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7 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

8 BIMONTHLY MEETING

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14 2200 University Avenue

15 St. Paul, Minnesota

16 Thursday, June 6, 2024

17 5:40 p.m.

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1 APPEARANCES:

2 REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND SSB STAFF

3 Judy Sanders, Chairperson Dave Andrews

4 Connie Berg Jennifer Beilke

5 Diane Dohnalik Jon Benson

6 Frank Eller Joe Niffen

7 Sue Fager

8 Samantha Flax

9 Hannah Harriman

10 Tom Heinl

11 Rob Hobson

12 Thea Kramer

13 Patricia McGee

14 Jeff Milhelich

15 Corbb O'Connor

16 Jennifer Points

17 Justin Salisbury

18 Ryan Strunk

19

20 ALSO PRESENT:

21 Natasha Jerde, Director of SSB

22 Nyia Vang, State Program Administrator

23

24 Whereupon, the following proceedings

25 were duly had and entered of record, to-wit:

3

1 MS. SANDERS: This meeting is now in

2 order for the Minnesota State Council for the

3 Blind. And we are going to begin with learning

4 everything we ever wanted to know but were afraid

5 to ask about the new arrangement in this room and

6 all the microphones and any other surprises that

7 are going to come to us. Do we have Dave Andrews

8 here?

9 MR. ANDREWS: Yes.

10 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

11 MR. ANDREWS: Can you hear me?

12 MS. SANDERS: Yes, we can. Dave is

13 going to be our instructor or something.

14 MR. ANDREWS: Well, I don't know about

15 that, but thank you, Judy.

16 So I wanted to give a little

17 explanation of how we got here and then what's

18 going on to set some expectations. So I don't know

19 at least, I don't know maybe you remember, Natasha,

20 it's been at least three years or longer we started

21 with the goal of getting new equipment for our

22 conference rooms so that we could improve the

23 quality of meetings, in-person meetings and

24 meetings where you had people in person and joining

25 remotely at the same time. And we wanted to make

4

1 these things as accessible as possible.

2 So the State has contractors that

3 install audio/visual type equipment, sell it and

4 install it. So we put together our requirements

5 and, you know, got a couple bids and we picked one

6 but we were in the middle of the pandemic. And

7 then Lori Kalland retired and so the rest of it

8 fell on me and Joe and others that have done a

9 great job.

10 We had to wait almost a year and a

11 half for all the equipment to come in, but

12 eventually it did. And it's been installed, it's

13 mostly configured, but I will say a couple of

14 things.

15 The stuff that we have is much more

16 powerful and flexible than what we had before, but

17 it's much more complex. And we are still learning

18 it and we are still working out a few bugs. And

19 I'm sure there are going to be some adjustments

20 along the way.

21 So as I said, the goal was to be able

22 to have these hybrid meetings in a good way. For

23 those of you that can see, there's a big screen up

24 on the wall and projectors in the ceiling so we can

25 combine A and B or separate them. And the same

5

1 with C and D and there is lesser stuff in

2 Conference Room E. So each room has a dedicated

3 PC, A, B, C and D and those PCs run the cameras and

4 the microphones for the meeting.

5 You can also accept a Zoom or a Teams

6 meeting, you know, as a participant in the meeting.

7 There are ipads that can control everything or you

8 can control things from one of these PCs. As we

9 get all this sorted out we will install JAWS on the

10 PCs and voice-over on all of the ipads, we are not

11 quite there yet, but we are sorting some other

12 issues out too.

13 Each room also has a, should I say it

14 and see if they respond, an Alexa and you know, if

15 it gets really boring, Judy, you could play one of

16 your favorite games.

17 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

18 MR. ANDREWS: Anyway, then there is a

19 thing called ClickShare that you plug your computer

20 into and can have it displayed up on the screen and

21 run a meeting from there. So we have a variety of

22 ways to initiate and control meetings.

23 You can do a little bit with the Echo,

24 but we need to do some more refining and practice

25 in that area. But ultimately, you know, a Blind

6

1 guy or anybody else would be able to go into one of

2 the rooms and start a meeting with their voice. So

3 we wanted to explore a variety of accessability

4 issues.

5 Now the system comes with wireless

6 mikes, one of Natasha's requirements was no wires,

7 so, you know, we did that. And in A and B -- we

8 own 16 mikes, eight for A and eight for B. Well,

9 there's a weird, and we may be able to change this,

10 but we are just going to have so experiment. So

11 each, like I said, each room has up to eight mikes

12 but a total -- if the two rooms are combined only a

13 total of nine mikes can be on at once and you can

14 leave them on, but then if you turn on one of the

15 other mikes it bumps one of the live mikes off and

16 then for that person to speak again you would have

17 to turn it back on again.

18 And the way it's set up now I think

19 most of you, a couple of you have your own mike,

20 but most of you -- two of you will share a mike.

21 You don't have to get super close to the mike, but

22 you have to get, you know, reasonably close. I say

23 six inches and then it will pick up better and be

24 better on the speakers and in the Zoom meeting.

25 There is kind of a rectangular stand

7

1 base with a stock that comes up that holds the mike

2 and in that base there is a -- there are lights and

3 a screen which you can't see. There is a bar, a

4 horizontal bar that you press and it turns on and

5 off. Unfortunately, the indication is visual, so

6 you may have to see if your mike is on and if it is

7 just toggle that switch.

8 There is a headphone jack in the side

9 of the base and if you plug headphones into there

10 you can hear yourself and that would help tell you

11 whether you were on or not and you can also hear

12 the meeting.

13 So we are going to have to do a little

14 experimenting here to get everything working right

15 and get people used to it, as I said, it's more

16 powerful but it's also more sophisticated and more

17 complicated.

18 So please bear with us as we work out

19 the kinks. Joe Niffen is here tonight running the

20 equipment and can take care of any problems that

21 come up. In A and B there is like an equipment

22 rack on one side of the room that's like a cabinet,

23 it's a wooden cabinet. And don't sit on it, we've

24 caught people sitting on it and it's not made to be

25 a couch, but some people are tempted. And it

8

1 contains professional digital recorders so we can

2 record meetings as well as you can record them in

3 Zoom or Teams.

4 Does anybody have any questions or did

5 I leave anything out, Joe?

6 MR. NIFFEN: I think you got it

7 covered pretty much.

8 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha, if I may.

9 MR. ANDREWS: Yes.

10 MS. JERDE: So we do have a podium

11 with a microphone, so for the audience that you are

12 facing straight ahead, the podium is to your right

13 next to the first table. In the future we may have

14 mikes on each of the tables, but right now we are

15 kind of playing with this max of nine.

16 MR. ANDREWS: Yeah, we wanted to get

17 as many mikes on the tables for the committee, so I

18 decided that we would just have one public mike,

19 because that's what people are used to anyway. And

20 it probably does us good to get up and stretch and

21 walk over to the mike.

22 MS. SANDERS: Thank you.

23 MR. ANDREWS: Any other statements or

24 questions?

25 (No response.)

9

1 MR. ANDREWS: All right. Thank you

2 all. And I will be here on Zoom and good luck with

3 your meeting.

4 MS. SANDERS: Thank you.

5 Now can I be heard?

6 (Yeses.)

7 MS. SANDERS: Not you guys in the

8 room.

9 MS. FLAX: I can hear you Judy.

10 MR. CONNOR: Houston says you are loud

11 and clear.

12 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you.

13 We are going to begin with the roll

14 call and it might be interesting, at least for this

15 first roll call for people when you -- if you

16 answer the roll call, for people if you answer the

17 roll call and are here we would like you to tell us

18 your position on the Council. And so we will begin

19 with Connie Berg. Connie, are you here?

20 MS. BERG: Yes, I am here. I am

21 actually calling in from my home. I usually do

22 Zoom meetings from my office.

23 I am Connie Berg, I am a member of the

24 Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians and Director of

25 the Vocational Rehab Program. I have been with

10

1 this program for 32 years and I am here, I guess,

2 representing the American Indian Tribal Vocational

3 Rehabilitation Services Programming.

4 MS. SANDERS: Okay, very good. Thank

5 you.

6 MS. BERG: You are welcome.

7 MS. SANDERS: Then do we have Deanne

8 or Deanna?

9 MS. CURRAN: Yes, I am here.

10 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Your last name is

11 what?

12 MS. CURRAN: Curran.

13 MS. SANDERS: Curran, okay. Go ahead

14 and introduce yourself and tell us who you

15 represent.

16 MS. CURRAN: So hi, my name is Deanne

17 Curran, I am currently on the SRC general board

18 along with Connie and I was just appointed in

19 November of 2023. I am one of the PACER advocates,

20 I actually work with Sue at PACER Center and I am

21 on the general SRC.

22 I actually have been on a previous

23 board of the Service of the Blind and Visually

24 Impaired in South Dakota before we moved to

25 Minnesota about 13 years ago, so this is a familiar

11

1 type of a board for me. I was on there for about

2 five years before we moved to Minnesota.

3 I've been at PACER Center for almost

4 12 years and both of my adult children have

5 received or are currently receiving SSB services.

6 Jordan has his own Etsy business, he is 31 years

7 old. Actually Natasha was one of his SSB

8 counselors and now --

9 MS. SANDERS: We just want to know

10 about you tonight.

11 MS. CURRAN: Oh, okay. And Abby is a

12 current SSB consumer. So I'm just letting you know

13 that I have connections with this board also.

14 I was asked by the SSB -- I'm sorry, I

15 was asked by the SRC, I'm on the Executive

16 Committee, to attend a few of these meetings and

17 see if there is some way we could join together

18 with your board and maybe do some collaborative

19 activities at some point. So thanks for letting me

20 join.

21 MS. SANDERS: All right, thank you.

22 So now from Deanne we go to Diane,

23 that really is alphabetical. Diane Dohnalik.

24 MS. DOHNALIK: Sorry, I got the camera

25 on but forgot to unmute. I am Diane Dohnalik, I'm

12

1 the specialist for Blind and visually impaired of

2 the Minnesota Department of Education, I've been in

3 this position about six, seven months now.

4 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you. Diane,

5 are we talking to you on Zoom?

6 MS. DOHNALIK: Yes.

7 MS. SANDERS: Well, Diane was in this

8 room just an hour ago.

9 MS. DOHNALIK: I was having difficulty

10 with some connections so it would be easier for me

11 to take notes and keep track of what's happening.

12 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Well, we're happy

13 to have you, I just wanted to see if that was real.

14 MS. DOHNALIK: Yes, it is.

15 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Frank Eller, you

16 are next.

17 MR. ELLER: Hi there, I'm Frank Eller

18 and I think I am on the Diversity and Inclusion

19 group, I kind of forgot, I apologize.

20 MS. SANDERS: Actually, though, do you

21 know why you are on this Council, what your

22 membership is? What seat do you hold, do you know?

23 MR. ELLER: I forgot, I apologize.

24 MS. SANDERS: Okay, that's all right.

25 MR. ELLER: Thank you for including

13

1 me.

2 MS. SANDERS: We are glad you are

3 here.

4 MR. ELLER: Thank you.

5 MS. SANDERS: Sue Fager.

6 MS. FAGER: Good evening everyone, Sue

7 Fager. I am the representative for Minnesota's

8 Parent Training and Information Center, PACER

9 Center.

10 MS. SANDERS: Thank you.

11 Sam Flax.

12 MS. FLAX: Hi, I am Samantha Flax I

13 represent members with multiple disabilities and

14 I'm not used to not being second in the roll call

15 anymore, I keep waiting to hear me, I'm afraid I'm

16 gonna miss a vote.

17 MS. SANDERS: We'll make sure you

18 don't.

19 Hannah Harriman.

20 MS. HARRIMAN: Hi, I'm Hannah

21 Harriman. I'm joining from Zoom so hopefully you

22 guys can hear.

23 MS. SANDERS: We can hear you.

24 MS. HARRIMAN: I'm one of the industry

25 representatives.

14

1 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you.

2 And Ryan Haenze.

3 (No response.)

4 MS. SANDERS: Ryan.

5 MS. FLAX: I believe wasn't there an

6 email from him, Judy, saying he may not be able to

7 make it?

8 MS. SANDERS: I think you are right,

9 thank you for keeping me honest or something.

10 MS. FLAX: You are welcome.

11 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb, Judy.

12 While we are paused for a quick second, Frank's

13 position is a recipient of VR services.

14 MS. SANDERS: Oh, okay.

15 MR. ELLER: Thank you.

16 MS. SANDERS: I hope you are getting

17 some of those services because you know that's what

18 they have you doing.

19 All right. Tom Heinl.

20 MR. HEINL: Yes, I am advocate

21 representative of the United Blind of Minnesota.

22 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Tom, you might

23 want to speak up a little bit louder if you can.

24 MR. HEINL: I'm an advocate of one of

25 the Blind organizations, the United Blind of

15

1 Minnesota.

2 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you very

3 much.

4 Rob Hobson.

5 MR. HOBSON: All right. Is this thing

6 working? Sorry about that. It didn't sound like

7 it was working.

8 Hi. I'm Rob Hobson, I am the

9 representative for the -- counselor, I'm a rehab

10 counselor, so.

11 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

12 MR. HOBSON: And that's short.

13 MS. SANDERS: And that means he's one

14 of the members who gets to speak up whenever he

15 likes, but he doesn't get to vote. That's the rule

16 that rehab counselors are in around here.

17 MR. HOBSON: Yep, we don't vote.

18 MS. SANDERS: All right. Thea Kramer.

19 MS. KRAMER: Hello, I'm Thea Kramer

20 and I work for Vision Loss Resources so I am a

21 member for a representation for vendors.

