Steve Cooper, who you are all familiar with now. He was thrilled to receive the award, and we were thrilled to give it to him. We can't think of a better candidate for this year's award. And I want to let you know that that was also given out on June 9th during the Montgomery County laryngectomy club monthly meeting. So everyone was so thrilled to be able to there to celebrate Steve and his contributions to people with speech differences.

Currently we are accepting applications and nominations for the Deaf awareness -- or the Deaf community leader award, which will be given out in September. The deadline for this is August 13. Those can be submitted to Rebecca Miller. I will put her contact information in the chat. And be sure that when you're out and about and talking to folks, if you know of somebody who deserves this award or you feel should be recognized, please let other people know. We have a number of previous winners as part of GABTR. So we're thrilled to acknowledge them as well.

Moving on to things we've done in the past few months, Tarita mentioned sponsorships. I'm excited to talk about the pro aging source book sponsorship we did for May. In May we acknowledged Better Hearing and Speech Month by working with the pro aging source book discussion series and sponsoring the entire month's discussions. They had about 15 discussions that month. So we were able to talk with everyone who attended those discussions virtually.

This also gave me the unique opportunity to work with Jane Hager and Kevin Steffy to put together a presentation that not only highlighted Maryland Relay Services but also the MAT program and some of the devices that are currently available through that program for individuals who are hard of hearing or who have speech differences. It was very well received, and it was really fun working with Kevin and Jane. I look forward to doing more with them in the future.

Rebecca, our RTT outreach coordinator, who is also not with us today because she's involved in outreach, she had a number of connections with local PSAPs or public safety access points throughout the state of Maryland last quarter. She made some really great connections. She attended a number of information sessions. And she's really working hard to get her name out there to really make sure that people are aware that RTT is a thing and it's coming.

And I'm going to also reiterate what Tarita said. We really want to have an opportunity to collaborate with you, the GABTR board, to get the word out there about Maryland Relay, its services, the equipment program, and things like that. So if you know of a program, a group, it can be a book club, it can be a church group, anything like that. If you know of any groups that would be interested in hearing more about Maryland Relay, please reach out and let us know because we would be thrilled to connect with them.

At this time, that's all that I have to present for you. I'll be happy to take any questions or feedback, please.

It looks like Steve has his hand up.

STEVE: Yes. I just want to say as I guess as Hamilton Relay being the contractor or one of the contractors, with my engagement, more as a consumer or user of the product, they have just been fantastic. I just want to give a shoutout to everyone, how responsive and so engaging. I just want to thank them for all they've done.

JENNY: Thank you, Steve.

If there are no other questions or comments or feedback, I'm going to hand the baton. Thanks so much, everybody. Have a great weekend.

AL: This is Al speaking. Thank you very much indeed. And really, thanks for the kudos, Steve. We appreciate that.

As I consult the agenda, the next item is hearing from Rebecca Miller.

TRAVIS: And as Jenny just mentioned, Rebecca isn't with us today. She's at NACO, attending the event.

AL: Fair enough. That would conclude, then, the reports from Hamilton.

And the time then would go to me for my report as the Chair.

I'm very pleased with what we've seen thus far, and I want to make good and sure that the branding for TAM is emphasized. Reason being, historically, as is the case in many cases, often when a Deaf program or a program that serves Deaf people is launched, and ultimately moved under disability with a promise that they will retain their own identity, what happens eventually in practice is that it becomes indistinguishably merged with the disability program. And the identity serving Deaf folks becomes diluted if not lost entirely. And I don't want to see that happen in this case.

When we talked about the transition from DoIT over to the Department of Disabilities, I really want to emphasize that we make sure that we retain our distinct identity, and that means on kind of collateral letterhead, etc., that you'll see the TAM brand. Also in your Zoom profiles, I would like to see TAM at all times. And I would hope to see that sooner rather than later.

I did also want to talk through how we run the meeting next time. As you know, we have quarterly sessions. So that puts us around October. And it very much is a possibility that that could be in person. I would love to see that. I have a lot of Zoom fatigue. I'm tired of signing in two dimensions. And I'm looking forward to relaxing and enjoying my time with people in person. But we can certainly talk about that in due course.

Also, David, speak of the TDI conference, that will be next week, if I recall. You requested that Eric Kaika, the current director of TDI, whether or not he can allow all of the members of this body, of GABTR, access to participate at least to view the proceedings. I'm wondering if that's a possibility, David.

