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>> All right, looks like we got a thumbs up, I can see it now. I got thumbs up in the chat, as well. Glad that we're all in the up and up. All right. This is Will. Looks like we are good with captioning. We are good to go with people here.

The only other thing I wanted to mention before we get started, Deb Baker is unable to attend today, so no report from HLAA, just to let people know. However, Kate Parrish will have an update from her end from HireAbility. So, we'll make sure we put that in the agenda. I'll modify that accordingly, I'll take HLAA off and replace it with HireAbility. That's one change to the agenda.

If anybody has any questions or any other things about the agenda, go ahead and ask them now, otherwise, we'll get started.

All right. Yeah, go ahead, Laura. So it seems like we're missing a few people. Do you see anything on your end about letting people in? No, because there's no waiting room. So I don't have to give people permission to come in. OK. Just trying to figure that out.

OK. There's one more person unable to get into this meeting. So we'll see if we can do that.

>> So this is Will. Who is unable to get in, Laura?

>> Yeah, our guest speaker. Dr. William Freeman is not able to get in.

>> Hmm, strange. OK. So I just resent the link to our guest speaker. Hope any, that works. Hopefully, that works.

So I put the link in the chat in case anybody needs to take that and pass it along. All right. So Will, go ahead with the agenda and I will troubleshoot on my end and see if we can get our guest speaker into the room. All right.

>> All right, everybody. So, at this point in time, we will start with just general updates. From various organizations. And let's start off with VCIL.

>> Hmm, Val, we can't see you, just to let you know.

>> Technical difficulties. Tech's great when it works. There we go. I forgot to turn my video phone off, so it was blocking my camera for Zoom. Hey, everybody, this is Val Hughes. And I am the Deaf Independent Coordinator for Vermont center for independent living, I work statewide, currently, I'm in Brattleboro today.

Let me think for updates. So just had a booth at the Vermont DBHI Plus event, Vermont Deaf, DeafBlind Hard of Hearing inclusive. It was good attendance, I wouldn't say it was packed but it was nice to see people, match some faces with names and see folks we haven't seen for quite some time.

The other thing, I just had a meeting with DRBT, Disability Rights of Vermont. And we were talking with a town clerks about concern for access for anybody with a disability to town halls, especially folks who are blind because there is new technology, new devices out there that we need to figure out how to let people know that are around. So how do we get the advertising out? Maybe I'll do a video log about that and explain the new devices, the new technology so that way, you know, if people do go to vote in person, because LENGSS are coming up in November. Working with them, as well as the town clerks, my stepfather happens to be a town clerk. It's a perk to know somebody in the loop. We are going to work on that. My stepfather is also hard of hearing, so this is a perfect connection.

So he wants to make sure all the town clerks are making everything accessible. And also, Lindsey Owen from Disability Rights Vermont is the other person I'm working with. Our meeting went well, and we all agreed, yes, we need to really put this out there. And make sure people are aware of it. We'll meet again, soon, and keep that going.

So that's one thing on my end. Social security, same old, same old, hoping to start the SOAR, I forget what the acronym is. We're starting the SOAR for people to start filling out their social security forms and get all of their paperwork in.

So, basically, you can bypass the long process by doing the SOAR, if we're able to get people to do that, I'm hoping to get trained with able accounting to make that even more possible for folks. So we've noticed for people with disabilities, it's great to have this concept as opposed to long form. I just learned about it a few weeks ago.

So for anyone who has a disability and happened to have a disability prior to being 26, or if they actually changed it to 46, so now, it actually encompasses a lot more people than before, which is great. So it helps people, you know, be able to save money, I think up to \$14,000, maybe \$18,000 and not have their benefits impacted, you can get social security, food stamps, but they're not going to look at your income at a higher bracket, which is wonderful. Looking into that further, hoping to get more trainings to know how to best serve our population. A lot of deaf people aren't aware of the new regulations.

We assume writ large we have to cap our income at a certain amount per month, but that's changing. If people want to save to go on vacation or save to buy a vehicle or maintain their vehicle, they feel like they're constrained to do that because they don't want to hurt a certain limit. I'm learning about that, I'll spread the word. Also going to the National Association of the Deaf Conference in July, first week of July, and hoping to, you know, check things out there, it's in Chicago, looking forward to learning a lot more about what's

out there for our population and how to bolster Vermont. Those are my updates. There's still a few peers I'm working with that are homeless. And working to support them as best as possible and we're getting there.

Again, the social security situation is the biggest one I'm trying to push for. There's a hearing next week, hopefully, that will help this person obtain social security finally. Other than that, I think that's it. Any questions? Looking in the chat. Questions? Yeah. Looks like -- OK. Kate, yes, thank you. When it gets closer to October, I'll certainly share the announcement with you and Joey and you can share with your case load.

About the able account. Yeah. Absolutely. Any other questions for Val? Anything? Seeing none, have a great day, everybody, thank you, Val, appreciate you being here.

All right, next up, we are going to have VANCRO. Jessica. Come on up.

>> Hey, everybody. Good morning, I am Jessica Hutchins. I am the lead program manager for VANCRO integrated interpreting services, good morning. It's a little rainy day here in my neck of the woods, a bit of a bummer, but so be it.

OK. Couple of updates from VANCRO. One is, we do have an apprenticeship program, we have various cohorts that is through the Department of Labor, a grant we have with them. That is actually yesterday we wrapped up the second cohort apprenticeship and now, we're in discussions to see if Department of Labor and also HireAbility Vermont can potentially help support and invest funds to continue this type of internship hours program.

So the first and second cohort were phenomenal, they had a great time with it. It really was an enriching experience for everybody involved, we're hoping to continue that. So we'll see. Next update, media production, so we do have a person named Felix.

He's from California. And he does a lot of our media production for a variety of contracts. So, for Vermont, there are different organizations and agencies that have been utilizing our media production services and it is wonderful. It's we've improved greatly on our video capability, how we're doing media production, I know that Laura has been sending out various videos that they have been asked to share. And it's great. So please, take a look if you can, and see what you think, I feel like we have made great gains in our media production round. So please, take a look and let us know what you think. Very excited about that.

We're trying to provide access to anybody who is unable to work in English, if they're not proficient in English, we have the translation for forms, videos, et cetera.

Thirdly, the Vermont Deaf, Hard of Hearing Deafblind day, that event happened first weekend of May. And yeah, May 4th, to be precise. May the 4th be with you, if you're a Star Wars fan. Some

people had May the Forest be with you on their shirts. They had Ewoks, way to be creative, people. Great event. Smaller numbers this year than last year, we noticed that, but new faces, which was great. And I would say there were a few more hard of hearing and deafblind folks that came. Which was wonderful to see and get people acquainted to our community. Really great conversations, good networking opportunity. We do have some ideas, myself, Rebecca, and Kate as the tri-hosts about how to improve things for next year.

Just to see if we -- we'll try to keep it the same weekend, but might tweak how we're doing it to make it even more of a better event. So, yeah, if you all went, thank you. Please, save the date for next year. Let us know of any feedback for the event.