22 MS. SANDERS: Could everyone hear her?

23 MR. ELLER: Yes.

24 MR. KRAMER: That's more than six

25 inches, can you hear me now?

16

1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

2 MS. KRAMER: Should I start over?

3 MR. ANDREWS: We heard you just fine.

4 MS. SANDERS: They heard you. Very

5 good.

6 Pat McGee.

7 MS. MCGEE: Yes. I don't know if I --

8 am I on? Am I on?

9 MS. SANDERS: You are on.

10 MS. MCGEE: All right. Pat McGee.

11 I'm returning after a pause of a couple years here,

12 was on for six years previously. I am now an

13 industry rep, although I applied for the position

14 of VR services client. So I don't really know what

15 I'm doing here, but I'm glad I am here.

16 MS. SANDERS: That's okay, we are

17 happy to have you anyway.

18 Jeff Milhelich.

19 MR. MILHELICH: Hi, my name is Jeff

20 and I am the rep from American Council of the

21 Blind. This is my second term on the Council.

22 Last time was back around 2012, I believe, and I am

23 glad to be here.

24 MS. SANDERS: Thank you, Jeff.

25 Jennifer Points.

17

1 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Did you

2 intend to jump from M to P?

3 MS. SANDERS: Oh, I didn't, I'm sorry,

4 you are going to have to remind me every time I do

5 that because Corbb was a late appointee and so the

6 list I have didn't remind me.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: I'm Corbb O'Connor and

8 I am one of the industry reps.

9 MS. SANDERS: Okay. We have a lot of

10 industry reps, that must be important.

11 Okay, Jennifer Points, are you here?

12 (No response.)

13 MS. SANDERS: I don't think, unless

14 anyone can look at the roll and see if she is muted

15 or something, we will move on.

16 Justin Salisbury.

17 MR. SALISBURY: Hello everyone, my

18 name is Justin Mark Hideaki Salisbury, my English

19 pronouns are he, him and his and I am an industry

20 representative.

21 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you.

22 Ryan Strunk.

23 MR. STRUNK: Good evening everyone. I

24 am the representative for the National Federation

25 of the Blind and coming up to the end of my sixth

18

1 year on the Council.

2 MS. SANDERS: Okay. And Patrick.

3 Vellia.

4 (No response.)

5 MS. JERDE: I think he is on vacation.

6 MS. SANDERS: Oh, is he? You know, he

7 might have told me that too. I gotta start keeping

8 track, don't I.

9 All right. That is our Council, now

10 let's find out what staff is here. We have Natasha

11 first.

12 MS. JERDE: Natasha Jerde. I'm the

13 ex-officio member here serving as the Director.

14 MS. SANDERS: Okay. And then who else

15 do we have?

16 MS. JERDE: Nyia.

17 MS. SANDERS: Nyia.

18 MS. VANG: Hi, my name is Nyia Vang

19 and I'm the new staff liaison for the SRC-B such as

20 yourselves. So if you have any questions don't

21 hesitate to reach out to me, email, call me. And

22 thank you for having me here.

23 MS. SANDERS: Very good. Jon, you are

24 here?

25 MR. BENSON: Jon Benson, State

19

1 Services for --

2 MR. ANDREWS: This is Dave Andrews,

3 I'm here.

4 MS. SANDERS: Okay, but we are talking

5 to Jon Benson right now.

6 MR. ANDREWS: Well I understand, but I

7 figured I could talk while he's unmuting.

8 MS. SANDERS: He was talking at the

9 same time you were, but I'm not sure --

10 MR. ANDREWS: Oh, okay, I'll shut up

11 then.

12 MS. SANDERS: Try it again, Jon.

13 MR. BENSON: I'm getting technical

14 assistance over here, maybe Dave's approach was

15 right.

16 MR. HOBSON: Do you want to use mine?

17 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: We are not

18 hearing Jon.

19 MS. SANDERS: He's working at it.

20 He's pressing buttons and breathing.

21 MR. BENSON: For any of the audience

22 members here this is a critical element here and

23 it's a critical moment.

24 MS. SANDERS: Is it not --

25 MR. NIFFEN: It takes a while for it

20

1 to connect.

2 MS. SANDERS: Do you want to use

3 someone else's while you are waiting?

4 MR. NIFFEN: It's almost done.

5 MS. SANDERS: Okay. There now, try it

6 again.

7 MR. BENSON: Jon Benson, Services for

8 the Blind.

9 MS. SANDERS: Yeah. Do we have any

10 other staff who want to show off?

11 Dave Andrews, go ahead.

12 MR. ANDREWS: Can I go now?

13 MS. SANDERS: Yes, you can.

14 MR. ANDREWS: Okay. I'm Dave Andrews,

15 I am supervisor of the Engineering Unit and Chief

16 Technology Officer for SSB.

17 MS. SANDERS: Okay. And Joe, do you

18 want to introduce yourself.

19 MR. NIFFEN: Not really.

20 MS. SANDERS: Come on, you're in the

21 room. Okay, never mind.

22 MR. ANDREWS: Joe Niffen is our Chief

23 Engineer and he's really good, he is just shy.

24 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Any other staff

25 here?

21

1 MS. BEILKE: Yes, this is Jennifer

2 Beilke.

3 MS. SANDERS: Jennifer, good.

4 MS. BEILKE: Yes, with SSB. I'm a

5 community partner relations and contract

6 specialist.

7 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you.

8 Anybody else who are staff?

9 (No response.)

10 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Let's go to the

11 all important audience. I don't know how we want

12 to do that. Somebody who is an audience member

13 introduce yourself.

14 MR. JACOBSON: What do you want us to

15 do?

16 MS. SANDERS: I want you to say your

17 name and I don't know if you want to say where you

18 are from or something, but at least your name.

19 MR. NIFFEN: You have to turn on the

20 mike.

21 MR. JACOBSON: Steve Jacobson.

22 MS. SANDERS: There we go.

23 MR. JACOBSON: It was hardly worth it.

24 MS. SANDERS: Well say something else

25 then, tell us, I don't know, when you were born,

22

1 something.

2 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He already

3 left.

4 MS. SANDERS: Oh, okay. Any other

5 audience members?

6 MS. BEILKE: They are coming.

7 MS. SANDERS: They are coming. And

8 then we will go to the ones on Zoom if there are

9 any, we will see. Here they come.

10 MR. HART: Rocky Hart.

11 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you, Rocky.

12 Who else?

13 MS. OLSON: Ginny Olson, SSP for

14 Rocky.

15 MS. SANDERS: Okay. We are glad to

16 have you both. Is that it? Let's look at Zoom

17 now. Anybody want to call the roll for Zoom or

18 something?

19 MS. DUNNAM: Jennifer Dunnam.

20 MS. SANDERS: Oh, thank you. Anybody

21 else who --

22 MS. O'CONNOR: Briley O'Connor.

23 MS. SANDERS: Thank you, Briley.

24 Are we done, shall we move on now?

25 MS. JERDE: There is a phone number

23

1 8609.

2 MS. SANDERS: Who has 86 --

3 MS. BAILEY: Jan Bailey.

4 MS. SANDERS: Thank you, Jan.

5 Who has 8609? Tom Heinl, is that your

6 number maybe?

7 (No response.)

8 MS. SANDERS: Well, they are not

9 talking to us so we hope that they are not butting

10 in.

11 MR. HEINL: I guess I was muted, Tom

12 Heinl is 8609.

13 MS. SANDERS: Oh, thank you, we didn't

14 recognize the number and you had introduced

15 yourself, thank you very much.

16 All right. Is that it then?

17 (No response.)

18 MS. SANDERS: That took quite a long

19 time, we won't do it that way again. We will just

20 say names next time.

21 Okay. Now we are going to approve the

22 minutes. Everyone got the minutes in the mail, so

23 I would like a motion to accept them please. Who

24 would like to do that?

25 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, so moved.

24

1 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller seconds.

2 MS. SANDERS: Okay. And you know, I

3 never thought about the legalities since he can't

4 vote on the motion is he allowed to make a motion,

5 anybody know?

6 MR. O'CONNOR: I believe so. This is

7 Corbb, he can make and second motions, but he can't

8 vote.

9 MS. SANDERS: Okay, all right. Any

10 additions or corrections to the minutes?

11 (No response.)

12 MS. SANDERS: Hearing none all those

13 in favor -- oh, we got to do a roll call don't we.

14 And you know, there is a person to blame for this,

15 I'm not gonna tell you who, but somebody complained

16 that because of open meeting laws we had to do all

17 roll call votes and actually convinced somebody

18 with power outside of SSB to say that we had to do

19 this. I may never forgive them, but we are going

20 to do this as best we can.

21 I want a yes or a no to approve the

22 minutes.

23 Connie.

24 MS. BERG: Need to abstain.

25 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Deanne.

25

1 MS. CURRAN: I'm not a voting member,

2 so.

3 MS. SANDERS: Yes, you are. I heard

4 that you were just put on the Council; is that not

5 right?

6 MS. CURRAN: I am on the other SRC

7 General Council.

8 MS. SANDERS: But they didn't give you

9 an appointment to this one as well?

10 MS. CURRAN: No.

11 MS. SANDERS: Okay, all right. That's

12 what was supposed to happen I think, but okay.

13 Diane.

14 MS. DOHNALIK: Yes.

15 MS. SANDERS: Frank.

16 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

17 MS. SANDERS: Sue.

18 MS. FAGER: Yes.

19 MS. SANDERS: Samantha.

20 MS. FLAX: Yes.

21 MS. SANDERS: Hannah.

22 MS. HARRIMAN: Yes.

23 MS. SANDERS: Ryan Haenze. Oh, he's

24 not here.

25 Tom.

26

1 MR. HEINL: Yes.

2 MS. SANDERS: Thea.

3 MS. KRAMER: Yes.

4 MS. SANDERS: Pat McGee.

5 MS. MCGEE: Yes.

6 MS. SANDERS: Jeff Milhelich.

7 MR. MILHELICH: Yes.

8 MS. SANDERS: Corbb O'Connor.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb O'Connor, yes.

10 MS. SANDERS: And Justin Salisbury?

11 MR. SALISBURY: Yes.

12 MS. SANDERS: Ryan Strunk.

13 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, yes.

14 MS. SANDERS: And that is it, the

15 minutes are approved.

16 Okay. Now we are going --

17 MR. O'CONNOR: Point of order, Madam

18 Chair.

19 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: You also need to vote,

21 my friend.

22 MS. SANDERS: Oh, I know it's a cliff

23 hanger, okay, I vote yes to approve the minutes.

24 Thank you for keeping me honest, I really

25 appreciate it more than you know.

27

1 All right. So now we are going to --

2 I am going to give you some information. Those

3 were the April 4 minutes, by the way, in case

4 anybody wants to know what we just approved.

5 So we are going to -- I'm going to

6 talk to you about committees that we have, and

7 there are several, and it is time for us to get

8 applicants for the committees.

9 Our committees start -- they will be

10 appointed as of August 1 or whatever our August

11 meeting is, and then the -- their terms,

12 everybody's terms will go through the end of July

13 of 2025. We have, I think it is, eight committees.

14 I don't know if I really ever counted them. And

15 your job both as council members and as members of

16 the community is to let me know what committees you

17 would like to serve on.

18 There is a list of them that is

19 available on the website, I can read them off to

20 you. At the end of this time we will give -- we

21 will seek committee reports from each committee and

22 they will all be mentioned, so you will hear them

23 then. And if you don't know what committee --

24 every councilmember should volunteer for at least

25 one or two and then we greatly appreciate it when

28

1 members of the community, members of the blindness

2 community, that doesn't mean you have to be Blind,

3 that means you have to know something about

4 blindness though, to serve on these committees.

5 You can volunteer as well.

6 If you volunteer for these committees,

7 if you are officially appointed, and there is not

8 an infinite number, each committee has so many

9 people that can be on it. So if you are officially

10 appointed to the committee by the Council, and I

11 will make the initial nominations at the August

12 meeting and then the Council will approve them,

13 then you can vote at these committee meetings.

14 There is never much voting, frankly, but all

15 committees are open.

16 And so if you don't get appointed

17 because we are -- each committee, we are told how

18 many people can be on it, if you didn't get on the

19 committee you wanted, you are still more than

20 welcome to attend the meeting and give input. The

21 only thing you couldn't do is be kind of like Rob

22 Hobson and not vote.

23 So I want everybody to think about it

24 and I would like to know by July 15 if you -- what

25 you would like to volunteer for. I think what we

29

1 will do is I will put out an email to the Council

2 and also ask that those of you who are not on the

3 Council but have interest in committees or maybe

4 you are affiliated with a group that deals with

5 blindness issues and you want -- you hope some of

6 your members will sign up for this committee,

7 please have them do this.

8 I am going to put out an email so you

9 can respond to it and you can spread the word with

10 other people, I hope you will, and have them apply

11 to be on any of these committees.

12 Those of you who have been attending

13 meetings for a while have heard the various

14 committee reports, but we will be going through

15 them later so you can give it some thought.

16 If you have questions please feel free

17 to either email me or call me and I will put my

18 phone number on the email that I send. That's

19 probably easier than giving it now.

20 Anybody have any questions about the

21 process?

22 MS. HARRIMAN: This is Hannah, I have

23 one question. So I know you said you are going to

24 send us an email, is there a formal application,

25 would you like a cover letter, resume, anything

30

1 like that?

2 MS. SANDERS: No, no, oh dear, thank

3 you for asking. No, I don't want a cover letter.

4 Unless you have reason to believe that you are a

5 complete stranger to me, then you might want to

6 tell me a little bit about why you think you should

7 be on that committee.

8 But actually what you could do when

9 you write to me and say you want to be on the

10 committee, put your phone number on it, that might

11 be very helpful.