Second, there is word around TAM about the numbers for text and VRS-based services. And the FCC is currently requesting comment on the VRS rates. As I explained earlier in this meeting, the reimbursement for research and development has been removed from the rate, and so we have seen far less, if any, research and development in this space, which in turn is in an environment where other folks' research and development are growing. So the cuts to costs ultimately impact us, and that doesn't make any sense. That has been observed certainly, and there certainly also must be a way for VRS and for the text-based services to avail of research. I know that people use two different numbers, for example. Just last week I got a car service and I gave the woman my text number in order to reach me, let me know when the car would be completed with service. And I in the very next room, somewhat obscured and hidden, working on a computer for about 3 hours. I saw that my car was on the lot. And I talked to someone who said they tried to call me, but my iPhone does not accept voice calls for obvious reasons because it's not set up as such. So I had been working on that computer the whole time and was really severed from any communication because they didn't text me, even though it had been ready for some time. But as I was off in a corner working on my computer, it had been about an hour. I'm sure there are similar experiences out there that people experience. And the VRS companies have asked that we send in letters requesting that the FCC would allow research to be included in the rate that would improve that experience. And I'm pushing for that. And I'm using this bully pulpit to do so.

And I think that's about all for that.

Does anybody else have anything further to add with respect to the TDI conference? David?

DAVID: Sure. As it relates to what you just mentioned, people's interest in watching the TDI conference and my plenary, let me know. I can certainly go ahead and register GABTR members. Just send me an email and I can take care of that on my end for you.

AL: Al speaking. Thank you, David.

My next point of discussion was for my Vice Chair, if he had anything to add.

DARRIN: So several things have been going on. The first is the MCOD meeting, the Maryland Commission on Disabilities, their meeting took place approximately 2 weeks ago, if I remember correctly. There were several issues that came up over the course of that meeting. We spoke about education, we spoke about the impact or lack of better word the role of COVID and how it's impacted programs, mass vaccination progress, and basically received updates on all fronts.

But really the crux of the presentation was related to the blueprint, for lack of a better word, for Maryland. Maryland just had legal education passed in 2021 just as of late, and I did ask several questions during that meeting about the role of Deaf individuals as it related to that. And we also talked about the interpreting bill.

Now, so far, seems the way things are moving when it comes to the mass vaccination sites, the state run sites are being closed down. We still have Six Flags as a site. Several others in the western Maryland area have been closed down. And the state is now transitioning more to more community-based mobile vaccination services that are taking place at grocery stores, local pharmacies, local departments of health, things of that nature. So I did inquire how that would align with accommodations and communication and how they would ensure that in terms of providing interpreters and so forth and so on, so that is on the radar of the council.

That's pretty much the bulk of my report, but I also did want to mention about the schedule, and I believe it was mentioned. This is my proposal. I do want to talk about what we're going to do moving forward as it's outlined on the agenda.

Just wondering where Al was. Okay. You're back.

AL: I was just having a hard time getting from one connection to the other, but I'm sorted now.

Does anyone have any questions of Darrin?

Glenn, do you have any questions?

GLENN: I don't know why my hand was raised. No questions.

AL: Sounds good.

Michelle, any questions?

Seeing none, we'll proceed to the next item on the agenda.

Melissa, any questions?

Alex, any questions?

Anything from Ken to report?

How about Steve?

None from Steve. Thank you, sir.

Lori is not present.

Jason Corning, do you have any final thoughts?

JASON: Yes, I do, actually. I recently launched a new product called MIZARU, a specific app that helps deafblind individuals across the U.S. search for communication facilitators, SSPs, delivery services and the like. My question, really it's more of an ask and promotion to all of you, is anyone interested in becoming an SSP or CF, to go ahead and sign up. Right now we're recruiting to get enough people to be able to provide this service and launch our product. There are not enough SSPs and communication facilitators to provide for the needs of deafblind individuals. It's completely free to sign, and again, it's MIZARU.IO. It's a very new product that's still in the early stages. So I would like to see a little bit more growth with this product. Hopefully eventually to empower more deafblind individuals.

AL: This is Al speaking. That is outstanding, Jason. Have you tried to get in touch with the Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf? RID?

JASON: I have not.

AL: They do maintain a list of Certified Deaf Interpreters which might also get you in touch with some SSPs as well. So I suggest that you share that information with RID.

JASON: Absolutely. Will do. Thank you.

