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8 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

9 BIMONTHLY MEETING

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15 2200 University Avenue

16 St. Paul, Minnesota

17 Thursday, April 6, 2023

18 5:40 p.m.

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1 APPEARANCES:

2 REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND SSB STAFF

3 Corbb O'Connor, Chairperson Dave Andrews

4 Frank Eller Jennifer Beilke

5 Samantha Flax Jon Benson

6 Ryan Haenze Rob Hobson

7 Tom Heini Brianna Holeman

8 Michael O'Day

9 Kristin Oien

10 Judy Sanders

11 Ryan Strunk

12 Kyle Van Acker

13

14 ALSO PRESENT:

15 Natasha Jerde, Director of SSB

16 Susan Kusz, State Program Administrator

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21 Whereupon, the following proceedings

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

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1 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. I will
2 kick us off, calling to order our April 6 meeting
3 of the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind
4 meeting. If you at any point have trouble hearing
5 me, please holler. I'm working with too many
6 screens and microphones today.

7 I would also ask those of you who
8 are -- when you speak to introduce yourself for the
9 benefit of the caption--

10 MS. SANDERS: It's a little bit hard
11 to hear you.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Hard to hear me said no
13 one ever. Is it a volume issue or is it a me

14 issue?

15 MS. SANDERS: I don't know. I heard

16 that though. In the beginning you sounded louder

17 and then you --

18 MR. O'CONNOR: And then I sounded less

19 loud. Okay, all right, I think I know the issue.

20 We will go with this. Let me make one change.

21 Thank you, Judy.

22 Okay. So this is Corbb. We will call

23 to order the meeting of our State Rehabilitation

24 Council for the Blind. I would ask for the benefit

25 of our captions if when you speak you please

1 introduce yourself.

2 With that in mind I'm going to start

3 with a roll call of our councilmembers and then we

4 will move to members of the staff and then to

5 members of the public. So I suspect that a few of

6 these folks are absent, but that's okay, we will go

7 ahead and start with Frank Eller.

8 MR. ELLER: Hi, Frank Eller and what

9 else am I supposed to say?

10 MR. O'CONNOR: Samantha Flax.

11 MS. FLAX: Samantha Flax, here.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Ryan Haenze.

13 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, here.

14 MR. O'CONNOR: Tom Heidl.

15 MR. HEINL: Tom Heidl is here.

16 MR. O'CONNOR: Rob Hobson.

17 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, here.

18 MR. O'CONNOR: Catalina Martinez.

19 (No response.)

20 MR. O'CONNOR: Let's see, Michael

21 O'Day.

22 MR. O'DAY: Yes, I am here.

23 MR. O'CONNOR: Kristin Oien.

24 MS. OIEN: Kristin is here.

25 MR. O'CONNOR: Jennifer Points.

1 (No response.)

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Judy Sanders.

3 MS. SANDERS: Here.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Ryan Strunk let me know

5 he would be arriving about an hour late this

6 evening.

7 Trevor Turner.

8 (No response.)

9 And Kyle Van Acker.

10 MR. VAN ACKER: Kyle Van Acker, here.

11 MR. O'CONNOR: Hello.

12 All right. Let's move to members of

13 the SSB staff that are present.

14 MS. JERDE: Natasha Jerde, here.

15 MR. ANDREWS: Dave Andrews, here.

16 MS. HOLEMAN: Here.

17 MR. O'CONNOR: That was Brianna
18 Holeman, I believe, we caught just the last word.

19 MS. HOLEMAN: Yes, correct.

20 MS. BEILKE: And Jennifer Beilke.

21 MR. O'CONNOR: I see Jon Benson is --
22 there he is. Jon, we don't hear you. You and I
23 have the same mike problems this evening, but I see
24 you unmuting, I'm sure you're here.

25 Let's move to members of the public

1 that are here or any members of the staff we
2 missed.

3 MR. JACOBSON: Steve Jacobson --

4 MR. BENSON: This is Jon. I am, in
5 fact, here.

6 MR. O'CONNOR: Hi Jon. Missed who
7 that was in the room?

8 MR. JACOBSON: Steve Jacobson.

9 MS. SANDERS: Steve Jacobson.

10 MS. DUNNAM: Jennifer Dunnam.

11 MR. O'CONNOR: And I heard Jennifer
12 Dunnam.

13 MS. FAGER: Sue Fager with PACER

14 Center.

15 MR. HOBSON: Sue Zeeker with PACER

16 Center.

17 MS. SANDERS: Fager.

18 MR. HOBSON: Okay, Fager.

19 MR. O'CONNOR: Excellent. I believe

20 we have covered everybody. Did we miss -- I will

21 give one more second, see if we missed anybody.

22 (No response.)

23 MR. O'CONNOR: Excellent. Let's move

24 then to the approval of our minutes from the

25 February 9, 2023 meeting. Do we have a motion to

1 approve those minutes?

2 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, so moved.

3 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, second.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Rob moving and Frank

5 Eller seconding do we have any discussion?

6 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy Sanders. I

7 have one correction to make. And it is that in

8 Roman numeral IV it says to -- we have to delete

9 CSAVR and, because then it says and the spring

10 CSAVR meeting. So I think the first CSAVR and the

11 word and have to come out.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Thank

13 you, Judy. Any other discussion points or

14 corrections to the minutes?