12 And then what I will be doing in

13 August is I will announce the various committees

14 and who is on which one. And if we don't fill,

15 make the proper appointments for a committee, we

16 will leave it open and we will keep recruiting for

17 it.

18 Any other questions?

19 MS. HARRIMAN: This is Hannah and that

20 makes sense. And I'm looking at the calendar and

21 I'm realizing I have a mandatory work event for one

22 of my jobs on August 1, our next meeting, so is

23 there a way to be notified if you are selected to a

24 committee or if you're not?

25 MS. SANDERS: Yes, we will let you

31

1 know what committees you are on.

2 MS. HARRIMAN: Okay. Sorry, those are

3 all my questions for now.

4 MS. SANDERS: That's okay, they are

5 good questions.

6 Any others?

7 MR. HOBSON: This is Rob.

8 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Rob.

9 MR. HOBSON: I just want to point out

10 I know some positions require you to be on a

11 specific committee.

12 MS. SANDERS: They do. And rather

13 than go through all of those, I suspect that most

14 of you know which ones. For instance, the

15 Communication Center is the best example of that.

16 Most of you know because you are associated with

17 the Communication Center in some capacity, but if

18 you are one of those people who needs to be on one

19 of those committees, I will let you know.

20 MR. HOBSON: Sounds great, thank you.

21 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

22 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

23 MR. O'CONNOR: I just want to clarify,

24 we will go through a lot of this later when we go

25 through the committee structure document, but the

32

1 seats of the committees are a guidance to the Chair

2 and the Chair's recommendations to the Council and

3 the Council then votes. Being in a specific seat

4 does not guarantee you a specific or assume a

5 specific committee assignment for you.

6 And so we as a group will determine

7 later on this evening the number of seats and those

8 kinds of provisions for those committees.

9 MS. SANDERS: Okay, point well taken.

10 Any other things about committees? Remember to

11 stay in touch and let me know what you want.

12 Okay. Now the other thing that we

13 have besides committees are task forces. The

14 difference between a committee and a task force is

15 that a committee has a year-round job, the task

16 force has a task and once that task is done,

17 whatever it is, we are going to appoint two of them

18 tonight, once the task is done then you no longer

19 are a force.

20 So we have two of those to do tonight.

21 The first one is the Budget Task Force and we --

22 probably two or three people or maybe four at the

23 most is a nice number for a task force, so let me

24 tell you we have that one and then we have the

25 Needs Assessment Task Force. And that one is a

33

1 little bit less clear about what that means, so I'm

2 gonna come to that one second.

3 Let's start with the Budget Task

4 Force. Is there anybody -- I think Ryan Strunk,

5 did you chair that last time?

6 MR. STRUNK: I did not, I served on it

7 but did not chair it.

8 MS. SANDERS: Do you remember who did?

9 MR. STRUNK: Corbb did.

10 MS. SANDERS: Thanks, Corbb. So that

11 just gives you an idea. The budget is not SSB's

12 budget, it's our Council budget. We actually have

13 a budget that we have to follow and we spend money

14 on things like food, which we just ate, sorry for

15 those of you on Zoom, not really, I'm feeling not

16 sorry, you could have been here to eat.

17 And we also sponsor people to go to

18 the various rehab agency conferences, the national

19 ones. And we pay -- I am not sure if our per diems

20 that we are entitled to for coming to these

21 meetings as councilmembers count.

22 MR. O'CONNOR: It does.

23 MS. SANDERS: Okay. And so things

24 like that. And this group has to come up with a

25 budget, you will be able to have the current budget

34

1 as an example and you can decide whether you want

2 to make changes or not and then we vote on it.

3 So who would like to volunteer for the

4 Budget Task Force, the all powerful Budget Task

5 Force?

6 MS. MCGEE: Judy, this is Pat McGee, I

7 will volunteer.

8 MS. SANDERS: Yeah, Pat McGee, what a

9 trooper. Anybody else want to volunteer?

10 MR. STRUNK: This is Ryan and I will

11 volunteer.

12 MS. SANDERS: Good for you, Ryan.

13 All right. And anybody else?

14 MS. FAGER: This is Sue Fager with

15 PACER, I would be happy to do this.

16 MS. SANDERS: Okay, Sue. We have

17 three and that's fine unless there is somebody else

18 who has an interest in it I would not object to

19 putting you on there.

20 (No response.)

21 All right. We have Pat McGee, Ryan

22 Strunk and Sue Fager. I don't know if --

23 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson so moved.

24 MS. SANDERS: Well, before you do that

25 let's pick a chair and then we will move.

35

1 Ryan, I know you have done it before,

2 do you wish to chair this or would you be willing

3 to?

4 MR. STRUNK: I will do it.

5 MS. SANDERS: What did you say?

6 MR. STRUNK: Yes, I will happily do

7 that.

8 MS. SANDERS: Thank you.

9 Okay. So Ryan Strunk will be the

10 chair with Pat McGee and Sue Fager as task force

11 members.

12 Now, Rob, make your motion.

13 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, moved.

14 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller seconds.

15 MS. SANDERS: Rob Hobson moved and

16 Frank Eller seconded this Task Force made up of

17 Ryan Strunk as chair, Pat McGee and Sue Fager as

18 members.

19 All right. We are going to do the

20 roll call again.

21 Connie.

22 MS. BERG: Yes.

23 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Diane.

24 MS. DOHNALIK: Diane, yes.

25 MS. SANDERS: Frank.

36

1 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

2 MS. SANDERS: Sue.

3 MS. FAGER: Sue Fager, yes.

4 MS. SANDERS: Samantha.

5 MS. FLAX: Samantha Flax, yes.

6 MS. SANDERS: Hannah.

7 MS. HARRIMAN: Hannah Harriman, yes.

8 MS. SANDERS: Tom Heinl.

9 MR. HEINL: Tom Heinl, yes.

10 MS. SANDERS: Thea Kramer.

11 MS. KRAMER: Thea Kramer, yes.

12 MS. SANDERS: Pat McGee.

13 MS. MCGEE: Pat McGee, yes.

14 MS. SANDERS: Jeff Milhelich.

15 MR. MILHELICH: Jeff Milhelich, yes.

16 MS. SANDERS: Corbb O'Connor.

17 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb O'Connor, yes.

18 MS. SANDERS: Justin Salisbury.

19 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury, yes.

20 MS. SANDERS: Ryan Strunk.

21 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, yes.

22 MS. SANDERS: And Judy Sanders, yes.

23 All right. The motion passes, we have

24 our first task force.

25 Let's do our next one, the Needs

37

1 Assessment is a little bit less clear. What this

2 is, the Council as a part of the State Plan for

3 State Services for the Blind and DEED, we have to

4 establish our Needs Assessment, what is it this

5 agency needs to do to be a better agency or to give

6 better services? Where are we lacking in areas?

7 And you get to determine this. And I

8 have always had the greatest admiration for the

9 people who do this committee, I really have. This

10 like other committees does not have to be just

11 councilmembers, there are members of the public, as

12 you have in the past, helped with this. We will

13 thank you in advance and think you are -- we will

14 put a monument up or something, don't know when,

15 but we will.

16 So would anyone like to volunteer for

17 this?

18 MR. O'CONNOR: Point of order, Corbb

19 O'Connor has a question.

20 MS. SANDERS: What's your question?

21 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb, for

22 Natasha. We had talked that this committee last

23 year needed the support of an external consultant

24 and I wondered whether you could give us an update

25 on if a consultant was identified, if funding was

38

1 approved, anything like that?

2 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. So the

3 next Needs Assessment will be due in two years and

4 we need to begin the request for proposal process

5 probably this summer, because it can take quite a

6 significant amount of time to get that.

7 So where we are at, we need to start

8 the request for proposal process, but we do have a

9 budget for an external consultant and it's possible

10 the Needs Assessment Task Force could be in some

11 way part of searching for that third party.

12 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Does anybody

13 know, I mean, it's in our Work Plan to appoint this

14 task force now, but would we want to wait for that

15 process to either find someone or does anyone know?

16 Because we have never done that before.

17 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury.

18 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

19 MR. SALISBURY: And Corbb, I also want

20 to be able to ask a question, but on this piece it

21 appears to me sequentially, because I have been

22 part of community needs assessments before, that a

23 task force at this stage in the game would be

24 developing the terms by which those external

25 consultants would be selected for this task force

39

1 and develop a process through which that external

2 consultant would be selected. I could be wrong,

3 but that's how I perceive the role at this point.

4 And then as a question, I was going to

5 ask: Are there any particular guidelines or

6 restrictions on how this task force would be

7 gathering information about community needs in the

8 process?

9 Because it seems like -- it's hard for

10 me to discern whether this task force is also

11 trying to simultaneously gather information about

12 community needs in order to determine the terms of

13 the community needs assessment or if they are

14 trying to plan kind of an isolation of that

15 community needs assessment.

16 So can you talk more about that?

17 MS. SANDERS: Anybody?

18 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. I keep

19 looking over at Jennifer because up until briefly

20 she has been our Statewide Needs Assessment

21 Coordinator and I wonder if, Jennifer, you would be

22 able to share --

23 MS. SANDERS: Working to get to a

24 microphone, see if it works.

25 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer Beilke.

40

1 I will try to answer your question the best I can.

2 In some ways it may be premature to have the Needs

3 Assessment -- to put the Needs Assessment Task

4 Force together. Although I'm thinking this through

5 and mulling it over as I try and speak at the same

6 time, as far as you had some very good points.

7 What I'm thinking of is we have,

8 thanks to Natasha, we have an excellent example of

9 an RFP or Request For Proposal for this very thing,

10 for an external third party company to perform a

11 Needs Assessment from another state. And it does

12 have some excellent pieces to it.

13 There are some things that I can

14 definitely see us borrowing and there are some

15 other things in there that, some areas that they

16 focus on, that I feel wouldn't be such a focus for

17 SSB.

18 But I do feel that an area that would

19 be really helpful for the task force would be to

20 help put into that request for proposal your

21 thoughts and how you would like that -- some of

22 those things that you would like to see that, you

23 know, that third-party provider, how you would like

24 to see that Needs Assessment be conducted.

25 Some of those ideas we can put into

41

1 that request for proposal and some of those ideas

2 might already be in that sample that we have, but

3 we would like your input in that. So yes, that

4 would definitely be a way that we would like the --

5 the task force could definitely participate and

6 assist us with that. Does that adequately address

7 all of your points?

8 MR. O'CONNOR: This is --

9 MS. BEILKE: Sorry, go ahead, Corbb.

10 MR. O'CONNOR: Yeah, so this is Corbb,

11 just to make sure I am understanding. The next

12 Needs Assessment is not due for two years, so what

13 is the outcome or work product, in addition to the

14 request for provided feedback on the request for

15 proposal for the consultant, what else would this

16 committee be producing in this interim year, if

17 anything?

18 MS. BEILKE: Well, it could be doing a

19 review of, you know, of our current, I mean, I say

20 current but it hasn't actually been approved yet

21 and it won't be effective until July 1. But, you

22 know, they could be doing a review of how we are

23 doing, you know, our progress.

24 Looking ahead to areas. Maybe if we

25 are seeing some things that maybe we missed, some

42

1 areas we know we couldn't get to, those could be

2 areas where we could start either gathering data or

3 just brainstorming or brainstorming ways that we

4 could get to that data. That could be something

5 the task force could be doing during this time.

6 That's one idea.

7 MS. DUNNAM: Jennifer Dunnam.

8 MS. JERDE: Natasha --

9 MS. SANDERS: Jennifer.

10 MS. DUNNAM: I yield to Natasha and if

11 she doesn't say what I was going to say, then I

12 will.

13 MS. JERDE: Thanks Jennifer, this is

14 Natasha.

15 MS. JERDE: I was just going to say I

16 believe this was a holdover on the Work Plan prior

17 to when we were doing three years Statewide Needs

18 Assessments. When WIOA came out we decided to do

19 two year, every two years because we would be on

20 the same cycle as our larger plan. I have a

21 feeling this may be a holdover from that on our

22 Work Plan which is why it's on here, but it may not

23 be something that was updated on our Work Plan. So

24 it may be a bit premature, but maybe not.

25 MS. SANDERS: Well, I would,

43

1 especially if -- now if we don't do it now, can

2 you, Natasha, start with the request for proposal

3 even though we don't have the committee yet or the

4 task force?

5 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. Yes, and

6 that process can take upwards of six to nine

7 months.

8 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

9 MS. JERDE: And it may be, once we get

10 a sense of where we are at in that process, the

11 task force could be appointed at that time to weigh

12 in on the scope of the work that we need to have

13 done.

14 MS. SANDERS: Jennifer, what did you

15 want to say and see if it lends any help?

16 MS. DUNNAM: Nothing new, I was going

17 to talk about two years and three years, so it's

18 covered. Thank you.

19 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer Beilke.

20 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

21 MS. BEILKE: I had started on the RFP,

22 like I said, we have an excellent example of an RFP

23 from another state which is a -- it's beautiful, if

24 anything it's overly detailed, but of course being

25 in another state it's in a completely different

44

1 format from the way we do ours, but I would very

2 much like to get feedback because there is some

3 things in there that I would like to know does our,

4 you know -- because, for example, it included, you

5 know, some very descriptive pieces that they wanted

6 a presentation to their Council and they wanted,

7 you know, down to the, you know, how many copies

8 they wanted.

9 I mean, it was very descriptive, but

10 is that something we would want is a presentation

11 to our Council, you know? So I would very much

12 want to get feedback from everyone, you know, in

13 that piece for the RFP, so definitely.

14 MS. SANDERS: Well, I do know that in

15 the past we have had reports from that task force,

16 so I don't know if that's what you mean.