AL: This is Al speaking. In addition to that, I'm wondering if you're going to be working with Bryen Yunashko in Chicago.

JASON: I will be contacting him once I move to Chicago, yes.

AL: I would like to hear whether or not that is the case, because Bryen uses myMMX for folks to access the VRS system, who are deaf and blind.

JASON: Yes, I'm aware. We have separate goals, but it is possible we could collaborate, yes.

AL: I am sure everything is in process and I don't doubt you are acting in all earnestness. We will miss you. Godspeed to you and what you are going to do.

JASON: Yep. Need to pack up all of my stuff before I head out on Monday.

AL: Thank you, Jason.

Shannon, do you have anything to report?

And a final call for any members of the council who I might have missed.

All right. GABTR membership reports have concluded, and now we open the floor for public input. Has there been any input from external participants, Travis?

TRAVIS: None that I can see.

AL: Fair enough. Let's move on to new business on the agenda.

Chair recognizes Darrin.

DARRIN: I would like to propose two motions. The first being to schedule the next meeting in person. I, Darrin, make a motion to talk about the next four subsequent GABTR meetings for scheduling purposes.

AL: We do just tend to schedule them every 3 months. I would suggest we handle them one at a time.

DARRIN: Okay. So the first would be related to scheduling.

AL: And you move that the next session be held in person?

DARRIN: Yes. I Darrin Smith make a motion that we move to a hybrid schedule for October and for April, that those be virtual. And January and July be in person. That's my motion.

AL: I see. So you would like to see the October and April sessions.

DARRIN: Yes, be online. And then January and July take place in person.

AL: That's the substance of your motion. Excellent.

Do I hear a second?

GLENN: I second.

AL: Okay. Darrin and then Steve.

DARRIN: The reason why I made this particular motion was first and foremost, of course because of the pandemic, October is so soon that it may not be feasible to have an in-person meeting with all vaccinations from staff. It's not required, so, again, we want to be able to be fair to everyone. And I'm thinking the best approach then would be to have the October meeting virtually.

If things proceed according to plan, we can move to in person in January. And then back to business as usual and continue that cycle up until 2023. That's sort of my proposal. And again, I am fully vaccinated personally, but I'm not aware that vaccination status of everyone or the health risks of their parents or other family individuals who are higher risk. We have other individuals to consider in this matter, so I figured a hybrid schedule, move to a hybrid schedule would not be harmful to anyone and we might as well go forward with it.

AL: Noted.

Steve, let's hear from you. Come on up.

STEVE: Thank you. I'm very much in favor of at least hybrid. My concern is setting a schedule for four meetings at once, because with COVID, so much is unknown. I personally would like to see it addressed one meeting at a time.

And also clarification from Darrin, are you saying the October meeting virtual only? Or could we offer a hybrid?

DARRIN: This is Darrin speaking. We can propose a hybrid meeting in October. I believe we do have the virtual capabilities in the office. So if someone wanted to show up in the office and still participate virtually, that could be a feasibility. We could have that be a possible work around for our situation in October.

Again, would Maryland be able to help us in that regard, figure out the virtual capabilities, David?

DAVID: This is David. We are certainly comfortable with providing laptops, pulling people in virtually. Really and truly, as of the 1st of July, 2021, so just as of late, we technically are back to normal status when it comes to being able to return to the office.

Now, Governor Hogan has said there's some flexibility there, and that pertains to Maryland Relay.

AL: This is Al speaking. Were we to hold this meeting in October in your office, would it not still be open to members of the public, in which case we would need to ensure that those folks are vaccinated before they are allowed entry to the facility. We could hold a hybrid session, in-person only, with public participation being through, say, Facebook as a platform?

DAVID: I don't see any reason why we couldn't do that. Now, I do want to let everybody know, for state buildings in particular, the Governor's order is that we cannot require individuals to be masked at this point. There's signage currently posted outside of the buildings at all of the entrances of the buildings, basically informing folks that if you are sick or running a temperature, please do not enter the building. So it's rather passive enforcement. There's no temperature checks, there's no required masking at this point, nothing like that. So that's something that we can't force people to do.

AL: In the interest of time, would you be able to revise your motion, Darrin, which is now on the floor unfortunately, so I don't want to go into interminable amendment territory, but could we just talk about that one meeting as Steve wisely suggested for the present, and that will be strictly virtual I'm guessing, just to err on the side of caution?