15 MS. OIEN: This is Kristin. Under

16 SRCV members on the first page there is no E in my

17 first name.

18 MS. SANDERS: Does that mean there is

19 supposed to be?

20 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. That

21 took me a second. So we have a misspelling in

22 Kristin's name, we will get it only spelled with

23 l's. Sorry about that Kristin, we will get that

24 right next time.

25 MS. OIEN: That's okay.

1 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Any

2 other discussion?

3 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson. I saw that

4 at the beginning I was listed under SSB staff. I

5 don't know if I am supposed to be or am I on the

6 Council? I am on the Council, but it's confusing.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: Let's put you on the

8 Council where you belong. Yep, thank you very much

9 for catching that.

10 MR. HOBSON: I don't know where I am

11 supposed to be.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: This is a record number

13 of minute corrections. I am so grateful that you

14 all read the minutes, as I am sure that you

15 regularly do. But I appreciate the close reading.

16 Any other discussion?

17 (No response.)

18 MR. O'CONNOR: All righty. I am going

19 to take the approach that we will make those

20 corrections in the minutes. And with that in mind

21 let us then move to a vote. And we will start that

22 vote with Frank Eller.

23 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

24 MR. O'CONNOR: Samantha Flax.

25 MS. FLAX: Samantha Flax, yes.

1 MR. O'CONNOR: Ryan Haenze.

2 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.

3 MR. O'CONNOR: Tom Heint.

4 MR. HEINT: Tom Heint, yes.

5 MR. O'CONNOR: Rob Hobson.

6 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, pass.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: Catalina Martinez.

8 (No response.)

9 MR. O'CONNOR: Oh, not here, sorry.

10 Michael O'Day.

11 MR. O'DAY: Michael O'Day, yes.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Kristin with i's Oien.

13 MS. OIEN: Kristin Oien, yes.

14 MR. O'CONNOR: Jennifer Points.

15 (No response.)

16 MR. O'CONNOR: Judy Sanders.

17 MS. SANDERS: Judy Sanders, yes.

18 MR. O'CONNOR: Ryan Strunk is not here

19 yet.

20 Trevor Turner is, I believe, not here

21 yet.

22 MR. VAN ACKER: Kyle Van Acker, yes.

23 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you. And Corbb

24 O'Connor, yes. So we are all in agreement, minus

25 Rob who is a nonvoting member.

1 Feel free, by the way, now that we
2 have our Council together, to jump into these
3 votes. We take many of them and would love it if
4 you managed to beat me to calling out your name,
5 save us a few precious seconds but not the end of
6 the world if we should miss it.

7 I want to, before we move to Jennifer
8 Beilke giving us an overview of the State Plan and
9 Comprehensive Needs Assessment as she might make
10 her way to the microphone, I will just ask those of
11 you who chair committees, if there are significant
12 discussions that you would like to have with the
13 Council, please let me know and we will be happy to

14 get you on the agenda to discuss those outside of

15 just our regular committee updates. If they are

16 just a couple of minutes I would be happy to take

17 those at the end, if there is a discussion you wish

18 to have with the rest of the Council or of there's

19 a report that's maybe a little lengthier or maybe a

20 little more once a year type report, I would love

21 to give you that time on the agenda.

22 Quick note. On tonight's agenda we do

23 not have a representative from the National

24 Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils at this

25 meeting, we postponed that to our next meeting, so

1 look forward to that discussion in June. That will
2 be a presentation from that group that is a
3 membership organization of lots of rehabilitation
4 councils from around the country that we have an
5 opportunity to bring some of the learnings from our
6 council meetings to other councils around the
7 country.

8 And I know there have been some
9 discussions in the past about that group and about
10 how blindness is represented or maybe it would be
11 helpful to have blindness represented differently
12 and would be glad to have that discussion.

13 So there will be a brief presentation

14 and then we can have some discussion, just to
15 forewarn everybody, I am not planning to request
16 that we make a motion or a vote to join that
17 coalition at the next meeting, instead this is a
18 discussion, we can see where it goes and then see
19 what action we would like to take in the future.

20 Are there any other -- I don't believe
21 there are any other notes that we need to start
22 with this evening, but I will pause just in case
23 there are any questions or anything like that.

24 (No response.)

25 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. We will move

1 then, it's that time of the season for a
2 Comprehensive Needs Assessment and so I have asked
3 our State Program Administrator, Jennifer Beilke,
4 who is no stranger to this Council, to give us some
5 guidance and some information, I know we have a lot
6 of new councilmembers who have not yet been through
7 this process and so asked if she would give us some
8 information about what is all involved in that
9 assessment and in that work that goes on over the
10 next few months.

11 And I will ask you to keep your ears
12 and eyes attuned to see if this might be work that
13 you would be interested in participating in,

14 because we will be appointing a State Plan Task

15 Force. So with that I will turn it to Jennifer

16 Beilke.

17 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer, can

18 everyone hear me okay?