Lastly, I have been going to do various trainings, typically partnering with DVAS, we've been doing that for months, years. So we do some places biweekly, sometimes, we will do through video means, sometimes, we'll talk about training opportunities with hospitals and medical centers so it's really been great to see the transition of adding more trainings to the facilities. And people are realizing that access is not an overnight thing. And it does take time, it's a process. So we're hoping to keep spreading this training far and wide to make that happen. And it's great because we have a group of deaf professionals, deaf hard of hearing professionals are working hard to support each other to provide access throughout the State of Vermont in a variety of capacities.

Last, last, but not least, the SSP program. At this point, all I know is that September is the wrap up date. However, we are still hopeful and we're trying to get word out there to see if there is any other funding source to keep this going. That could take over this program. We do know that the deafblind folks, regardless if they are deafblind signers or nonsigners, this is a huge benefit. They need SSPs. It is part of their life and they should have a right to it. Some folks who either never had one or had one in the past and realized they wanted to get back to it, and especially in today's world, they are realizing the benefit of it and they need that type of support.

Maybe just for reading the mail or reading emails and getting all of the specifics, or maybe getting rides to their doctors appointments or to the grocery store.

Or even just to go have a daily fun day out. So, again, it's nice to know that they have the support now, but it's sad that it might be wrapping up soon.

Those are all of my updates, if I'm missing anything, let me know. Any questions, comments, or thoughts or anything you need from us to support you further? Let me know.

>> OK. Seeing none. I guess we're good. So no questions anybody? No questions? All right, thank you, Jessica. Quick change of interpreters.

>> All right on to VTAB, Rebecca. Hello, everybody, this is Rebecca. So not -- I'm not here to report for DVAS, I'm the new president for the Vermont Association of the Deaf. So we've got some new officers. I'm the new president. We have John Peroni as a vice president. Alan is our treasurer. Val Hughes is our secretary. And then, Jacob Veter is our member at large.

And then, David Krueger is our (inaudible) our basically, our previous president. So that's our leadership group. So we're excited to see what this new group of folks can bring to our work. What we've been doing most recently, is really trying to get a sense of what the community needs. So, we did go to the deaf and hard of hearing plus day that Jessica was just talking about. We're hoping to pull in more members to get connected with the community in different ways.

June 8th, we're having an Osteen alumni event will be happening. VTAD will also have a presence there. We're also talking right now about what kind of legislative action we might want to be involved in, and we're hoping to be more involved in that area.

You know, one big issue is communication access, just in general, for Vermonters who are deaf and hard of hearing. So that's just one example of an advocacy area. Val, as Val mentioned, she's going to be attending the National Association of the Deaf, we're sending her as our rep, as well, hopefully, she'll be able to bring back a lot of information on what's happening on the national level and resources and advocacy that's happening there and how we can apply that to Vermont.

So that's really all of the update for now. We're just getting started with our new executives. Certainly, if there's any concerns or issues you want us to take up or you want to have a conversation, certainly, feel free to reach out and let me know.

I'll also add, I just did have a conversation with Dr. Freeman and I'm excited to see how things go there. So thank you so much for the time. I'm open to take any questions if people have questions.

>> This is Will, doesn't look like there's any questions. Thank you, Rebecca. All right. Next on our list is Kate. From HireAbility.

>> Good morning, everyone. So I just wanted to let folks know that we're working on developing a flyer for the transition for transition age.

We've already done some training for our staff so that we can increase the number of referrals. And we've set up a direct email address to get those referrals. So we've already started to see from the work we've done so far, some more referrals, which is really nice. We have three new high school students who have been in touch with us from this work so far. It's exciting to see more

and I'm hoping those numbers will continue to grow.

>> So really, that was the only update was that transition work we're doing. So thank you. Any questions for Kate? Not seeing anything. OK, thank you, Kate. Now, CVCI update, Pam Hoover?

>> Hi, thank you. So, the CARES team provided consultation and technical assistance, this year, to about 320 students and educational teams. In addition, we have been hosting monthly peer groups for students across the state.

That have been really successful. So, we also -- most of our team attended the Vermont DBHI plus event, which was great. It was really good to see, like Val has mentioned and everyone mentioned, it was really good to see people we haven't seen in a long time.

So I think, probably, the biggest update that we have is over the past two months, directors from CARES and directors from the educational services program have been meeting in an effort to ensure that all students who are DHHDB have access and support to the services they need, academically, socially, and emotionally.

So, this year, CARES did submit a grant proposal that included a subcontract agreement with the educational services program, and we look forward to working together, collaboratively.

So, that's really it. That's all I have for an update. Any questions? OK.

>> Great, thank you so much.

>> Mm-hmm.

>> Next on the agenda is the UVM MC educational services program. Linda Hazard.

>> Great, thanks, Will. Good morning, everyone. And I just want to echo what Pam said, we are looking forward to collaborating this year. To ensure students are receiving services that they need and that our programs are working together collaboratively. I think this will be to the benefit of all of us, our students, our families, and our school districts.

So, just wanted to comment on that. So, I will say the educational services program this year has served 165 students, 85 of those students receive some type of direct services, and 80 students receive consultation and technical assistance. Our students who also receive direct instruction are receiving consultation and technical assistance, as well.

Our big news is that Adventure Day is tomorrow at Lotus Lake, which brings 4th graders to 12th graders together from across the state. We have a little over 40 students who have signed up. This has been an event that's been going on over 35 years. So, started with, even, I think, before the Vermont Center.

And then, 9East Network. And now, with under the educational services program, there are students invited from CARES, as well as other school districts that have providers that are hired

by the district. So we're very excited about this.

And it will be a fun-filled day. As far as EHDI updates, we just entered our 5-year grant cycle, which is focused on language acquisition and developmental assessments for our birth to 3 population. And in March of this year, at the EHDI conference in Denver, Colorado, Morgan Tuksberry and myself presented the data on the birth to 3-year-old children that we have acquired in the last -- since 2021.

So it was exciting to see that. We partner for this project with Odyssey out of the University of Colorado. And so, our data is compared with other early intervention programs, as well. And I'm happy to share the presentation with all of you and can send it. I will say that it was really nice to see how well our students, how well our children are doing in these areas.

And we also were at the event on, you know, for Vermont -- for deaf, deafblind, and hard of hearing inclusivity, and it was a great day. It's my first time there. And I was excited to be there.

The other just quick item I wanted to mention or -- is that we are seeing an increase in deaf hard of hearing and deafblind children who are being diagnosed. In the last year, we've had 14. We do see this every once in a while. We will have an increase. But I wanted to mention that because we've been averaging about 20 children enrolled in early intervention. And we've actually increased to 30 children who are... in early intervention. And I know Michelle John just put in the chat, Odyssey is an acronym, and I will put the acronym in the chat box so that you know what it stands for.

But basically, essentially, it's a program, the CDC sponsored special project that was partnering with the University of Colorado. Are there any questions? Oh, I think that Tracy put it in there for me, thank you, Tracy.