17 Jennifer.

18 MS. DUNNAM: Yes, maybe it would be

19 helpful to say in the past this task force has been

20 a multi year task force, so it's usually a windup

21 of whatever the cycle was. So I don't know. I'm

22 just an observer, but it seems to me the point of

23 this, if we are at the beginning of a cycle,

24 appoint the task force to go through the cycle and

25 have it available as needed.

45

1 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury.

2 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Justin.

3 MR. SALISBURY: So I think given the

4 comments from Jennifer Beilke about, you know, the

5 value of being able to get feedback on this RFP

6 process, it seems to me like it could be quite

7 valuable actually to go forward with having this

8 task force. It may not have a very heavy load at

9 this point, but to be able to offer that feedback

10 at this early stage sounds pretty valuable.

11 MS. SANDERS: Okay. I assume is there

12 anyone who wants to challenge that idea? Let's

13 appoint one.

14 MS. BERG: I'm sorry, this is Connie

15 Berg calling or Connie Berg discussing about the

16 Needs Assessment. Has it already been determined,

17 the assessment tool that's going to be used, have

18 we already identified the individuals that we will

19 be contacting to ask them what they feel their

20 needs are? I mean, a lot of that I don't think --

21 I sometimes think it's going to take more than two

22 years to get all of that information together so

23 I'm in support of starting it as soon as possible.

24 MS. SANDERS: Okay. The answer to

25 your question is that we have to do it in two

46

1 years, that's part of the requirement so, I mean, I

2 think you raise a good point, we need to start

3 thinking about it.

4 We don't know. A lot of that will

5 probably depend on who we get to facilitate too.

6 So let's form a task force and I'm sure that after

7 all this discussion everybody wants to be on it,

8 but you can't. So who would like to volunteer for

9 this task force?

10 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury would like

11 to be on it.

12 MS. BERG: And Connie Berg, I would

13 like to volunteer.

14 MS. SANDERS: All right. Justin and

15 Connie and did someone else?

16 MR. HART: Rocky Hart.

17 MS. SANDERS: Rocky Hart. If we have

18 someone else that wants to do this I think it would

19 not hurt for this kind of thing. Anybody else?

20 (No response.)

21 MS. SANDERS: Or we won't, we will do

22 it with these three.

23 All right. So we have Justin

24 Salisbury, Connie Berg, and Rocky Hart. Justin,

25 would you like to chair this thing?

47

1 MR. SALISBURY: Yes, ma'am.

2 MS. SANDERS: Okay, all right. I need

3 a motion to accept Justin Salisbury as chair and

4 Connie Berg and Rocky Hart as members.

5 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller moves.

6 MS. FLAX: So moved.

7 MR. ELLER: Sorry.

8 MS. SANDERS: Frank moved except he

9 apologized so who wants to do it?

10 MS. FLAX: It was Sam, we were talking

11 at the same time.

12 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Sam moved because

13 Frank was sorry and we don't want him to be sorry.

14 MR. ELLER: Frank seconds.

15 MS. SANDERS: Okay, Frank seconds --

16 MR. ELLER: I learned my lesson.

17 MS. SANDERS: -- the motion. So now

18 we will do a roll call and everybody knows Justin

19 Salisbury will chair and Rocky Hart and Connie Berg

20 will serve as members of the task force.

21 Connie, we are voting. Connie Berg,

22 are you voting? Did we lose you?

23 (No response.)

24 MS. BERG: Okay, can you hear me now?

25 MS. SANDERS: Yes, now we can.

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1 MS. BERG: I'm sorry about that. I

2 was saying that only because my name was included

3 in the motion I am going to have to abstain.

4 MS. SANDERS: You can abstain if you

5 wish, but you don't have to. It's perfectly legal

6 for you to vote.

7 MS. BERG: Okay, yes.

8 MS. SANDERS: All right. Diane.

9 MS. DOHNALIK: Diane Dohnalik, yes.

10 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Frank.

11 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

12 MS. SANDERS: Sue.

13 MS. FAGER: Sue Fager, yes.

14 MS. SANDERS: Samantha.

15 MS. FLAX: Samantha Flax, yes.

16 MS. SANDERS: And Hannah.

17 MS. HARRIMAN: Hannah Harriman, yes.

18 MS. SANDERS: Tom.

19 MR. HEINL: Tom Heinl, yes.

20 MS. SANDERS: Thea.

21 MS. KRAMER: Kramer, yes.

22 MS. SANDERS: Pat McGee.

23 MS. MCGEE: Pat McGee, yes.

24 MS. SANDERS: Jeff.

25 MR. MILHELICH: Jeff Milhelich, yes.

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1 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb, yes.

3 MS. SANDERS: And Justin.

4 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury, yes.

5 MS. SANDERS: Ryan Strunk.

6 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, yes.

7 MS. SANDERS: All right. And Judy

8 Sanders, yes. The motion passes. Thank you very

9 much, this is an amazing thing, this took much

10 longer than we probably thought it would.

11 Okay. Now, the last thing --

12 MS. BERG: Madam Chair, Connie Berg.

13 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

14 MS. BERG: I have a question. Did

15 that include the voting also for the Budget Task

16 Force or did we do that earlier?

17 MS. SANDERS: No, we voted on that one

18 first.

19 MS. BERG: Okay, all right, thank you.

20 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Now, I want to

21 remind the current committee chairs that you have a

22 responsibility to write your part of our Annual

23 Report. That is due October 15, it only has to be

24 a couple of paragraphs, you know, you can look at

25 some past ones on our website maybe if you want,

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1 but each committee has to submit a report and it is

2 the responsibility of the chairs to do it. Lisa

3 Larges will come and hound you if you don't do it.

4 She's good at that.

5 Okay. Any questions about any of

6 that?

7 MS. FLAX: Can we get candy again?

8 MS. SANDERS: October 15 is when it

9 has to be done.

10 MS. FLAX: I said can we get candy

11 again?

12 MS. SANDERS: What?

13 MR. O'CONNOR: I'll let the rest of

14 you in on the inside joke. Last year I was so

15 frustrated for lack of response from particular

16 individuals that may or may not have been on this

17 Council that I said the first two committees to get

18 me their reports got candy. And I believe Samantha

19 is, as the chair of 1,700 committees of this

20 Council, is looking for some sugar.

21 MS. SANDERS: Yes, I won that candy

22 too last year.

23 All right. Moving right along here.

24 The last thing that I want to have maybe Natasha

25 talk to us about upcoming conferences. These are

51

1 the conferences that a couple of Council members

2 can attend, they are national conferences, they are

3 National Council for State Agencies for the Blind

4 and there's also the VR one, CSAVR is. Those

5 conferences are the same week and you can go to

6 just the Blind one or both if you want.

7 Are those the only conferences that

8 we --

9 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. There's

10 also the NCSRC, which is the National Coalition of

11 State Rehab Councils which is that weekend leading

12 up to those two other conferences.

13 MS. SANDERS: Oh, okay. All right.

14 Is anyone interested now? You get your airfare is

15 paid, your hotel is paid and you get an allowance

16 for food to do this.

17 MR. O'CONNOR: Do we have dates for

18 those yet?

19 MS. SANDERS: No, I don't.

20 MS. JERDE: I have them ready. So

21 this is Natasha, the location is in Seattle this

22 fall. The NCSRC, is October 19 and 20. The

23 Council of State Administrators and Vocational

24 Rehabilitation, also called CSAVR, has a

25 pre-conference that same weekend, but the actual

52

1 conference starts on the 21st and goes through noon

2 on the 23rd. And then starting at 1:00 on the 23rd

3 the National Council on State Agencies for the

4 Blind, NCSAB starts. And that goes until

5 approximately noon on October 25.

6 So if you go to all three you would be

7 there from the 19th through the 25th, although some

8 people elect to only attend NCSAB or CSAVR, that's

9 also an option.

10 MS. SANDERS: Right. So do you happen

11 to know when the registration is due?

12 MS. JERDE: Registration is not out

13 yet, but usually early bird is around September,

14 early September, and we like to get everything in

15 by September 15.

16 MS. SANDERS: All right. So you can

17 think about it. I would hope, though, that if you

18 want to do it, do you think September 1 is

19 sufficient for them to let us know?

20 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha,

21 September 1 would be great. If we get word that

22 the registration is coming out earlier, we can let

23 you know.

24 MS. SANDERS: All right.

25 MR. STRUNK: Ryan --

53

1 MS. MCGEE: Madam Chair.

2 MR. HOBSON: Rob.

3 MS. SANDERS: Before Pat said Madam

4 Chair, Corbb, was it you?

5 MR. STRUNK: Strunk.

6 MS. SANDERS: Oh Strunk, okay, Strunk.

7 MR. STRUNK: It strikes me we could

8 probably vote on this in August, but one of the

9 things, the reason I suggest August, is one of the

10 things that I might suggest, and we can discuss

11 this on the Budget Task Force as well, it occurred

12 to me as a recent attendee of one of the

13 conferences that if you attend the conference and

14 then file for reimbursement, you know in my case

15 the hotel had to go on my credit card instead of

16 the state credit card and you end up with a

17 substantial enough bill when you are reimbursed by

18 the State of Minnesota you are reimbursed as an I9

19 and you have to pay taxes on your reimbursement.

20 And so it's a substantial percentage.

21 And so we might consider even

22 allocating or determining if there are ways to

23 avoid that in the future or to gross up future

24 attendees so that they are not having to pay taxes

25 for the privilege of representing the organization

54

1 for attending, you know, as a way of skilling up

2 the organization.

3 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

4 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

5 MR. O'CONNOR: So I just want to

6 clarify, Ryan. Were you taxed on the reimbursement

7 or were you only taxed on the per diem and meal

8 allowances? Because the per diems are taxable if

9 you hit $600 or more a year, but the reimbursement

10 expenses should not be.

11 MR. STRUNK: I will need to check on

12 that, but Dan Ashman shared that he ran afoul of

13 the same thing the year before. I was not

14 reimbursed until January or February of this year,

15 so I don't know what it will be for 2024 until next

16 year. So I will need to check on that and be

17 absolutely certain.

18 MR. O'CONNOR: I am given to

19 understand I'll need to expect some form of that.

20 MS. SANDERS: Yeah. We do need to

21 straighten that out, but I also think we can wait

22 until August, I don't have any problem with that.

23 But that would have nothing to do with what's

24 taxable, so we do need to straighten that out

25 regardless.

55

1 MR. O'CONNOR: The reason I bring it

2 up is it is a thing we can discuss as part of the

3 Budget Task Force and be prepared to offer you

4 information about that before August and have more

5 information for you.

6 MS. SANDERS: You know, depends on --

7 I suppose nobody wants to be taxed on that, so we

8 do need to understand it no matter what. And

9 nobody should buy any tickets until maybe September

10 regardless. You can think about it now and Nyia,

11 if you can make sure that our minutes reflect that

12 this is to be brought up in August as well so we

13 don't forget, because I will.

14 All right. Anymore conversation about

15 that?

16 MS. MCGEE: Pat McGee.

17 MS. SANDERS: Pat, yes.

18 MS. MCGEE: That's actually what I was

19 going to bring up. I also believe we have to vote

20 on who we -- who is being sent, so that means we

21 actually have to decide in August who is going, we

22 can't wait until September.

23 MS. SANDERS: No, no, no, we can

24 wait -- well, we can, I mean we will know whether

25 we need to do that by then.

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1 MS. MCGEE: Okay. And also I did get

2 hit with that too, my income was $605 from a

3 reimbursement for an emergency flight out because

4 they canceled my flight home so I had taken --

5 MS. SANDERS: Well, that is a little

6 different, I think.

7 MS. MCGEE: That's why I got so much

8 money back.

9 MS. SANDERS: All right. Someone else

10 asked for the floor, who was that?

11 MS. MCGEE: It might have been me.

12 MS. SANDERS: No, it was you and I

13 thought someone else did.

14 MS. FLAX: It was Corbb.

15 MS. SANDERS: Oh, okay.

16 MR. O'CONNOR: It's been covered.

17 MS. SANDERS: All right. Now believe

18 it or not we are ready for Natasha's Director's

19 Report. I think this last thing was the longest

20 thing I have ever done.

21 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. And I do

22 want to say it's 6:50, we have a break set at 7:00,

23 and do you want me to do a little bit now and then

24 stop?

25 MS. SANDERS: Yes, I think you should.

57

1 MS. JERDE: Okay. I'll keep my eye on

2 it.

3 So greetings Council and happy June.

4 I don't think you realize how thrilled I am that we

5 have pretty much every single seat filled for our

6 Council minus one, which I believe is the

7 Governor's Workforce Development Board seat. I

8 don't remember the last time we've had everyone in

9 their seats and I'm excited for what we are going

10 to be able to accomplish this next year together.

11 So onto some updates. The first is we

12 are applying for a Disability Innovation Fund

13 Grant. The US Department of Education

14 Rehabilitation Services Administration, RSA,

15 basically our overseer issued a notice inviting

16 applications for a grant that they are calling

17 Creating a 21st Century Workforce of Youth and

18 Adults with Disabilities through the Transformation

19 of Education, Career and Competitive Integrated

20 Employment Model Demonstration Project, it's the

21 longest name for a grant I have ever heard in my

22 life.