DARRIN: I'm in agreement with that, to save time. Keep it online and next one come January, we can readdress?

AL: Right. If we get there. Certainly. I'll take that.

Glenn, since you seconded the original motion, what's your appetite for the revised version? I guess we've lost Glenn. I'm sure he would be okay with it. I'll say, if not, he can holler.

Let's then revise that original motion to reflect that we're talking about a virtual meeting for the fall. Hopefully we'll be in person by January, all things considered.

Are there any objections to that?

Discussion is closed. The motion carries.

Darrin, you had a second item that you wanted to bring up?

DARRIN: Yes. In terms of my second motion, I wanted to get an understanding on the status of the bylaws. I'm under the impression that they have not been updated and there hasn't been any changes made in a long time. So I'm proposing a motion to revise, review, and update the bylaws. Thank you.

AL: Is your motion that such, that they be updated and revised?

DARRIN: Correct.

AL: Do we have a second to Darrin's motion?

ALEX: Seconded.

AL: So we have a second from Alex. I'll invite any discussion.

DARRIN: This is Darrin. I propose to close the discussion.

AL: Are there any objections to closing the discussion? Going once, twice, three, four, five. Seeing none, discussion is closed. We're ready to call a vote.

If there are any objections to that motion, please indicate. Going once, twice, three times, four, and five.

Who, if anyone, would like to take responsibility to review the minutes for this proceeding? The bylaws, I should say. I misspoke. The bylaws.

DARRIN: I'll be happy to take that over.

AL: Excellent. We thank you for that, Darrin. That would be lovely.

And I suggest that you task a co-editor to review them with you.

DARRIN: I will talk specifically with David and Travis to see if they have any additional ideas for review.

AL: Excellent. This is Al speaking again. As Chair, I hereby appoint you, Darrin Smith, to review the minutes. Or excuse me, again, the bylaws. For some reason I'm obsessed with the minutes. Darrin Smith, we'll have you review the bylaws. And if there are no objections to that assignment, that passes and you are hereby appointed as the individual charged with looking over the bylaws.

Okay. Looking at my agenda.

TRAVIS: If I may.

AL: Chair recognizes you, Travis.

TRAVIS: I also want to let everybody know, I want to make sure everybody has on their radar that there will be a group email coming out for the GABTR meeting. This will allow us to communicate in real time and have those discussions, so expect that email to be coming out soon. There will be a group email for the entire GABTR council.

AL: By way of clarification, this is Al speaking, in the past, before David came on board, there was a, so to speak, yahoo listserv or some kind of group that we used, like GABTR@ whatever Yahoo groups. And all of the members then were able to participate. If you sent one message, it would be broadcast and archived at the group.

And after the previous director retired, we stopped using that protocol. I'm wondering if we couldn't restore such logistics to have that happen rather than danger of overlooking an individual email. Travis, could I task you with that?

Thank you, Travis.

Are there any other items from anyone?

Seeing none, if there's no objection, if there's a motion to adjourn the session -- oh, hello.

ALEX: I just wanted to note Steve's suggestion in the chat.

STEVE: Yes, this is Steve. With a group I'm involved in, we set up a closed Facebook group for the board and we have our discussions in that Facebook group and we get the real-time notification. It's been very effective. You can add the entire string of notifications rather than separate emails, so that could be an option to look at and it's very easy to set up.

AL: Excellent, Steve. This is Al speaking.

Is there anything further? Glenn, did you have something? Or Alex. My goodness. I need more coffee.

ALEX: Apparently. This is Alex Simmons speaking. I just want to share some kudos that needs to go to Kevin for hosting the aforementioned focus groups, with the various devices and pieces of equipment. I learned a lot of information that was really nice to know about the different devices that are out there and available. So if you have the opportunity or the time or the interest, please reach out to Kevin to find out what new types of equipment is out there. That's information that I think would be beneficial to the entire community out in Maryland. So Kevin, just want to let you know I had a great experience with that focus group. It's a shame that attendance was so low, but job well done, Kevin. I just wanted to bring that to the council's attention.

AL: Thank you very much, Alex.

Is there anyone else who would like to speak or say a few words?

Going once, going twice...

That closes any further announcements.

Do I have a motion to adjourn?

I'll make a motion to adjourn.

We are, ladies and gentlemen, adjourned as I rap the gavel on this session. And we will see you in 3 months' time come October. Thank you.