Great, thank you, everyone.

>> Great, thank you, any questions for Linda? I'm guessing not. I didn't see any. OK. All right. So we're running a little bit ahead of schedule. But that's fine. So one thing I did forget to do at the beginning of the meeting because we were dealing with some tech stuff, I did -- we do have a couple of guests here with us. So I just wanted to make sure that I recognized those folks. So we have Janet (inaudible) is here, and she is an ASL interpreter, and then, a teacher of the deaf, she's been a teacher of the deaf for many years. She's thinking about potentially joining the council as our new interpreter representative.

Replacing Kelly Decker who left the council a couple of months ago. That's one person we have joining us today and Kara Haines who is the coordinator of our transition services at HireAbility. Vermont. And so, she works -- she's been working closely with Kate

on the project she mentioned, and the HireAbility Vermont transition team. So just welcome to Kara.

We also have... John Pirone who is here. Nice to have you joining us here, John. And then, last but not least, we also have Dr. Will Freeman who I really like his first name. It's a wonderful first name, wonderful choice as a first name. I'll say that. But, he's going to be presenting some information today. And so, when he's done with his presentation, I think we'll take our break after that since we're running a little ahead of schedule. If that's OK with folks.

I think we'll now turn it over to Dr. Freeman. Take it away, Will.

>> Good morning. My signing is... that's because I'm a dance movement therapist and I was given that sign years ago.

It's great to be with you all today. In my practice over the many years, I have served people with disabilities of all range and that does not, of course; include people who are culturally deaf, because I distinguish between disability and culturally deaf.

I'm also the director of New Thought Vermont, which is focused on well being, resilience, and meaning in life. And building connection and community through the practices of mind, body, and spirit. We're located here in Weston, which is in the south central part of the state.

It's about 45 minutes south of Rutland. It's on the spine of the green mountains. In a small town of about 600 people.

I used to serve on the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion at UVM for a short period, with the expressive movement project training teachers and that therapists and artists how to use movement with people with significant disabilities. I maintain a practice in movement therapy with people who are in hospice, have rare conditions that are multiple, and are usually young men. V

I wanted to share with you a situation that happened that brought me here today. About year and a half ago, close friend of mine, her sister joined her living here in Weston. And her sister is deaf. And it occurred to me, she was unable to really participate in any kind of community activities because there was no access.

And this concerned me greatly. So, a year ago, we started at New Thought Vermont to offer some programs that had interpretive services.

And this included a legislative forum with our Vermont senators and representatives. And another forum on seniors. This woman whose name is Vivian, just lit up, of course, because she had other people to communicate with, including another person who was deaf. And I realized that this is going to be a common issue throughout the state.

That we're not alone in the difficulty of having interpretive services available for people who are culturally deaf.

The cost of those interpretive services for those two forums that we offered were between close to \$300 and close to \$400. I felt it was important because I learned long ago how essential it is to build in interpretive services into one's ongoing budget.

I used to work for the Kansas State Department of Education as director of a project in the arts, inclusive of people with disabilities and individuals who are deaf. So I had a lot of programs that were interpreted and became familiar at that time.

So this was not new to me. But now, living much more in a rural area over the past 25 years, it just became stunning to me, um, among several things. One is that we only have about 40 interpreters in the state. That we have 500 to 600 people, maybe, who are culturally deaf who use American Sign Language.

That there are 75,000 people plus who are hard of hearing, and I'm sure, that is a greater figure than 75,000. I being one of the people who is hard of hearing.

It was concerning to me that we just don't have the resources. And when I present the issue about, that there are 500 to 600 people who don't have access, often, the response is, well, let's see, 500 to 600 people, there are 625,000 people in the state, that's a really insignificant number, so why would we really want to support those individuals?

I was absolutely shocked by that kind of response. So, in this past year, I've really worked to inform our community here in Weston and in the mountain towns. If you don't know the mountain towns, it's an isolated area in the state. We don't have. An educational institution of higher education, we don't have a medical center other than we have a clinic, we don't have social services, except that the woman whose sister is deaf founded an organization ten years ago to provide for preventative health and social services. So we're starting -- we're having to develop our own services in this part of the state.

And one certainly, that does not get visibility like Chittenden County, Addison County, Washington County. And even that said, in those counties, there are rural needs that for interpretive services. Of course, what we encountered was that a lot of the cost was for travel time for interpretive services.

So, I've been in touch with Laura Siegel over the past couple of years and she has been wonderful in terms of her responsiveness and assistance in providing me with information and those in our communities.

And that led to a letter I wrote that I'm going to ask Laura if she's able to screen share. And this letter was to our local representative. And we met with her in -- this is Kelly Piala, and Gloria, Vivian's sister, Gloria, is hearing and Peter Miller, president of New Thought Vermont and I met with Kelly Piala one Sunday afternoon, and this was the outcome.

And reviewed, of course, how many people who are signing deaf Vermonters who require American Sign Language to participate in their communities and experience equal access to programs and events. And reduce further marginalization, isolation, and loneliness.

What was a particular concern to me was that Weston is not alone. That this occurs in many rural parts of the state. Many of us have witnessed the effects of those who are deaf in our communities who have been -- had their lives diminished because of the lack of available ASL interpretive services. And that cost is a significant barrier.

Our goal, of course, is to build community. And with Vivian and others who are deaf in our communities, we felt it was upon us to provide these kinds of services and you'll see in this document where I have identified what I previously discussed about the actual costs of interpretive services for those two forum events that we held.

I want to bring your attention and, certainly, I brought the attention to our representative in this -- and this is the fifth paragraph at the bottom of the page. As you are aware, one of the strategic priorities identified by Governor Scott includes protect the most vulnerable and one of the key issues, also, is healthy communities and access to services and benefits aimed at addressing the social and environmental conditions.

In places where people live, learn, work, and play. Also, if you've not read the US surgeon general's report on the advisory of our epidemic of loneliness and isolation at the top of the next page, it reads, that there are harmful consequences of social disconnection, including diminished engagement, other negative effects on individuals and societal health, well being, and more.

So, this was the basis on which new thought Vermont pursued outside of the normal budget cycle a request for \$50,000, not for New Thought Vermont, but for small nonprofits, businesses, and practices. So that they could afford these kinds of services for people who are culturally deaf in their communities. And also, the importance of having a needs assessment. So, our representative Kelly Piala took this to the human services committee on which she sits. -- in the state legislature.

When she did, she advocated for approval of this in the -- in the budget. And in the budget, it passed with a recommendation to the House Committee on Appropriations. Meaning, the committee that sits to identify what the funding will be going forward as they propose a budget and it moves on to the Vermont Senate.

In this discussion, several questions came up. Ones that I was surprised at. And I just wanted to mention a few of them so that you understand a little bit about the scope of what we dealt with. This is a quote from one of the staff members and one of the

representatives on that committee.

We just had a committee discussion about this request and a question came up about how DAIL, is currently meeting this obligation under the ADA. So then, I had to respond and give a rationale as to what we have just discussed here. That we have experienced barriers to cost that have impacted people who are deaf in our mountain town communities, and that we're not alone in this, as this is a state wide issue.