23 SSB in coordination with the Institute

24 for Community Inclusion at U Mass Boston and

25 Lanterna Consulting, we are applying for this

58

1 grant. RSA estimates the grant awards may range

2 from 8 to 10 million dollars, they are for a five

3 year duration and they are looking at about 20 to

4 25 awards. There have been several hundred

5 expressions of interest and never has a Blind

6 agency ever been awarded a Disability Innovation

7 Fund Grant ever. So we took that as a challenge.

8 But our proposal for the grant, which

9 is due on July 8, it's approximately a 75 to 100

10 page long grant application, it's intensive, but we

11 are proposing something that we're calling Evolve

12 Employment.

13 And we've created a model, really

14 around creating a 21st Century workforce agency

15 that's serving Blind, low vision and Deafblind

16 individuals. And we are really looking at

17 advancing outcomes for people are who are most at

18 risk for underemployment or unemployment. And we

19 are going to have an emphasis on individuals who

20 acquire a vision loss later in life, as well as new

21 Americans.

22 We are looking at five different

23 components to this and the model is much larger

24 than this, but this is the high level. We are

25 focusing on both the employer aspect as well as the

59

1 people we work with.

2 So we are looking at expanding and

3 refining our organizational structure and how we

4 deliver services as part of our employment and

5 training. And we are looking at a different

6 approach to working with people.

7 The second is that we are increasing

8 our service provider skills, experience and

9 capacity, which means we would be able to provide

10 incentives and training to our service providers to

11 help people get into some of what we are calling

12 the drive for five sectors, but they are the in

13 demand sectors here in Minnesota that the Governor

14 has been talking about.

15 We are looking at launching a business

16 focus outreach campaign that changes the

17 perceptions and stigmas of vision loss, while

18 offering resources and support in the areas of

19 recruitment, retention, advancement, accommodations

20 and accessibility.

21 An important part of this grant is

22 people do not need to be associated with the VR

23 program to get these services under the grant,

24 which means we can go out to businesses whether

25 they are working with someone that has applied for

60

1 services or they are working with someone who has a

2 vision loss who is not associated at all with the

3 agency. So that would be an area that we are

4 looking at.

5 We are also looking at advanced

6 technology, artificial intelligence and training

7 that supports individuals in getting into these

8 occupations and demand, as well as helping

9 businesses in hiring and retaining those

10 individuals. And we are looking at how can we

11 better work with our other partners, especially our

12 WIOA partners, in helping them provide better

13 services to people with vision loss.

14 And so we are in the thick of the

15 application process and if you would like to offer

16 support for the grant application, please let me

17 know. Or if you want to talk further on exactly

18 what this looks like and what we are actually

19 envisioning versus just this high level summary, we

20 are happy to talk more about that as well.

21 The next area is I'm really excited to

22 announce that we have an accepted offer for a new

23 English Language Learner specialist to be employed

24 at State Services for the Blind.

25 Since we are on the topic of

61

1 committees, this was actually a recommendation from

2 the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee and

3 we listened and we actually had someone who

4 hopefully will be starting early July. This brand

5 new position establishes programs and services that

6 supports the vocational success of English Language

7 Learners.

8 It involves not only developing

9 curriculum and providing the service itself, but

10 it's also collaborating with all of the other

11 programs that exist that provide adult basic

12 education, but are not equipped with how do you

13 provide accommodations in those settings, how do

14 you incorporate Braille training? So this person

15 will be that specialist. They will be a bridge,

16 they will be providing the training and they will

17 be working with others who offer English Language

18 Learning.

19 LUNA. So there is a company called

20 MOHX, M-O-H-X, Games and they are actually based

21 out of Eau Claire, Wisconsin. And they have been

22 working with UW Stout on this new piece of

23 technology they've created. And they proposed

24 testing this technology which they call LUNA

25 Vision, L-U-N-A, Vision, at SSB this summer and it

62

1 would be at no cost.

2 So what is LUNA. How they describe it

3 is that it's an app designed especially for people

4 who are Blind or low vision, and they are also

5 looking at Deafblind in the future, and

6 transforming the way they interact with their

7 surroundings. It's designed to construct a real

8 time map that it translates to 3D audio tones and

9 auditory cues and it also is really important to

10 note it's not meant to replace the need for using a

11 cane or for O & M skills, but it's an additional

12 tool in the toolbox for navigating your

13 surroundings. It's able to detect an unlimited

14 amount of objects and it's available in 57

15 different languages.

16 They would like to test out this

17 technology in our building with staff, with

18 visitors, get feedback to see is it a useful tool,

19 is it something that works well and then their hope

20 is to eventually get this in other buildings.

21 So Be My Eyes is probably the most

22 closest I can think of, they are implementing an AI

23 feature in Be My Eyes. This actually incorporates

24 more than that, of course I'm not a techie, but the

25 way they explained it, it is like Be My Eyes, IRA

63

1 and a few other applications all rolled into one.

2 So that may be coming this summer and we would love

3 if people would like to come and test this and

4 provide critical and honest feedback that will be

5 an opportunity.

6 And then my last update before we

7 break. So many of you may be aware we have this

8 initiative we have been working on called Evolve

9 VR. And our most recent update is that Jon, our

10 deputy director of program services, and our

11 workforce development counselor/supervisors met

12 with the Innovation Lab, which is kind of a think

13 tank within our department. And they are looking

14 at how the intake experience works with individuals

15 and improving that experience when people walk in

16 our doors and apply for services.

17 So they are planning some listening

18 sessions and learning how to better manage that

19 whole process so it's a much easier, funner

20 experience for the people who come through out

21 doors.

22 So with that I'm at 7:00. Judy, do

23 you want to --

24 MS. SANDERS: Yeah, we will take --

25 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

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1 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Sorry, I just had a

3 quick question. I didn't know if you were sharing

4 the name of the English Language Learning person,

5 if they were known to our community or perhaps they

6 are new?

7 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. I'm not

8 able to yet because they are still doing background

9 checks.

10 MR. O'CONNOR: Thanks.

11 MS. SANDERS: Okay. We are going to

12 take a ten minute break; does that work for

13 everybody?

14 MR. ELLER: Yes.

15 MS. SANDERS: Okay, ten minutes.

16 MS. JERDE: And this is Natasha. Nyia

17 will be going around with the nonemployee expense

18 request for reimbursement, so she will be grabbing

19 you during break.

20 MS. SANDERS: Good luck with that on

21 Zoom.

22 (Break taken from 6:58 to 7:10 p.m.)

23 MS. SANDERS: All right. We will turn

24 the meeting back over to our director, Natasha.

25 MS. JERDE: Thank you, Judy.

65

1 So on to some administrative updates,

2 I'm gonna start with Community Partnerships. So we

3 shared at a previous council meeting some of our

4 strategic planning goals around improving

5 communications with our partners and so here are

6 some progress updates.

7 So our new Community Partner

8 Newsletter titled The Partner Post debuted on

9 April 15 and the May version went out on the 7th.

10 We have begun work on our web page redesign. We

11 are in the thick of updating and restarting the

12 contract monitoring process which we will be

13 talking more about at our next Community Partners

14 Forum which is on Tuesday, July 9 from 10:00 to

15 noon. And now you can register for those upcoming

16 forums on our website under the forums tab on the

17 Information for our Contracted Community Partners

18 page. You can also find previous materials from

19 other forums available there and if you do need a

20 direct link sent to you, you can email Susan Kusz

21 or Jennifer Beilke.

22 And some additional information on

23 contracts. We are continuing to make improvements

24 and reposting our request for proposals for our

25 master professional technical contracts. These are

66

1 the contracts we use for Adjustment to Blindness

2 and employment-related services. We are always

3 looking at streamlining the contracting process,

4 reducing the barriers and ensuring accessibility.

5 We are currently battling the accessability piece

6 and have been working with the Department of

7 Administration on fixing a ton of accessibility

8 issues with their contract documents. We have

9 three contracts in negotiations, four amendments in

10 progress and we have another three that are

11 requesting amendments.

12 An equity select contract with Jeff

13 Thompson for our pre-employments podcasting has

14 been completed for structured discovery centers.

15 We are now able to use the Louisiana Center for the

16 Blind and the Colorado Center for the Blind. And

17 we are currently working on what's called a joint

18 powers agreement with South Dakota Rehab Center for

19 the Blind and the Iowa Department for the Blind.

20 We have to do a joint powers because these are

21 state run centers, while the other two are not

22 state run so we are able to bounce off of other

23 state contracts for the most part.

24 Outreach. So our outreach team, and

25 we call them the Lisa's, because it's Lisa Larges

67

1 and Lisa Rogers, we call them the Lisa's. They

2 have been incredibly busy since our last council

3 meeting.

4 They had vendor booths at the Charting

5 the Seas Conference in Alexandria, the Celebrate

6 Aging Expo in Detroit Lakes and at a Community

7 Health Fair in St. Cloud. They are currently

8 working on several outreach initiatives, including

9 connecting with eye care professionals across the

10 state to inform them of SSB's services for their

11 patients, continuing working on our website,

12 boosting visibility of the Communication Center

13 audio offerings to organizations that provide

14 services for people with print related

15 disabilities.

16 And actually this just in, the Council

17 of Latin Affairs just posted a kind of an

18 announcement for our Communication Center that hit

19 today. They are working to expand outreach to the

20 Arrowhead, which is the northeastern Minnesota

21 area, and rural Minnesota communities with a media

22 campaign. They just finished the script for that

23 and that will be launching soon.

24 They have been collecting stories of

25 impact from SSB customers that includes conducting

68

1 interviews and writing narratives. Essentially we

2 want to tell the story of their successes.

3 We have been collaborating with the

4 Olmsted Implementation Office and the Minnesota DNR

5 to assist with their accessibility initiatives.

6 They continue to send out the SSB Messenger, which

7 is our monthly newsletter, and they have been

8 coordinating with our departmental outreach team,

9 as well as our sister agency at VRS to boost our

10 outreach efforts. So they have been busy and this

11 summer is going to be extra packed.

12 A brief update on facilities. So I

13 would say probably not August, maybe October, where

14 you go to get your meals will look substantially

15 different. We are almost ready to begin our

16 cafeteria remodel which, talking to Justin is not

17 really a cafeteria, it's a place with tables and

18 vending machines, but we will actually have a rehab

19 teaching like space in there. We will have a

20 kitchen, laundry setup and so not only can we use

21 it for meals for Council and a gathering place, but

22 our internal staff and outside community partners

23 can use that space to provide independent living

24 teaching in a real working kitchen at SSB.

25 We are also in the process of a

69

1 Braille shelving project. It's a very fancy

2 shelving system that's over my head, but it's going

3 to allow us to have a lot of Braille books with

4 very little space and there's some --

5 MR. O'CONNOR: Ha, it's over your

6 head.

7 MS. JERDE: No pun intended, or maybe

8 I did.

9 So we are hoping to get all of those

10 projects started after July 1. We had to do this

11 massive lease agreement, we had to have the feds

12 approve this, it's been over a year just getting

13 approvals and paperwork done.

14 Onto some program services updates

15 starting with the Business Enterprise Program. So

16 we are hiring and it is now posted a part-time

17 admin position as well as a full-time technician.

18 As part of our Evolve BEP initiative these

19 positions will create greater continuity of

20 services for our operators and stakeholders and we

21 hope to have those positions hired by the end of

22 July.

23 We continue to work with the elected

24 committee of Blind vendors on a plan to update our

25 policy and procedure manual. We are hoping to

70

1 complete this in 2024. Committee Chair Mike

2 Colbrunn and John Hulet, the Director of BEP, met

3 this week to discuss the next steps.

4 We have finalized an interagency

5 agreement with the Minnesota State Colleges and

6 Universities. BEP operators have long paid

7 commissions to Minnesota State locations as part of

8 past agreements, essentially it was like a pay to

9 play. We will pay you a portion of our sales if

10 you let us be in your location.

11 So I'm excited to say that the

12 commission requirement was eliminated as part of

13 our negotiations. This will save some BEP

14 operators thousands of dollars each year. This was

15 not easy, this was highly controversial and

16 difficult to navigate, but the team pushed through

17 and now our operators are going to not have to pay

18 to play, they have a priority in those locations

19 and we didn't believe it was really within our

20 philosophy to have them pay for that.

21 We have also notified MinnCOR

22 Industries, it's a subsection of the Department of

23 Corrections, that we will not be able to include

24 language in the upcoming interagency agreement that

25 would require operators to pay a commission.

71

1 MinnCOR is the department we work with related to

2 our presence in state prisons, the current

3 agreement expires September of 2024. MinnCOR has

4 indicated this change will be challenging, but we

5 are hopeful we will be able to work something out

6 as we did with Minnesota State.

7 They did mention going to the

8 legislature about this, but as of right now we have

9 not heard anything, but it is possible this gets

10 elevated at a higher level but we are standing our

11 ground until we are directed otherwise.

12 We continue to work with our elected

13 committee on reviewing our current BEP training

14 process. SSB staff who assist the BEP in the

15 assessment will be visiting Mike Colbrunn's

16 business in Mankato later this month to really dive

17 into what a BEP operator does. We were hoping to

18 utilize this information to revise how we assess

19 potential applicants to the program and how we can

20 better train BEP students.

21 And we are also working with RSA, our

22 overseers, to determine how best to provide initial

23 stocks and supplies to support our operators. RSA

24 recently released a technical assistant circular

25 which raised questions about the process that we

72

1 currently utilize. Consistent with our mission to

2 ensure all our activities comply with the

3 guidelines, we wanted to research this issue

4 further and make any necessary revisions to our

5 process if required.

6 Currently we provide up front initial

7 stocks and supplies and an operator has three years

8 to reimburse or pay back the cost of those stocks

9 and supplies. RSA has added some interesting

10 interpretations to that and so we are looking at

11 can we even do that or do we need to rethink how we

12 provide those stocks and supplies.

13 I'm going to pause there, see if there

14 are any questions.

15 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury. So I want

16 to point out two things I think are awesome and

17 then ask a question from something earlier on. So

18 I love the work on the additional contracts for

19 places where people can get Adjustment to Blindness

20 Training and I also love this change in the

21 commission requirement for Blind vendors.