Then, and I'm going through my papers here, another question came. We are working on the DAIL budget, and have some questions regarding your request. Can you share who this request is from? And what the amounts are based on? Is this intended to go to a municipality? And if so, who would grant it out to?

Now, while these questions have been previously addressed in the materials, again, just as a process experience, this is the kind of question that I had to respond to immediately as this was in the committee process.

I hope this makes senses... that first the bill starts in the House, it goes in this case, to the Human Services Committee, then to the House Committee on Appropriations.

When it went to the committee on appropriations, the priority level was listed as moderate. Not high. And this was also a little complicated because New Thought Vermont was an outside organization asking for additional funding for DAIL, for funds that were not requested by DAIL in its own budget.

So, with that moderate level, it did not make it through the Committee on Appropriations. Meaning, it was not approved to go on to the next process, which is through the Senate. So then, I called our senators and asked for their assistance, as you may know, this has been a very difficult budget year. And it was not included in the senate's budget.

So this proposal, ultimately, did not pass. There was also a question that came up ... and I couldn't find it, and others could not find out, there was another request for \$80,000. Well that request had been for a deafblind project to... support people with physical and mental health and create employment opportunities, and I'm sure there's more to that proposal, I'm just giving you a sense of it.

So these are these kinds of... questions that come up in the process, and they come up very quickly. And have to be responded to immediately. So that leads me to, OK, this time, we didn't make it. I worked closely with Laura and with one of the commissioner's assistants. But Laura's not in a position to be involved in advocacy, that is not her role in terms of -- of course, it's her role in terms of advocacy generally, but not when it comes to legislation.

So that's when I contacted DVS and, also, the folks at VANCRO including Cory. My concern is that in proposes any kind of

legislation, we need to have a network that, in this case would include people who are deaf using sign language, people who are hard of hearing, people who are deafblind, their family members, and in addition, people who are in the communities as well as interpreters and others who can let their representatives and senators know how important this kind of funding would be.

I know that over the past several years, there have been other initiatives through the legislative process to serve the deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind communities. Which is wonderful. And it can't be just New Thought Vermont on its own on the outside or a couple of people here and there.

Supporting this initiative. Ideally, this should come in the DAIL budget. And I know that this kind of initiative has been proposed in the past and has not received its validation to move through in the budget, as I understand it.

And I am open to being corrected on that. By Laura. And others. So, what next? Well, we really need to have this network that's available. And that's going to take all of us to pursue this kind of initiative. There are going to be more questions about specificity, including how are you dividing up the \$50,000?

Where will it go? What will it look like? Who will it serve? How many people will be served? These are the questions we have to be able to anticipate in going through the legislative process.

And what you all have is access to governor staff to let the governor's office know how important this is. Now is the time to look at organizing this summer and really starting in the autumn, being out there, meeting with our legislators before the legislative session each county has a number of senators and each region has a representative. So that means being active and having a coordinated network that might be best through one of your organizations.

It's just really important and it was unfortunate that this didn't go through. I am not discouraged at all. Because I think this is bringing increased awareness. And we hold New Thought Vermont holds legislative forums here in Weston, usually 2 to 3 times a year. Once before the legislative session, once during the legislative session, so that people can understand where legislation is going, what the issues are, how they're being attended to.

And lastly, after the legislative session. So this June, we are planning to have a legislative forum. It would be great if we could have people who are deaf and their family members at this kind of a forum so that our legislators could see there is a need for interpretive services.

And I'd like to say that their legislative forums that happen throughout the state. It's not just here in Weston. And it's important to get to our legislators in the state before the legislative session.

So they know about what's coming, they know about the importance, and how this might look. So now, I guess, my -- I'm open to questions. It's just been a process that we've gone through trying to advocate for people who are culturally deaf who use ASL.

And my hope is that through this council and its connection with the governor's office and through DAIL, that this will be a part of the DAIL budget.

Whether it is or it isn't advocacy, strong advocacy in a coordinated network will still be needed. I look forward to any questions.

>> This is Laura. Just wanted to catch people up with the chat. Do you want me to go ahead and do that now? Or would you rather wait until --

>> Sure.

>> -- after people talk?

>> Go ahead.

>> All right. Great. So quick review of the chat, before we pull people on screen. OK. So looks like John typed in, yeah, you know, the whole small numbers insignificant numbers, it's a strong argument for a lot of legislators, unfortunately, but if you look at the demographic, we have 1.6% Asian, 1.7% Black, African-American, .24% Native American Indigenous, and .49% other race and identity. So again, small populations there, too. It's not an excuse. It's not a rationale to say we don't provide resources because resources and support should be provided regardless of the population numbers.

Let's see what else we have here. Jessica Hutchins also put in responding to John, absolutely. There's so much impact the deafblind, hard of hearing, you think about male interpreters, BIPOC interpreters, we don't have a lot of those numbers, that's another impact. Wondering, when the bill, what's the number of the bill that you proposed, Dr. Freeman? If you could share that, that would be helpful so we could track it.

>> Well, the bill came and it went. So there will be another bill at this legislative session is over and, excuse me for just a moment.

>> Sure.

>> I apologize for the interruption.

>> No worries, quite all right. So, yes, John says, right, there is a report showing that 21% of all Vermonters have a disability and about 4.5% of them are deaf or hard of hearing. So, I happen to ask, where did you get that information, John? So he posted a link in the chat, you can take a look the a that report.

On Disability statistics. Let's see, another question from the chat, from Rebecca Chalmers asking if you wouldn't mind sharing your email address so we can correspond with you, if you're willing to do that. That would be great.

>> Sure, I'm happy to do that. And I will put that and the phone number here in the chat.

>> Great, thank you. And then, let's see, also, in the chat, from Jan, it says, if I remember correctly, VIRS, had this type of grant or one similar for interpreting 12-step meetings in the past. And so, the state agencies were providing the grant during those years, and so the funding was transitioned to the interpreting for referral service or agency or program to procure interpreters for that. And Jessica Hutchins responded in kind, yep, that is correct. Unfortunately, that was cut a while back. And so, that was at a time when VTAD obtained donations to provide this type of funding for interpreters for AA meetings. But unfortunately, that funding has also ended.

Janet responded, that the model of having the funds go through the interpreter referral service might make sense since the legislature wants to know who will receive the funding, you could share that. And so, the grant could be from DAIL to the interpreting referral service, just in thought.

Let's see what else we have in the chat. Kara said that I've got to jump at 10:30 for another meeting, but thank you so much for having me here. Will also added in that the Vermont Interpreter referral service used to handle interpreting services before VANCRO in case anybody needed clarification about who they were.

Great, and I see your email address. So this is Laura now speaking. So in terms of the funding, I was told that it was cut in 2008. And so, last Friday, I actually had a conversation with Diane Del Moss from DAIL as well as James Smith from HireAbility on Friday. We talked specifically about that type of funding. And they are actually looking into it further to see why did it get cut? Where did it go? Maybe we can find more rationale.

I remember 3 years back, I did contact the Vermont Department of Health and they told me, oh, we never granted funds for that, no.

Never. It was only for treatment programs, never for funding AA meetings and AA meetings interpreters for that. We can't actually find the paper trail for how this initiated and when it stopped. We're doing a little bit of a deeper dive into that to see what we can find about the history of it. But looks like, yeah, I'm at a dead end for it.

>> Val?

>> I'm looking for Val.

>> She's coming up. But it's the black, we can't see her.

>> OK. Thank you.

>> Yeah.

>> Maybe you need to turn off the camera on the video phone, again, Val, maybe that's the issue.

>> I'm glad that we have a common language prep. I understand.

>> I mean, maybe if you just have a question or comment, you could just type it in the chat. Yeah, if that's easier. This is Will, but one thing I did also want to mention that VANCRO has just established a nonprofit organization, inclusivity works, and we say IW for short. But it's -- that's been an ongoing process for the last 6 months or so. But Inclusivity Works, the goal there is kind of sort of a little bit similar to what you're talking about to do some advocacy around grants and securing money for access for deaf and hard of hearing and deafblind folks, and so this is a new initiative, we're just getting off the ground. But the person who is running it, her name is Paige Kerby from VANCRO, and so, I'm happy to connect you with Paige, and maybe there's, you know, there's some common ground there.

>> Yes, that would be great. I'd like to see how this community wants to look for advocating. Because when things come to the legislature, one has to move very quickly. You can't sort of put it on the back burner and deal with questions later.

And I really believe that if we had a network, and I'm happy to sit down and meet with people this summer to talk about what that might look like. I used to work for the Kansas State Department of Education and I often had to present to the Kansas State Board of Education, I had to present to budget committees and so forth in the legislature.

Let me just share a quick story with you. When I was in Kansas, in the program that I directed in the arts inclusive of people with disabilities, one of the difficulties was that a new governor came in and she decided to cut the budget from \$150,000 core funding to zero.

And I had a friend who had been in the legislature who was a -- who agreed to be a volunteer lobbyist. And she said, I want you to come up with a one-page description of what the organization does. What is the need? How will it be impacted if you don't get funded? Well, we had happened to develop a statewide advisory council of about 50 people. And those people started faxing and calling and writing the governor's office.

And people they knew started to do the same thing. And the budget analysts in the governor's office came to me and said, OK, William, what do you want?

And I said, just restore the funding to \$150,000. And they said, well, if we do, will you call the dogs off? Meaning, all of the people who were writing and advocating. And I said, sure. And they restored the \$150,000.

That's what I'm talking about. Is having a network already in place so that it can be acted upon immediately and people can contact their legislators, go to the presented committees and, in a coordinated way.

I see the question about VCIL. Yes.

>> Thank you. And I just want to get caught up on the chat, as well. Val is asking -- she works with VCIL and she would be really interested in sitting with you and talking about how you could work together.

>> And I've had several discussions on other topics with Peter Jonky at VCIL and had a lot of contact with him during the COVID times.

Happy to meet with you.

>> My hand raising icon is not working, so I'm jumping in. So I wanted to say thank you, Dr. Freeman for taking on this passion project. And individuals like you can really make it happen. So thank you. And... I ended up being a bit of a spearhead, if you will, for it was an 8-year volunteer project of getting a law passed and I'm happy to share with you some of the things that seemed to work or not work.

It reflects a lot of what you've already said, but I'm happy to chat with you about that. As far as this council, I felt like one thing we were able to do is we're supposed to keep -- our mandate is to kind of assess services and make recommendations. So, if you -- we do write an annual report to the legislature. It has often included a large part the volunteers have written. So maybe if you do come up with some summary or you have ideas of what we might want to put in there for assessing services, you know, maybe we could focus this year's report better on ASL access or nonaccess. You know, that is a kind of role that council could play.

That could support advocacy efforts, as well. If we put out a clear picture of what we've assessed and we have a general recommendation, then that often partners well with somebody who has a more specific recommendation.

If that makes sense. I'm saying, hey, you want to write something, you can shoot us an email and maybe we can use some of it or maybe we -- maybe you have an idea of what we could look at and some of us could volunteer to put it together.

>> Well, Rebecca, thank you, and thank you for the work that you did. I'm aware of it. And I know that we had a back and forth of trying to connect during this time. Of this legislative season. While it's now over, I think that one of the areas that's really critical, and Laura can speak to this more, is the importance of needs assessment. It's really critical.

>> I think you were probably connected with a different Rebecca, Dr. Freeman.

>> No, actually, I was connected with Rebecca through some voice mail.

>> Phone tag. Sorry. Not good with the phones. I didn't call

back, again.

>> There are many Rebeccas here. And multiple Jessicas that I've been in touch with. So, Laura, can you -- I know I'm putting you on the spot. But can you share a little bit about this importance regarding the needs assessment and -- since you brought this up, Rebecca Chalmers, the... can you speak to that?

>> Yeah, what I've seen the last three years is that anytime you try to make a proposal of any type, oftentimes, people say, OK, where is the data? To support that. And we don't have any, really. It's important to get this community needs assessment done. You know, other states have shared some examples of these types of assessments. And things that have helped them convince their legislators that money -- that funding is needed for certain projects.

And that things can go quicker, and this is -- that's true for all areas, not just for interpreter access, but for health care services or, I mean, you name it, they want to know, you know, part of your selling point is -- or part of your argument is the numbers, you know, how is it going to impact people?

And that's been the challenge for all things deaf and hard of hearing related. So that's been tough. Is that what you meant?

>> Yes, and that was part of the funding request, was for both interpretive services for small nonprofits, businesses, and practices, part 1 and part 2 was for a needs assessment. But we need to sharpen that up, that proposal. So we know, you know, what is someone going to charge to do a needs assessment? To develop the instrument? To gather the data? To analyze -- analyze and summarize the data to make it available and meaningful when it comes to legislative process and for funding or for grant writing or any of those things?

I used to write grants, you know, back in the day to the feds and to the state. And what we would do is leverage those moneys, meaning that we would use those moneys to say, look, we already have state funding, now we're seeking federal funding and we'll provide some match. Funding funds available.

I --

>> Yeah.

>> I don't know what the answers are.

>> Yeah, just to remind you, we have -- I have written proposals for the legislature before, and also, to get into the DAIL general budget, and both of those requests were denied. The DAIL general budget whoever makes that decision, which is higher up than me, didn't feel it fit the governor's strategic plan.

And his strategic goals. So, that was the reason I was given. The other through the legislature, it was a similar idea. It didn't align very well with the governor's strategic goals or his strategic outcomes.

I'm not certainly ready to give up. I'm stubborn by nature

and I'm going to figure out another way, we're always looking for that loophole that's going to get us in. But it's been frustrating.