22 At the very beginning of your report,

23 and forgive me now this is 40 minutes ago, I think

24 you were -- when you talked about the Evolve VR

25 framework and the, like, grant that you are going

73

1 for with these other entities, I think in some of

2 those pieces you were talking about destigmatizing

3 vision loss and I'm curious if you see that as,

4 like, substantively different from destigmatizing

5 blindness, because a lot of the literature that

6 I've read in this area it talks about

7 destigmatizing blindness and then it emphasizes

8 using the word Blind. So I'm wondering where it's

9 going with destigmatizing vision loss?

10 MS. JERDE: And this is Natasha. That

11 was a nomenclature issue encapsulating all

12 spectrums of vision loss from Blindness, low

13 vision, DeafBlindness, so that was more of a

14 nomenclature issue. But it would be the whole

15 spectrum, but blindness specifically is an

16 important area to destigmatize.

17 We find, and I don't think this is a

18 surprise to anyone, our outcomes and the outcomes

19 across the country for individuals who are Blind,

20 low vision, Deafblind have not changed, have not

21 increased positive successful employment outcomes

22 in decades and at least in the last ten years.

23 Other disability groups, they are

24 seeing increased labor force participation rates,

25 they are seeing lower unemployment rates, but

74

1 individuals who have indicated they have some sort

2 of vision loss, whether it's blindness or low

3 vision, it's not improving at all.

4 And there was a recent study called

5 The Big Data Project by VisionServe Alliance that

6 really laid this out, as well as the Mississippi

7 State NCRTC, that acronym, and then there were a

8 few other studies that were done in the last three

9 years that are showing no improvement or very

10 little. And some of it is related back to just the

11 misperceptions and stigma that exists, among other

12 things.

13 MS. MCGEE: Pat McGee. Natasha, I

14 have kind of a weird question. When you were

15 talking about you were working with Department of

16 Administration on accessibility, I think you also

17 said --

18 MR. O'CONNOR: Can you get closer to

19 the microphone, by chance?

20 MS. MCGEE: Oh sorry, yep.

21 When you were talking about working

22 with the Department of Administration on

23 accessibility issues I thought I heard you say you

24 were also working with the DNR.

25 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha, two

75

1 separate things.

2 MS. MCGEE: Okay. And I was wondering

3 what you were doing with the DNR with regard to

4 accessability.

5 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. There

6 are some initiatives that are going on with

7 accessible parks and trails that we are

8 collaborating on.

9 MS. MCGEE: Okay, thank you.

10 MR. HART: Rocky Hart. Yeah, Natasha,

11 thank you very much. Can you elaborate a little

12 bit on the initiative you were discussing Minnesota

13 Department of Corrections and getting services into

14 state prisons, I'm little bit curious as to what is

15 going on with that. Is that an administrative

16 issue with MinnCOR? And how exactly are your

17 materials being distributed in that matter?

18 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. So we

19 have vending facilities in the prisons through --

20 that are in Minnesota and we have agreements with

21 MinnCOR, which is through Department of

22 Corrections, for those vending facilities.

23 What's happening is we have come back

24 and said we are not able to pay commissions anymore

25 to be located in the prisons and MinnCOR has come

76

1 back and said ouch, okay, that's going to be

2 challenging for us, but we will see how this will

3 all play out. So that's where we are at.

4 And that interagency agreement is up

5 September of 2024 so we've just given them a heads

6 up that we are not going to be including

7 commissions in that agreement.

8 MR. HART: Thank you.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. I just

10 want to clarify, the reason that we paid

11 commissions in the first place is because we are

12 taking the -- these are not places where federally

13 Blind folks would have already have priority, but

14 that was a way to get us the priorities data in

15 those contract locations that were available and

16 pretty similar to the rest of the Randolph Shepherd

17 Program on a national level. Have I characterized

18 that relatively accurately albeit succinctly?

19 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. Actually

20 this is the really disappointing thing is no, we do

21 have federal priority on those locations, but in

22 full transparency several directors ago they made

23 this decision to pay commissions as a, I don't

24 know, I probably have some personal feelings about

25 this and I don't want it to come across. But they

77

1 made the decision to do that, to make it, I don't

2 know, more --

3 MS. SANDERS: Saleable?

4 MS. JERDE: That's a good word,

5 saleable to those locations. But we didn't have to

6 do that, in fact, it's not even allowable.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: Very well, thank you.

8 MR. HEINL: This is Tom Heinl, I have

9 a question. If you have priorities in those

10 places, how could they not allow you to be in them?

11 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. That's

12 the million dollar question being asked around the

13 country. Because there are many entities,

14 including the Army canteen services who are

15 actively fighting having operators on-site and have

16 gone to the legislature about it and are wanting

17 formal rulings that they don't have priority.

18 And there are state and federal

19 entities who just outright refuse and say okay,

20 let's go to court. I'm not saying that's happening

21 here in Minnesota, but it is happening across the

22 country.

23 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. That's

24 not a new issue, you know, we've been around and

25 been with that for several years in different

78

1 places, including the one big one in Minnesota that

2 was in St. Cloud.

3 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. I feel

4 like Justin has a burning question.

5 MR. SALISBURY: I do, yeah, this is

6 Justin. I am trying to make sure that I follow all

7 the rules as I am learning them, you know, as a new

8 person about how much you say publicly and how much

9 you can follow up with people, you know, on the

10 side to talk about things. But I'm thinking more

11 and more about, you know, the discussion of Blind

12 versus vision loss or blindness versus vision loss

13 and one thing that -- or a couple of things that

14 come to mind, you know, when I hear the citations

15 of the VisionServe Alliance, which is an entity

16 that's very publicly advocating for the eradication

17 of a Blind child's rights to learn Braille, and

18 when I look at the National Research & Training

19 Center on Blindness at Mississippi State University

20 both of those entities are associated with a lot of

21 epistemic ableism and so those names send red

22 flags, you know, for me any time I hear them.

23 But also, you know, when we talk about

24 Blindness versus vision loss, vision loss itself is

25 a medical process, but Blindness comes down to a

79

1 minoritized group of society, a marginalized group

2 of society, it's a social identity and it is a

3 disability. And I know that the two can be very

4 much related, but when we look at stigma I

5 understand that the stigmas can be associated, but

6 I think that depending on how we frame those things

7 and what other partners, then, like hear and

8 interpret and want to do in next steps, those can

9 go in different directions whether we are talking

10 about medical processes or whether we are talking

11 about minoritized communities.

12 And so I don't know that I can fully

13 make sense of my thoughts at this time, but I just

14 want to express that I think there is more that we

15 might want to do to look at that. And I think it's

16 awesome that you are applying for the grant, I

17 definitely want to encourage you to keep going with

18 that, I'm just a little bit unsure of what I think

19 about how we frame, you know, what we are talking

20 about.

21 MS. JERDE: And this is Natasha. I

22 will speak briefly before I continue on. So fully

23 recognizing there must be -- there is qualms with

24 the different sources, unfortunately no other group

25 has been doing research on this and those are the

80

1 groups that have been doing the research.

2 So if there are other sources out

3 there that actually show the demographics of the

4 labor force participation rate of people who are

5 Blind, low vision and Deafblind that shows the

6 unemployment rate, that shows the trends, I will be

7 all ears, because these are the sources that we

8 have available to us.

9 And as for the stigma piece, this is

10 the time to provide feedback, well not this

11 specific Council meeting, but this is why I am

12 bringing this forward is because we do want to hear

13 from the community at what that actually looks

14 like, what does that mean.

15 Because it's not me going out, you

16 know, thinking I'm doing something right, we want

17 to hear what that's going to look like.

18 So I appreciate, I'm hoping, your

19 upcoming feedback and thoughts and ideas, because

20 that would be really helpful.

21 MR. SALISBURY: This is Justin. Yes.

22 And again, I'm trying to figure out, you know, I'm

23 trying to learn the rules and what I might

24 ordinarily try to seek a private meeting to talk

25 with you about, you know, not at all meaning to put

81

1 you on blast, but yeah, there is something that

2 catches for me there and I definitely want to dig

3 into it more.

4 MS. JERDE: Perfect. This is Natasha.

5 If you know me, I don't take offense, so you can

6 say about pretty much anything.

7 So onto the Senior Services Unit.

8 Summer is the busiest time of year for SSU. The

9 snowbirds are back and more seniors are willing to

10 get into their training while the weather is nice

11 and as usual, Olmsted County continues to be very

12 busy, as is Dakota County.

13 We do have a few folks out on medical

14 leave. Amy McClellan from Dululth is recovering

15 from surgery and she will be back to work in a few

16 weeks. Lauren Eliason is enjoying her last week of

17 parental leave and Angela Christle in Rochester

18 will be out indefinitely. She has experienced

19 additional vision loss and has some work to do to

20 gain the skills she needs to return to work. And

21 this is information she has allowed us to share.

22 And in the meantime Brent Benson, from our

23 Workforce Development Unit, is helping us cover

24 southeast Minnesota.

25 The recent Possibilities Fair was a

82

1 big success. We had about 30 attendees who heard

2 from our distinguished speaker who is the NFB of

3 Texas president. We had information booths as well

4 which participants visited and collected valuable

5 information. We had a lot of NFB of Minnesota

6 volunteers and a few of us SSBers were there as

7 well. We owe a big thank you to you, Judy, who

8 along with Ed Lecher, organized the event and what

9 a great partnership it was. Also thanks to Rob

10 Hobson, Michelle Gip, Charlene Guggisberg, Barb

11 Klein and Jeff Behl. Catherine Durivage from the

12 Library was also there.

13 And onto Workforce Development Unit.

14 So I usually do data, but I'm probably going to

15 highlight just a few of the big numbers. Since

16 July 1 this data is from, so from the year pretty

17 much, we've received 243 applications for services

18 and we are serving 775 people currently. If you

19 compare that to pre-pandemic, we are almost right

20 back on track. During COVID we had experienced

21 lows of about 500 people being served, so those

22 have been steadily increasing.

23 We are at 55 successful closures,

24 those are due June 30 to count for our program year

25 and so we are expecting more.

83

1 And we have the average caseload size

2 right now is 54 individuals per counselor because

3 we are currently hiring some additionals.

4 Some general updates. So the Employer

5 Reasonable Accommodation Fund, this quarter we have

6 23 approved applicants and we have reimbursed a

7 total of $285,168 to employers for reasonable

8 accommodations they have made for individuals with

9 disabilities.

10 Our accounting technician ended up

11 taking a promotional opportunity so we are posting

12 that position internally right now to get someone

13 in quickly.

14 WDU is also reposting for a counselor

15 position as a recent hire chose to separate from

16 SSB. We are thinking of actually posting for two

17 because of our increased applications.

18 And we have been monitoring our

19 successful closures and we hope to have at least 60

20 by the end of the month.

21 And a high point is that we have three

22 customers graduating from a pharmacy technician

23 training program and their accomplishments will be

24 celebrated at SSB in the next week. This is a

25 vocational area where we have not seen a lot of

84

1 interest, so we are very excited.

2 There were a total of, I think, 9 or

3 10 graduates from this pharmacy technician program

4 and it's a partnership with Thrive, CVS and I think

5 one more pharmacy. And it's a kind of a pipeline

6 program where people can actually go into positions

7 after graduation.

8 And then onto Pre-ETS or

9 Pre-employment Transition Services. Jada Johnson

10 started on June 5 as our Multiple Systems and

11 Pathways Navigator. She will be working with

12 students with multiple and complex disabilities and

13 their families. It's part of the if you have heard

14 of E1MN which is Employment First Minnesota, it's a

15 huge framework we have across Department of Human

16 Services, Department of Education and the

17 Department of Employment & Economic Development to

18 help provide better services to individuals who are

19 on waivers, so individuals with the most

20 significant of disabilities. And we hired someone

21 that that is her role is to help individuals

22 navigate the systems that exist.

23 Our peer ambassadors were featured in

24 a Blind Abilities podcast where they shared

25 upcoming opportunities for students.

85

1 Our Transition Coordinator, Shane

2 DeSantis, gave the commencement address at the

3 State Academy for the Blind on May 31. And our

4 student numbers continue to climb with the latest

5 count at 207. Students 14 through 21 amount to

6 almost 40 percent of our caseloads. Students in

7 the Summer Transition Program come to SSB in a few

8 weeks for mock interviews, career exploration and

9 learning about our Communication Center.

10 And we are partnering with Wilderness

11 Inquiry and the Duluth Center for Vital Living to

12 offer a two night camping experience on August 13

13 through 15.

14 Now before I move to the Communication

15 Center any questions?

16 MS. BERG: Connie Berg. I'm wondering

17 if there is any way that I would be able to get

18 some general contact information about if an

19 individual was requesting services in the northern

20 Minnesota area, who we would refer them to?

21 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha.

22 Absolutely, Connie, we will get you the list of

23 counselors that are working in the counties up

24 north.

25 MS. BERG: Thank you very much.

86

1 MS. JERDE: You are welcome.

2 Any other questions?

3 (No response.)

4 MS. SANDERS: Keep going.

5 MS. JERDE: Okay. Communication

6 Center. Our audio services has chosen a finalist

7 for the Audio Quality Coordinator position. The

8 position evaluates and coaches all of the

9 Communication Center's volunteer readers and

10 ensures our quality meets standards.

11 Roberta Kitlinski has decided to

12 retire and enjoy nonwork life. We will miss her

13 dearly and we wish her all the best. We are

14 working on finding her successor, although she does

15 have very large shoes to fill, she was our

16 volunteer coordinator in audio services and her

17 last day is June 21.