>> Well, if it doesn't fit, protecting the most vulnerable and access to services and benefits aimed at addressing the social environmental conditions in the places where people live, learn, work, and play, that's directly from the governor's project priorities, strategic priorities (audio cutting out) then (audio cutting out) --

>> Yeah, we don't know how they evaluate that proposal.

>> (Inaudible) continue.

>> All I know is that the (audio cutting out) not a high priority.

>> Dr. Freeman, you were freezing for much of that last comment. Maybe can you just repeat that? From the how it doesn't fit the governor's strategic -- what you read -- whatever you said after that. You were freezing.

>> I said, it certainly -- to my view, it certainly meets the governor's strategic priorities and key issues. There's no way that it doesn't. The proposal for interpreters (audio cutting out) interpretive services for people who are otherwise (inaudible) these people are freezing.

>> Yeah, we caught it that time.

>> OK. It's (audio cutting out) some of our legislators --

>> Yeah, I'm just looking at what a couple people have written here in the chat. So Sharon had made a comment about a needs assessment that was done in 2016-2018 when the council was first convened. Covering birth to 3 and then the school age group and an adult and elderly, which were the four subcommittees that were first established.

Linda Hazard and Bill Hutchins were the council chairs then. Or Hudson, were the council chairs. There is some information from that time period, maybe we could share the results. And Rebecca Chalmers said, maybe it's time to do a -- do the needs assessment subcommittees, again, and maybe could break it down by communication and language access, you know, deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind.

>> (Inaudible) in Kansas working with the Department of Education was when I wrote these huge grants for hundreds of thousands of dollars, I -- we didn't have data about the arts and how it affected the lives of people with disabilities.

So, we had to what is called extrapolate, we had to extrapolate from other data sources. So, we collected information about how recreation was important for people with disabling conditions. We collected data on how many people there were in the state with disabilities, ages 3 to 21.

We looked at state data, we looked at federal data, data from other states. To make the case because we didn't have a needs

assessment that we could easily call upon. So these are just some ideas going forward. I really think that I'm happy to be a part of the solution, but I'm not -- I am a part of the community because I am hard of hearing... and my husband is... has profound hearing loss.

So... there just needs to be some leadership within your community, I think, our community, excuse me, to -- to look at how we're going to go forward in a meaningful way, in a coordinated way.

So, that it's a matter of sending a text or sending an email or making a phone call to get the word out and to have responsive go -- responses go to a specific legislator who is on a specific committee.

This isn't a difficult process, if it sounds like it, I don't mean it to. It's just -- how it goes forward.

>> Hi -- hi, I just thought it might be -- quickly toss out things I thought worked well. Our group trying to pass legislation to make sure there was equality for people who needed hearing aids. Our group really took off once. We had one person who volunteered to coordinate meetings on a weekly or monthly basis, and that was just their strength and they volunteered to do that.

It was part of their job. And another person was a paid lobbyist, really, frankly, and I don't think we would've passed it without her. She was with AARP. And it worked better having people from -- who could do it on the job, honestly.

I felt like it was hard getting that support strictly from disability groups, frankly. It was much easier getting support from elder groups. So I don't, you know, see that meshing as easily with the ASL topic. And I don't know who the strongest groups are who can do it on the job, who can lend their paid lobbyist expertise at key moments.

But it was extremely helpful. We had one person great at coordinating people and paid lobbyists and everybody else, you know, making it real. And also, I guess, that a third thing useful, we did end up with a website with a petition and simply having all thousands plus signatures on it was meaningful to a bunch of people saying, oh, this is a topic that matters to 1,000 plus people, that was really useful, as well. So just to throw it out there.

>> Well, that's exactly, Rebecca, how it gets done. If we didn't have a lobbyist that was a volunteer in Kansas who was tracking the bill at all times, I don't think it would have gone through. What was quite maddening, for me, was I didn't know where the bill was at any time.

And despite my emails to staff members, to legislators, they couldn't provide me the information. But had we had a lobbyist, I'm thinking that it may have been more hopeful. But with a recommendation of moderate and not a high priority, I think, that's

where it was difficult.

Because the legislature faced too many issues that were critical with a limited amount of funding, and \$50,000 is nothing. In a state budget. And but when something comes in as moderate, I would like to see this come through DAIL. I'd like to see this supported by this council to the governor. And I'd like to see those organizations like DVAS, the one that you mentioned, Will, the new one, and others coming together to... and VANCRO folks coming together to make this a more even more compelling case and have a strategy going forward so once the autumn comes that we have a plan.

And also, in the winter, when the legislative session starts. And because it's an election season, certainly, we should be asking our legislators where they stand on support for interpretive services. And you know, ADA is one thing, and living life as a woman here who is in her mid 80s who's isolated and lonely because she can't get access to services is quite another.

On as they say, you know, when the rubber hits the road, the services just aren't there. And put aside the, you know, the only 40 interpreters in the state, it's a really difficult situation when I see Vivian who came alive at these forums and we had her teach a signing class, this winter. And then, she goes back into isolation.

And isolation looks at watching the television throughout the day and watching captions, but the governor's press conferences are not always interpreted, nor the television stations always have captioning.

So, that is another matter for another day. I'm not familiar with... what is VDCR? Val, you wrote VCIL works closely with VCDR, is that VANCRO?

>> Yeah, I actually just added a link in the chat to that. This is Laura. So VCDR is -- thank you, Janet. Vermont coalition for disability rights.

>> And I understand --

>> I know that Sara Lunderville, she is heavily involved with VCDR, I believe.

>> Are there any other questions? Or is there any other way I can be of assistance?

>> This is Will. So, I just want to first of all, say thank you so much for all of your information and all of the work you've done and your generating of ideas and pushing forward is so worthwhile what you're doing. I do know, we as a council, have a few different priorities within the council in what we're trying to move forward. Obviously, more access to interpreters is one of them. And then, also, making sure that the school age population really has what they need. Also, talking about support service provider, SSP services. So I think that maybe at this point, a needs assessment. I know we have

all partnered well with different organizations and talked about that.

Maybe we need to figure that out and push that forward to the legislature and not just one person submitting one form, one needs assessment, but really making a concerted together effort to push that through. Really great point we need to all work together on this and network.

So, again, let's work with VCIL, all of the organizations here, let's have everybody contact Will and get this going. Another thing, too, I was thinking about is Paige Kerby from Inclusivity Works, we'll get her on board as part of this group.

>> And is there a lead organization for this kind of initiative? Is this something -- I know that -- DVAS helps with people with legal kind of issues, individual kinds of barriers that come up. And I'm wondering, what -- where is the larger initiative for advocacy? Is that going to be through Insight? Is that going to be -- where is that?

So that there can be a coordinating body.

>> Yeah, Laura, maybe you can -- oh, Rebecca, you answer that question? That would be great.

>> Hey, this is Rebecca nice to see you, again, Will. I think that every organization, you know, is wonderful and has benefit and everybody has their own point persons, but what specifically are you looking for? For my organization, yes, you mentioned, I do a lot of legal advocacy, working with individuals, and also, trying to push a bill through for deaf, hard of hearing, deafblind children and educational rights. So we tried to float that this year.