18 Braille shares some data, but the

19 summary of it is we are working with 40 students,

20 we have provided 433 Braille titles and that

21 amounts to almost 200,000 Braille pages to

22 Minnesota students.

23 Engineering and Radio Talking Book.

24 We have hired Isaac Hanninen as our new electronics

25 technician senior. He comes with loads of

87

1 experience including he is already familiar with

2 the conference room setup, so he actually has

3 experience in the Army with the centrum, centurium,

4 whatever the application is that's controlling all

5 of this.

6 MR. NIFFEN: Crestron.

7 MS. JERDE: Crestron.

8 MR. ANDREWS: I can't ever remember

9 the name either so don't feel bad.

10 MS. JERDE: Thanks, Dave.

11 And as you may recall, we conducted a

12 request for proposals to replace our DAISY

13 recording software. We frankly didn't find anyone

14 we were happy with to do the work, so we are

15 working internally with our IT Department and they

16 are basically creating a prototype for our

17 recording software.

18 And so they did a proof of concept and

19 we've decided to have them develop the software we

20 will need. We are hoping to finish up moving the

21 Braille unit to KLAS and we plan on going live this

22 fall and we will begin writing the specs and

23 developing the software for audio after July 1.

24 And finally the development office.

25 We have raised about $135,000 in federal fiscal

88

1 year 2024, that amounts to 47 donors who gave 508

2 gifts. And so the August planned giving will be

3 going out and it's gonna be focusing on wills as

4 August is National Will Planning Month.

5 And that concludes my report.

6 MS. SANDERS: Thank you.

7 Okay. I have no idea what time it is,

8 but we are going to just pretend like we're almost

9 through. I think we are doing okay.

10 We have a report, I think Samantha, do

11 you have a report from the Employment Committee?

12 MS. FLAX: Sorry about that, I

13 couldn't unmute. So very briefly, the Employment

14 Committee is a bit behind but we are meeting next

15 Tuesday, June 11 I believe that is, at 4:30 p.m.

16 So if anyone doesn't have the invite to that and

17 wants to come, let me know.

18 I actually think Natasha went over

19 some of the things that I had the staff liaison,

20 Dave, help me for this, so any of the numbers I was

21 going to share she already did. So thank you,

22 Natasha, I'm so glad we planned that in advance and

23 we coordinated that so well.

24 Apart from that, the committee in the

25 past has talked about the importance of having a

89

1 wide variety of jobs for people to be able to

2 shadow in, things like that, but I will have a more

3 thorough report in August, Madam Chair.

4 MS. SANDERS: Sounds good, thank you.

5 Now we have a report from the Task

6 Force on Committee Structures and that's Corbb

7 O'Connor.

8 MR. O'CONNOR: Hello, this is Corbb.

9 So thank you to the Committee Structure Task Force,

10 I know Jeff Milhelich was on it, Justin Salisbury

11 was there and Susan Kusz was our staff liaison. I

12 believe that's all we had, was there someone else?

13 (No response.)

14 MR. O'CONNOR: I think that was it. I

15 realized just a few moments before this meeting

16 started that it looks like Susan did not send out

17 the document with the revisions to the Council, but

18 before I go into describing that I want to make

19 sure that -- I don't want to repeat things that

20 people already read in the report. So I am happy

21 to walk through and summarize those changes unless

22 somebody tells me they already got it.

23 MS. SANDERS: No, I don't believe we

24 did.

25 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. So we made some

90

1 cleanup changes to the report. Justin, this will

2 not surprise Justin, but as many of you noticed

3 when it comes to language around Blind, visually

4 impaired, low vision, losing vision, there are some

5 strong feelings about that. So Justin, I think,

6 and the committee rightly pointed out the places

7 where we talk about visually impaired we switched

8 to say Blind and low vision.

9 We cleaned up some things where you

10 will notice throughout there are things where it

11 says like the committee will analyze this data.

12 And really the committee is not analyzing the data,

13 the committee is reviewing the analysis that was

14 already performed, for example, by agency staff.

15 We clarified some notes about, as I

16 mentioned up at the top of the meeting, about

17 recommendations, these are recommendations to the

18 chair of who could serve on these various

19 committees. We mentioned, for example, like it's a

20 representative from the Minnesota Braille and

21 Talking Book Library, not that we are appointing

22 the entire library as a member of the committee.

23 So little cleanup changes like that.

24 I think the most substantive ones were

25 around -- I'm getting to this part of the document.

91

1 We added to the charge of the Customer Satisfaction

2 Goals and Priorities Committee, those who are fans

3 of the Oxford comma will note that we removed the

4 second and, that has been bothering me for years in

5 the name of this committee, but in that we added

6 to the charge that this committee will also

7 evaluate and propose changes to the annual

8 satisfaction process which might include hosting

9 focus groups. So that was in addition to their

10 charge.

11 We kept the majority of the

12 committees, we kept all the committees that you

13 have been used to, we did not add any new

14 committees. And we made some minor changes in

15 relation to which SSB staff members were on those

16 committees.

17 And we also increased the number of

18 folks on the Transition Committee. I'm trying to

19 find the exact number, but I believe we moved that

20 to 9. Yes, we moved that from 7 to 9 people, it's

21 a popular committee and we wanted to make sure that

22 we had broad representation and there we made a

23 change that we should include active teachers of

24 Blind students as members of that committee.

25 The very last one was the committee

92

1 about the community partner outcomes and measures

2 committee. There was some duplicative language in

3 there that we removed and I believe everything else

4 is relatively the same, other than it had some

5 grammatical cleanup throughout the document.

6 That is my report. I will make sure

7 that I know there may have been a few last minute

8 changes, so I will ask Nyia or Susan to send out

9 that final document via email to the group.

10 There is still an opportunity before

11 we appoint the committees, I suppose, if people

12 have any strong changes. Also this is not a

13 binding document when it comes to the charge of

14 each committee, so if the committees decide that

15 there is something else that they would like to

16 take up, it is certainly something committees can

17 do throughout the year, this is just what at a

18 minimum we are asking the committees to do.

19 With that I will move adoption of our

20 committee structure for the 2024/2025 year.

21 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury seconds.

22 MS. SANDERS: All right. Corbb moves

23 and Justin seconds that we accept the report for

24 the committee structure document. Is there any

25 discussion about it?

93

1 MS. DUNNAM: Jennifer Dunnam.

2 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Jennifer.

3 MS. DUNNAM: Sure, they are small

4 things. First of all, the Customer Satisfaction

5 Goals and Priorities, that and never bothered me

6 because those are two separate things, even though

7 they are related, but whatever, that's fine,

8 whatever, I don't care.

9 However, I haven't looked at the

10 document so I don't know if this is gonna be

11 relevant or not, you can tell me or not, but in

12 particular on that committee, although staff does

13 do analysis on the data, the committee should be

14 doing its own analysis as well of the data, so I

15 would want to make sure that they analyze and

16 review, perhaps, to make sure that the committee

17 shouldn't just be waiting to see documents, but

18 should also be looking at both data and finding its

19 own things that stand out, et cetera.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, this is Corbb. So

21 that bullet point went from reading conduct a

22 review and analysis of the effectiveness of

23 customer satisfaction with, and then there were

24 several sub bullets, we changed the top line bullet

25 to say: Review the analysis of the, I want to make

94

1 sure that I get the right words in here, review the

2 analysis of the consumer satisfaction with. So if

3 you are suggesting that we keep that at conduct a

4 review and analysis, that's an easy change.

5 MS. DUNNAM: No, that's a little

6 different than what I understood, because I

7 couldn't see it. So along those lines I would

8 suggest, I'm not sure how to say it, but the

9 committee is also responsible for making sure that

10 analysis happens. So like if SSB just said no, no,

11 we are not going to do that, you know, we have to

12 make sure that the federal requirements are met.

13 Can you read the bullet point again

14 that you revised?

15 MR. O'CONNOR: Let me make one change

16 to how I am viewing the document, get rid of all

17 the markup for a second so I can review the final

18 version here.

19 Okay. We have it as review the

20 analysis of the consumer satisfaction with sub

21 bullet, the functions of the Department of

22 Employment and Economic Development's, sub bullet,

23 Vocational Rehabilitation Services provided within

24 the state, except adjustment to Blindness and

25 technology services. Side note from me, that's

95

1 because it's covered by another committee, back to

2 the document.

3 Sub bullet, the employment outcomes of

4 persons served and then there is three other points

5 here. In collaboration with SSB, evaluate the

6 extent to which SSB achieved its goals and

7 strategies used and factors that impeded outcomes

8 and performance on federal standards and --

9 MS. DUNNAM: So may I interrupt you?

10 MR. CONNOR: Yeah, go ahead.

11 MS. DUNNAM: Just for a second because

12 I am good with all the rest of it. Maybe a

13 suggestion would be to revise that top bullet to

14 say in collaboration with SSB conduct the analysis

15 and review.

16 MR. O'CONNOR: Sure, easy change.

17 MS. DUNNAM: Cool.

18 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you. In

19 collaboration with SSB review the analysis of the

20 consumer satisfaction. Is that what you said?

21 MS. DUNNAM: No, it was to put back

22 the original language, just add in collaboration

23 with SSB.

24 MR. O'CONNOR: Got it.

25 MS. DUNNAM: Thank you.

96

1 MS. FLAX: This is Sam.

2 MS. SANDERS: Sam.

3 MS. FLAX: I had a question and I

4 don't know if it will necessarily impact this

5 report, but it's related. I was thinking about

6 when we were looking at the different roles of the

7 committees and I am wondering if you had gone over

8 what the expectations for committee members and

9 chairs and liaisons are, especially I've chaired a

10 bunch of committees this year, so everyone shout

11 out come August, but one thing that I noticed is

12 that a lot of times I didn't really know what was

13 the chair's responsibility and what was the

14 liaison's responsibility, so maybe outlining that

15 for everyone now, particularly as people are

16 looking at what committee's to join would be

17 helpful as well.

18 MS. SANDERS: That might be more than,

19 I don't know, Corbb, I'm not sure we can -- if we

20 do that I think we can't be ready to send this

21 document out. Does that make sense?

22 MR. O'CONNOR: So I think that's more

23 of an internal SSB process clarification than it is

24 documented here. So we have the duration listed on

25 this document, and this is on the website right now

97

1 too, general rules and record, then there is a bit

2 about the relationship, the level of authority and

3 the resources saying hey, committees, if you need a

4 budget talk to the Budget Task Force.

5 We don't have anything in this

6 document right now about the expectations on staff

7 that previously I believe has -- the expectation

8 had been Nyia and Susan probably have some thoughts

9 on this too that I'm happy to hear, same with

10 Natasha, that staff would take meeting notes and

11 minutes, submit those on behalf of the committee.

12 There was some internal SharePoint documentation

13 work that was done as well as the actual Zoom

14 meeting creation and calendaring at the request of

15 the Chair.

16 Perhaps there is more to it than that

17 that is not coming to mind immediately, if any of

18 you all want to comment on that I would be happy to

19 hear it, but it is not currently in the document.

20 MS. SANDERS: Does that raise your

21 comfort level, Sam, or not?

22 MS. FLAX: Well, it's not necessarily

23 my comfort level with the document, I think, but

24 I'm completely fine with the comfort of this

25 document now, I just think maybe we want to, once

98

1 we get a clarification from SSB on that, just go

2 over it at a future meeting or even add it after.

3 I don't think it's something that we have to hold

4 off on this document now, because I think it is

5 slightly separate, but I did want to raise it while

6 I was thinking about it.

7 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha.

8 MS. SANDERS: Natasha.

9 MS. JERDE: We are actually pulling

10 together our staff liaisons so Nyia can meet

11 everyone and then she is requesting to sit in on

12 each committee meeting so she can learn a little

13 bit more.

14 After we have that conversation with

15 the staff liaisons we can put together maybe a

16 cheat sheet for committees so that they know whose

17 responsibility is whose, who is your staff liaison

18 point of contact.

19 And Corbb was 100 percent right, the

20 staff liaison is meant to make the committees lives

21 easier so they don't have to take meeting minutes,

22 they don't have to worry about scheduling meetings.

23 The staff liaison can help with all of that.

24 So you can just focus on the work of

25 the committee.

99

1 MS FLAX: I think that sounds great,

2 just having that. Even if we just for this one see

3 this document coming out from SSB, if we did want

4 to add something, but again I don't think we have

5 to.

6 MS. SANDERS: All right. We are going

7 to move on, I think. Do we need to accept this as

8 you think?

9 MR. O'CONNOR: This does need a vote.

10 MS. SANDERS: All right. Who moves to

11 adopt this?

12 MR. O'CONNOR: There is a motion on

13 the table.

14 MS. SANDERS: All right. So we are

15 ready to vote I think, we probably had more

16 discussion than we probably needed.

17 So we are accepting the committee

18 structure document. Connie.

19 MS. BERG: Yes.

20 MS. SANDERS: Diane.

21 MS. DOHNALIK: Diane Dohnalik, yes.

22 MS. SANDERS: Frank.

23 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

24 MS. SANDERS: Sue.

25 MS. FAGER: Sue Fager, yes.

100

1 MS. SANDERS: Samantha.

2 MS. FLAX: Yes.

3 MS. SANDERS: Hannah.

4 MS. HARRIMAN: Hannah Harriman, yes.

5 MS. SANDERS: Tom.

6 MR. HEINL: Tom Heinl, yes.

7 MS. SANDERS: Thea.

8 MS. KRAMER: Thea Kramer, yes.

9 MS. SANDERS: Pat McGee.

10 MS. MCGEE: Pat McGee, yes.

11 MS. SANDERS: Jeff.

12 MR. MILHELICH: Jeff Milhelich, yes.

13 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

14 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb, yes.