Vermont Association of the Deaf really, now, is pushing strongly for more involvement with the legislature. So maybe, Vermont Association of the Deaf could be that organization to kind of take the lead. Definitely, work with them. Because they represent the entire community. So I believe that, you know, every organization has specific point people and things to contribute. So I guess just wondering how to rally the troops.

>> I think it would be much stronger this kind of initiative for funding coming from an organization or network of organizations that serve people who are culturally deaf and who are using ASL. Versus New Thought Vermont, which is an organization that has encountered this situation. It's like I'm out here... you know, alone here in Weston pushing forward this issue, and then, there are questions like, well, is this for you? Does this go to the municipality? Where does this go?

I think this should be in the DAIL budget. I think that there should be an advocacy organization or network that is really coordinating this.

And I don't know what that looks like. But Vermont

Association for the Deaf might be that. And it's a little challenging because I personally don't see people who are deaf as having a disability. And... yet, I also know that... it's part of disability as we understand it.

And that nuance may not be something that the legislators were going to, you know, carry that, too, because they're used to seeing this as part of DAIL. I just want to see the normalcy of things of everyone being included.

Doesn't seem that difficult to me. I want to ask Laura, is there anything that I haven't mentioned, Laura, that needs attending to?

>> I would say you have covered everything so much. I think now it's a matter of who is going to kind of, like, take the lead and get us going. Again, I can't be involved because of my current role. So yes, I'm slightly limited in what I'm able to do. But I can kind of help behind the scenes as much as I can.

Yeah. And I'll do what I can. I mean, like I've been doing with you, advocating in ways that I can in adherence with my role. And I really appreciate all of the efforts that you are making. Really, wow. It is fantastic.

So, yeah, it takes a village, we need a village to push this through and get it going.

>> Well, thank you all, it's been a pleasure to be with you and thanks for the additional time to have the questions. If there was some information that was saved that was in the chat that I think would be really important in looking at --

>> Yeah, I will save the chat, for sure, and get that out to people. We usually do that.

>> Yeah, those data, particularly related to the numbers of people who are minorities in other minorities, I think, would be compelling.

>> Yes, OK. Great. And this is the other Will. We do have notes from every meeting, as well, so we'll make sure we save the chat and the notes and share that out with everybody.

>> Thank you, thank you.

>> All right. Well, thank you, again, really appreciate having you here. You're welcome to stay for the rest of the meeting, you're welcome to scoot if you need to, whatever makes the most sense. I think at this point in time, we will take a break until 11:15. So we'll resume 11:15. Come on back, and we'll turn it over to Sharon and she'll talk about the school age subcommittee. All right. Go have a break. Stretch yourself. Get some food. Take a walk around, have a drink, whatever you need to do. Take care of yourself.

>> Hello.

>> All right, everybody. Welcome back, and Sharon, the floor is yours.

>> Thank you, Will. I'm the cochair of the school aged subcommittee along with (inaudible) who couldn't be here today. She had a conference related to work. So she apologizes. But we agreed that I'd share with the council that the school age subcommittee has presented three times on the checklist that the subcommittee has developed.

The sessions in November of '23 and March of '24 were held in collaborations with the Vermont Hands and Voices, the Vermont coalition for the guidelines and the ESP program. So we thank those organizations for their collaboration.

And for the March meeting, we had over 50 people, 22 registered in person, and about 33 online. And importantly, about 8 of those attendees identified as a parent of a child who is deaf or hard of hearing, 38 were professionals who worked with this population, who supervised professionals who work with this population.

And then, various other attendees, couple from Canada and couple from Massachusetts. The word is getting out a little bit that Vermont is beginning to do some things, which is great. Unfortunately, post survey responses aren't terribly helpful because it's only a response of three. So hopefully, in the future, we can do a little bit of a better job getting those responses.

However, qualitatively, in the chat, and in conversations casually before and after the session, people are acknowledging they've appreciated the more in-depth explanation on how to use the checklist and the tool. And they felt it helped them better understand the process of the use of the documents.

So clearly, there's an unmet need we are trying to fill regarding internal information, regarding the best practices for deaf and hard of hearing students.

Both families and professionals continue to share that they want more. So I'm in the process of editing and splicing together the video segments from the March 26th session so that it can be used by professionals and other organizations for teaching (inaudible) having watch parties, where people can get together and watch the video, discuss the -- what they see, what they don't understand, what they do understand.

And, that way, sort of do a repeat hybrid presentation. The school aged subcommittee is meeting, again, at the end of June, and I'll talk about that in a minute. We still have some more pieces to wrap up around the data standardization. So you saw on May 14th earlier this week, Spenser sent a letter to the Secretary of Education, to the governor regarding our recommendation, the council's recommendation for minimum data set Dr. Freeman might be interested in seeing that letter, as well. We don't have good data on our students across the state.

And you can see in the letter that Spenser sent how the

council voted for support of this minimum data set. And he will keep us posted if he gets a response from the governor, the secretary of ed, or from Heather Willis, who is also copied on the letter.

So, again, the school age subcommittee is meeting, again, later in June, and the one piece that we want to begin to focus on is the assessment piece, so the data recommendation we have now focuses on who are we serving and where are they? Sort of the demographic piece. But we also want to know how well they're doing.

We need some outcome data in order to be able to accomplish that. So, perhaps, we'll hear back from the AOE before our June meeting, and we can also, hopefully, look forward to getting the data from UVM CARES team and UVM Medical Center Education Services Program, once the fiscal year is closed.

So, that's it from the subcommittee. Can I take any questions or comments?

>> So any questions? Comments? Anybody? All right. Quick note in the chat for you. Thank you for all you do from Rebecca.

>> Thank you, Rebecca.

>> Kudos. Thank you so much.

>> You're welcome. And Dr. Freeman, I'll be in touch with you regarding the data, so we've made, now that you've shared with us your email, thank you so much. I'll be in touch with you via email.

>> Thank you.

>> Thanks, Will.

>> All right, thank you, Sharon. At this point, moving down the agenda. We have Laura with her update.

>> Hey, everybody, this is Laura. Whoo. I have a lot of updates to go through. So, I will try to keep this as brief as I can. Here we go.

So you probably saw the other day, I had emailed out about the VCBB, the Vermont Community Broadband Board.

So we get together, basically, every couple of weeks. And it's the first year of a five-year planning process, the goal is to really enhance and update internet. -- connections and access. And affordability to said services.

So I did share their one-year work summary with you so you have that, and we'll continue working together, I'll be involved in that in the years to come.

If you have specific questions about that, please, reach out to me, let me know, I'm happy to chat about it. So, I did testify on two bills. One was H871. And that was focused on school construction. So if there's already a school building or if there's a new building coming into existence or if the old one needs to be modified, what are the specifics that should be considered in renovations or new builds for schools, facilities specifically? The second bill. It's actually the same bill that I presented at the same time with Deb Baker back in January.

So, that was under the House of Reps. And so, it did actually make crossover, got to the Senate. And so, I had basically repeated my testimony from that Bill into this House and Senate. This year, it seems more and more people have been requesting me to do more presentations.

And so, typically, my presentations entail, I would say two main categories. Health care as well as social services. And this year, I did 20 presentations.

Which is, you know, considerable considering the past 3 years have not been in those numbers. It's great. It's really nice to have those opportunities.

From January till now, I've had about 125 referrals coming my way for a variety of things. Different topics, asking me about interpreters, assistive technology, consultation, guidance, et cetera. So 125, so far, to date this calendar year.

And I do have a few behind the scenes things that I'm doing and just kind of helping with planning processes, so for example, tomorrow evening, it's the Vermont Comedy Club, they are having an accessible show, with captioning and interpretation.

So I'm hoping we get a good attendance for that, come on out if you can. Also, Vermont HLAA, they are going to have presenters coming up, it's the, I think the Tuesday right after memorial day. So, save the date. Zach Lafada is person we'll be -- an audiologist, he happens to be a friend of mine. I know him from Washington, DC when I lived there. He's going to be coming to give a presentation if you're interested or think other people might be, spread the word, I can forward you the invite.

It's an electronic calendar invite. Some of you might have already received it. If not, let me know, I can pass that along.

I will, also, be involved with something called public health project group with UVM medical students. And I want to say there's probably 8 students. So coming up this fall, I will be partnering with them in that specific group focusing on how to really improve communication access in the health care system. What thatting loos like, TBD determined, but we haven't met yet, but I'm excited to meet with them. I'll keep you updated on how the project is going and what that looks like and what the activities will be entailed.

(Inaudible) natural resources will be hosting 3, I guess, we're calling it one day a month events. One's going to be June and then July and then August. And they will have interpreters there for their events. If you have hard of hearing nonsigners, they will get together in smaller groups to make sure they have full access to all of the outdoor activities they are offering.

So we'll see how many people come this year, if it's good numbers, they'll do it, again, next year, specifically for our population. There's an organization core that, which is trying to inspire the younger generation to get outdoors and get into careers

in the outdoors.

So here in Vermont, they're going to be here for 5 weeks and next year, they're planning to be here, as well, so that's kind of the reason behind the Agency of Natural Resources partnering with them to offer these days. They are free. You can come and enjoy an outdoor adventure day at a state park youth to adults. Again, they'll have different locations, I believe the first one is going to be in Burlington, the second one in July is going to be Emerald Lake State Park which is in Southern Vermont.

The third one in August is going to be at Elmore Lake State Park. So I'm happy to share the flyers with all of you if you have more questions and if you haven't received it, let me know. All right. I also will be part of the Agency of Education scoring committee this year, there will be 5 of us on that scoring committee. Just a heads up to all of you.

Let's see, what else did I want to share in terms of updates? I think I've kind of covered all of my highlights. So any questions?

>> Thank you very much, Laura, for that report. And certainly, if any followup questions, certainly, be in touch with Laura if you have any questions about anything. She's doing (inaudible). So we'll move on to the next part of the agenda, which is legislative updates. Which we did talk a little bit about this with William. But you know, one idea I have and I don't know if it's even a good idea, but I'll put it out there, but one thing that we could do to make -- is make sure that Will has all of our email addresses.

Which means, you know, we'll definitely continue to network and stay connected and continue to talk some about this idea of working with the legislature.

So if you're comfortable with that, I can share the council members' email addresses with him if that would be something that you would be interested in having happen.

>> Thank you so very much. I'll look forward to being in contact. I will also include and send you information about the legislative forum that we'll be holding in June. And would invite any of you to come and if we have information about those people who are deaf and are using sign, in this region who are in Windsor County or in the mountain towns, that would be helpful.

Thanks, again.

>> Thank you. Val, looks like you've got your hand up.

>> Yes, I'm finally back on my video. It worked! OK. So, I just wanted to say, Will, that I was on the committee for the hearing aids legislation that passed, and I'm involved with VTAD, as well, Vermont Association of the Deaf. We've been talking about doing more legislative work with the Vermont Association of the Deaf, and I work at VCIL as the Deaf Independence Coordinator. So I have a really good network, and also, as I said, my dad -- has been working for

municipalities for many years, his whole career. He has a large network, as well, as far as political folks and legislators, that's another resource we might be able to tap into.

So I'm happy to sit with you, you know, at some point and figure out what our networks look like. And hopefully, we can, you know get that money going for interpreters. Have a good day. It was good to meet you.

>> Thank you, I'll look forward to connecting with you and others. And I've come up to Montpelier on a regular basis, so we can find time.

>> Great. Sounds good. I live near Burlington, but I come to Montpelier quite a bit.

>> And I'm in Burlington every month. I'll be there tomorrow.

>> Great. Great. Sounds like we'll be able to connect. We'll figure something out offline for a time to meet. Thank you so much. Are you good, Val? You keep popping up. All right, so I think that's it. So if -- so if you don't want me to share your email address with Dr. Freeman, then certainly just let me know.

But if I don't hear from you, I'll assume it's OK to share your contact information. So are there any other legislative updates other than what we've already talked about? I don't see anybody's hand up. So, we'll move on to the next part of the agenda, which is a time for public comment. So, it's a time for anybody who is not officially a member of the council if they want to chime in and share anything, this is your time to do that.

All right, I don't see any hands going up on that either. No one's coming up to say anything. I would -- there's just -- couple other things I wanted to mention quickly. There was some confusion about the Zoom link this morning to begin the meeting. So we had been using Spenser's agenda and his link and so we had a conflict. So, we sent out a new link as a one-time thing under my Zoom, but for the rest of the meetings, we will go back to using Spenser's link, which is the original link we had always been using.

So, that second invite, it shouldn't be confusing because that was just for today. So, I think, we got all of the tech stuff worked out and so, hopefully, when we go back to that original Zoom, we'll be all set for the next meeting.

Janet, we can check in now that you've gotten a sense of the meeting and we can talk more about whether you can take that interpreter rep spot.

>> Sounds good, Will, thanks.

>> All righty. And we can start thinking a little bit about other members and other seats that are available. And Spenser and I will take a look at the list and be in touch with folks about that if that's necessary. And then, we're also getting to the time of the year when we start look at writing the legislative report.

Last year, it kind of snuck up on us and we got to it a little bit last minute, it was kind of rushed. And so, we're looking to kind of start that process earlier so that we have more time to make sure we're thoughtful in what we get to the legislature.

So, I think, that is basically it for the agenda, unless there's any other business that folks want to bring up at this point. All right. I'm not seeing anything. If we don't have any other business to bring up, I guess, we were going to wrap up a little bit early. And I'll be able to give you back what looks like about 25 minutes of your morning.

I'm happy to stay on if, Janet, you want to talk now or other people want to check in. I'm happy to stay and chat if people want to have one to one conversations, if not, we're adjourned and have a great rest of your day.

It's hard to see all of the squares move quickly. Someone signed something, but I missed what it was. Oh, it's Janet, we can stay on and just chat right now, if you want, we'll take advantage of this time.