15 MS. SANDERS: Justin.

16 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury, yes.

17 MS. SANDERS: Ryan.

18 MR. STRUNK: Ryan, yes.

19 MS. SANDERS: And Judy says yes, it is

20 passed.

21 We now just have committees to go

22 through. If you don't need to report, that's okay,

23 especially for those of you like the Communication

24 Center you might have something to add, but we got

25 a very detailed thing from you.

101

1 So let us start with the -- well, I'm

2 going to -- the State Rehabilitation Council, I

3 don't know, Deanne, if you have anything that you

4 want to tell us about the SRC that you think we

5 should know. This is your first meeting so you

6 don't have to.

7 MS. CURRAN: So I'm not sure what the

8 SRC-B knows about this agency in general, so I'm

9 just going to say we meet on the third Thursday, I

10 think it's the third Thursday or the last Thursday

11 of the month, it was just last week. I'm on the

12 Executive Committee, we meet on the first Monday of

13 the month.

14 Both of them are open meetings so if

15 anybody wants to attend those. And we meet monthly

16 except for July and December. If you have any

17 questions please free to contact us and let us

18 know.

19 We did have three -- we had three

20 council members that attended the National SRC, I

21 was one of those. As a new member it was

22 excellent, it was exciting to meet other people

23 from across the agency, that was the first time

24 I've attended one and was really grateful for that

25 opportunity to do so.

102

1 Thanks for letting me talk.

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

3 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: So one of the things

5 that's been helpful in past years for the SRC rep's

6 contributions here, I think, has just been about if

7 there are any issues that you folks are finding in

8 how you work best with the agency. And if there

9 are opportunities where you see that there may be

10 some kind of regulatory update where the state

11 program offices are doing something and maybe a

12 department outside of DEED that may impact

13 blindness or have an impact on Blind people, those

14 are the kinds of updates that have been super

15 helpful in the past from the person who has been in

16 your position.

17 MS.CURRAN: Yeah, I don't know whether

18 I'm going to be fulfilling this position full time.

19 My understanding was I was going to be attending a

20 few meetings to look at opportunities for us to

21 collaborate. So if there needs to be a rep I will

22 take that back to our executive committee.

23 I know that there was somebody that

24 was attending both, I think it was Kyle, is that

25 correct, and he is no longer on SRC-B. So I don't

103

1 think I am appointed to do this yet, I think this

2 is just something that I was coming over to see if

3 we could do some kind of collaboration, so.

4 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Thank you very

5 much. The State Independent Living Council just

6 this day signed on to a document that is put out

7 by, I forget the name of it, but it's an American

8 Disability Coalition thing and it's written to CNN

9 telling them that they need to be aware of people

10 with disabilities being recognized and included in

11 the Presidential debates, particularly the one on

12 June 27, you know. They want it signed and they

13 want it just to keep us in mind as they include

14 people in the debate process. So that's the most

15 interesting thing that they could come up with.

16 The Communication Center. Steve, do

17 you have anything to add other than the report that

18 was sent out?

19 MR. JACOBSON: Very quickly.

20 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

21 MR. JACOBSON: Okay. We had two.

22 Judy is right, you got the minutes, I won't go

23 through our March meeting, but we did for a number

24 of reasons have to cancel our meeting in May and

25 move it and we are looking to reschedule it for

104

1 June 24.

2 Maybe I can take advantage of the

3 microphone and ask Tom Heinl if he is on the line

4 if he knows if that date will work for him since he

5 is one I haven't heard from? We will be discussing

6 Dial-in News in detail.

7 MR. HEINL: I thought you said the

8 19th of the month.

9 MR. JACOBSON: Okay. We will take

10 this offline then.

11 MS. SANDERS: When you say Dial-in

12 News --

13 MR. JACOBSON: I meant Newsline, I'm

14 sorry, NFB Newsline.

15 MS. SANDERS: All right, thank you.

16 Jennifer Dunnam, do you have a

17 Customer Satisfaction report?

18 MS. DUNNAM: This is Jennifer.

19 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer Beilke.

20 MS. DUNNAM: Oops, I'm sorry.

21 MS. BEILKE: That's okay.

22 This is Jennifer Beilke. I have a

23 report that Lisa Rogers put together.

24 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

25 MS. DUNNAM: Interesting.

105

1 MS. SANDERS: Is that something

2 that -- I wonder if Jennifer --

3 MS. DUNNAM: The committee hasn't seen

4 it unless you sent it to me and I missed it

5 somehow. Let me know.

6 MS. BEILKE: This is -- Lisa could not

7 be here tonight and it was not -- it was just put

8 together today so it was not sent out, it is only

9 in regards to the Customer Satisfaction Survey.

10 MS. DUNNAM: Should we look at it as a

11 committee first or is it something the Council

12 should see now?

13 MS. SANDERS: I'm gonna recommend not

14 only because I think that would be the proper way

15 to go, our time is, I think, running.

16 MS. BEILKE: Well, let me, if I may,

17 let me just at least introduce Lisa Rogers. Lisa

18 Rogers, she was introduced earlier, she was

19 hired -- she is part of the marketing and outreach

20 team for part of her position. The other part of

21 her position will be the manager, the coordinator

22 of our Combined State Plan and that will be taking

23 that off of my plate.

24 But she will also be taking off of my

25 plate the Customer Satisfaction Survey. So just an

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1 introduction, unfortunately she couldn't be here

2 tonight.

3 MS. SANDERS: Okay, that's good and I

4 think you might want to get her teamed up with

5 Jennifer Dunnam so they can figure out how best to

6 introduce what she has done. Thank you.

7 MS. BEILKE: Sure, that sounds good.

8 MS. DUNNAM: We will miss you

9 Jennifer, though, thank you so much for all these

10 years in helping us.

11 MS. BEILKE: I will still be at

12 meetings, I'm not really going anywhere.

13 MS. SANDERS: All right. Next I

14 believe we also got in our packet the Deafblind

15 Committee report. So I'm assuming -- Patrick is

16 not here, but I'm assuming that we can move on.

17 And we also already heard from Sam,

18 unless that was for the employment. Sam, do you

19 have anything for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion?

20 MS. FLAX: Well, that's not my

21 committee anymore.

22 MS. O'CONNOR: That's me.

23 MS. SANDERS: That's right.

24 MS. O'CONNOR: This is Briley.

25 MS. SANDERS: I'm sorry Briley, do you

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1 have anything?

2 MS. FLAX: I do have my transition

3 report if you want me to do that first while I'm

4 unmuted or do you want me to wait?

5 MS. SANDERS: Briley is unmuted as

6 well, we will get back to you in a minute.

7 MS. O'CONNOR: That's okay, it's a

8 short report. We do need to meet, just as I think

9 the Employment Committee also said. But I do want

10 to take a quick opportunity to thank SSB for, you

11 know, the DEI Committee had put together quite a

12 few recommendations last fall or so and they've

13 followed up and enacted on, I think, most if not

14 all of them, you know.

15 So I want to commend and express

16 appreciation on behalf of the committee. For that

17 it's always nice to feel like the time and effort

18 that everybody puts in is valued and heard. And so

19 I just want to take the time to thank Natasha and

20 everybody at SSB for that.

21 We will be getting a meeting on the

22 calendar in the next week or two. I got

23 availability from some folks so we will have a more

24 comprehensive update in August.

25 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you.

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1 All right. Sam, Transition. We will

2 go back to.

3 MS. FLAX: All right, sounds good. So

4 basically all I had to add was that at our last

5 meeting we went over a lot of details about the

6 college event that was in April and it sounds like

7 it went really well. And now we started discussing

8 helping Shane out with a career fair that will be

9 coming up, so a lot of exciting ideas on that.

10 But apart from that, no additional

11 report at this time.

12 MS. SANDERS: All right, thank you.

13 Natasha did a lovely report of our seniors

14 Possibilities Fair, which was our main project. I

15 think I better make one correction though, Glenn

16 Crosby, our national speaker, is president of our

17 NFB senior division and it's his wife who is

18 president in Texas. So I thought, you know, that

19 would be worth fixing.

20 All right. And I don't think we have

21 anything for Vendor Outcomes and Measures, I don't

22 think we do.

23 So we are ready for public comment

24 unless anyone else has business they think we

25 should have brought up?

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1 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb, public comment.

2 MS. SANDERS: Corbb, go ahead.

3 MR. O'CONNOR: I have three items to

4 note. This is from the National Federation of the

5 Blind of Minnesota. So we came to you a few

6 meetings back to talk about our bill to protect the

7 rights of Blind parents and I am so excited on

8 behalf of Jennifer Dunnam who heads up our

9 Government Affairs Committee to report that while

10 that bill that we came to you about that you helped

11 with in the House and you helped with in the

12 Senate, that particular bill, as so often is the

13 case, that one didn't move. But we got that same

14 language put into the Children and Family's Budget

15 and Policy Bill that passed the House, it passed

16 the Senate and it was signed into law by the

17 Governor.

18 So this bill protects, makes sure that

19 if there is a question about the ability of a

20 parent to, because of their disability, that that

21 disability cannot be a factor, that the courts must

22 look to specific actions that are concerning. That

23 courts provide the ability for parents to show how

24 nonvisual skills enable them to achieve the same

25 outcomes for their children. That if there is a

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1 need for a parent to learn those skills the court

2 must give that parent time to learn them and give

3 them access to mentoring and supportive parenting

4 services and then demonstrate those skills.

5 And then the last part is really just

6 around making sure that we are looking and any time

7 there is a specific issue brought up that it truly

8 is specific and not based on disability alone.

9 So big thank you to everybody who

10 helped us to move that legislation forward. We had

11 Representative Hicks from the Rochester area, as

12 well as a, Sam help me with his name, a

13 representative in the St. Paul area whose name I'm

14 blanking on at the moment. If anybody remembers

15 offhand.

16 MS. DUNNAM: Senator John Hoffman was

17 the senate lead.

18 MS. FLAX: No, Pinto, I think, right?

19 MR. O'CONNOR: Dave Pinto and Senator

20 John Hoffman. Representative Pinto on the budget

21 side and then Senator Hoffman helped us on the

22 Senate side. So really exciting.

23 MS. FLAX: We were both right.

24 MR. O'CONNOR: Yep, you are both right

25 as so often is the case.

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1 The second piece of news from us is

2 that we are hosting the National Federation of the

3 Blind Braille Enrichment for Literacy and Learning

4 Program this summer. So Sam has been coordinating

5 that.

6 We will have a two week summer camp

7 for Blind kids from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for two

8 weeks to learn Braille and other Blindness skills.

9 We are going to be hosting at the Minnesota Waldorf

10 School in St. Paul and we are still looking for

11 more kiddos who want to be part of that.

12 We currently have four students

13 registered and we are really looking to round that

14 out with five or even more, we have plenty of

15 capacity. It's a free program, it's from July 22

16 to August 2. And for more information you can

17 shoot an email to Bell, b-e-l-l, @nfbmn.org.

18 Bell@National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota.

19 And the third piece of news is to

20 please save the date for our fall convention which

21 is November 1 to 3 at the DoubleTree St. Paul East.

22 And we will have, of course, more details on that

23 coming up over the next few months. We will be

24 starting Friday morning which is a little bit of a

25 change from years past.

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1 MS. SANDERS: Corbb, do you want to

2 give the ages for the kids who are eligible for the

3 bell?

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Age 4 to 12.

5 MS. SANDERS: 4 to 12, maybe you said

6 that. Okay.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: I did not, so thank

8 you.

9 MS. SANDERS: All right. Anybody else

10 have any announcements?

11 (No response.)

12 MS. SANDERS: Hearing none, if I

13 forgot something that's just too bad, because I

14 would like us to move to adjourn.

15 MS. MCGEE: Pat McGee moves to

16 adjourn.

17 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller seconds.

18 MS. SANDERS: It seems so silly.

19 Connie, we are voting on adjourning.

20 MS. BERG: Adjourn, yes.

21 MS. SANDERS: Diane.

22 MS. DOHNALIK: Diane, yes.

23 MS. SANDERS: Frank.

24 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

25 MS. SANDERS: Sue.

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1 MS. FAGER: Sue Fager, yes.

2 MS. SANDERS: Samantha.

3 (No response.)

4 MS. SANDERS: Samantha, are you voting

5 yes to adjourn?

6 (No response.)

7 MS. SANDERS: Hannah.

8 MS. HARRIMAN: Hannah Harriman, yes.

9 MS. SANDERS: Tom.

10 MR. HEINL: Yes.

11 MS. SANDERS: Thea.

12 MS. KRAMER: Thea Kramer, yes.

13 MS. SANDERS: Pat.

14 MS. MCGEE: Pat McGee, yes.

15 MS. SANDERS: Jeff.

16 MR. MILHELICH: Jeff Milhelich, yes.

17 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

18 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb O'Connor, yes.

19 MS. SANDERS: Justin.

20 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury, yes.

21 MS. SANDERS: Ryan.

22 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, yes.

23 MS. SANDERS: And Judy says yes. Sam,

24 are you going to vote?

25 (No response.)

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1 MS. SANDERS: Okay. She must not be

2 here, I guess.

3 All right. Thank you everybody, we'll

4 see you in August.

5 (Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.)

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1 STATE OF MINNESOTA)

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7 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

8

9 I, Kimberly K. Evavold, do hereby

10 certify that the above and foregoing transcript,

11 consisting of the preceding 114 pages is a correct

12 transcript of my stenographic notes, and is a full, true

13 and complete transcript of the proceedings to the best of

14 my ability.

15 Dated: June 14, 2023

16

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KIMBERLY K. EVAVOLD

18 Court Reporter

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