19 MR. ELLER: Yes.

20 MS. BEILKE: Okay. So as Corbb

21 mentioned, I was asked to talk about the Needs

22 Assessment, it goes by a couple different names,

23 you may hear the Comprehensive Statewide Needs

24 Assessment or just Needs Assessment. The correct

25 term is Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment or

1 sometimes just CSNA.

2 So I would like to just tell you a

3 little bit about that Needs Assessment, just some

4 of the background of what is included in that. And

5 I just have some updates as well to share on this

6 whole topic.

7 So the Needs Assessment is required by

8 WIOA, all VR programs or Vocational Rehab programs

9 must develop a State Plan which contains many

10 sections. And one of those sections is the

11 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment or just

12 shorten it to Needs Assessment.

13 That Needs Assessment must be

14 conducted in conjunction with the SRC-B that is in,
15 you know, in the law that it must be done in
16 conjunction. The Needs Assessment provides an
17 assessment of the rehabilitation needs of
18 individuals with disabilities residing in the state
19 including, and there are -- I will read these.

20 These are required to be part of your
21 Needs Assessment for each state. It is for the
22 individuals with the most significant disabilities
23 including those in need of supported employment,
24 those who are minorities, those who are unserved or
25 underserved individuals of the Vocational Rehab

1 program, individuals served by other parts of the
2 statewide Workforce Development System, so
3 individuals who are receiving services through,
4 say, the Career Force Centers or some of the other
5 title programs that we have. And then youth and
6 students with disabilities and as appropriate,
7 their needs for pre-employment transition services
8 or other transition services.

9 There are also two other components
10 that are required. The other one is the Needs
11 Assessment also identifies the need to establish,
12 develop or improve community rehab programs within
13 the state. And the last one is an assessment of

14 how the needs of pre-employment transition students
15 and transition career services are coordinated
16 under the Individuals with Disabilities Education
17 Act. So that means schools, the school districts,
18 and those two in conjunction. So those are the
19 elements that we are required to include in a Needs
20 Assessment.

21 States can also include any other
22 topics or any other type of pieces they feel are
23 important or that, you know, could be an area for
24 that particular state to look at.

25 The information that comes out of the

1 Needs Assessment is really important. It provides
2 a lot of information for us. At Services for the
3 Blind we use the information from those Needs
4 Assessments to identify gaps in services and
5 identify areas of need that we need to address. It
6 also helps to ensure that we are in compliance with
7 our program, that we are in compliance and we are
8 providing required services.

9 It is one of the tools that is used
10 when developing the agency's goals, priorities and
11 strategies, you probably heard those terms before.
12 Those goals, priorities and strategies, for one,
13 they are required by law again, they are a

14 component of the combined State Plan and they help
15 to give us direction. Those goals, priorities and
16 strategies are basically a road map that we
17 developed as an agency, it is our road map of what
18 our goals are, what we have identified to be goals
19 and the steps that we are going to go through to
20 get to reach those goals.

21 And the goals and priorities and
22 strategies also allows us to document and measure
23 our progress. As part of that process we are
24 required to do a review of those goals and
25 priorities from the previous year, so we are always

1 reviewing our progress and then as well as planning

2 our next steps for the future goals.

3 The Needs Assessment information also

4 helps SSB as an agency to make decisions on

5 budgeting. By looking at, you know, areas where we

6 need to focus and where we are going to need to

7 focus funding in the future and how much funding

8 and it also helps with making decisions on staffing

9 within an agency. If we know we have an area, you

10 know for example, we know minority services are an

11 issue for our state and, you know, in looking at

12 some of that information might help us to determine

13 we really need to -- we need more staff or we need

14 to focus more staff time in that area.

15 Some of the updates that I can tell

16 you, and then Natasha will be sharing more in her

17 update as the Director's report, but there is an

18 upcoming move to hire a second outreach person who

19 would be responsible for the Needs Assessment.

20 Myself, I am spending more of my time

21 working on contracts and that leaves me less time

22 for the Needs Assessment and State Plan. Natasha

23 has talked with the Governor's Workforce

24 Development Board and they are the entity in

25 Minnesota, since we do a combined plan, the

1 combined plan means that our portion is combined
2 with the portions from the other title programs.
3 And so the GWDB, they are in charge of coordinating
4 that whole effort and tying it altogether. So
5 Natasha connected with them, they are going to get
6 started on some of the training soon, they will
7 usually call meetings and have everybody --
8 representatives from every program start coming to
9 a meeting so they can start coordinating that.

10 You may have heard me or others talk
11 about contracting out for a Needs Assessment to do
12 a very thorough and comprehensive Needs Assessment,
13 larger than we have done in the past, in the recent

14 past. We have started to work on a request for
15 proposals, we have kind of -- we've scoped that
16 out. We have a really, really good example that we
17 found to follow, but developing a request for
18 proposals takes quite a bit of time, it takes
19 several months, actually, to develop a request for
20 proposals and then you need to receive those
21 proposals and score those proposals and then do the
22 actual work of that Needs Assessment. And
23 unfortunately we are just not going to have enough
24 time to do it for our next State or Combined State
25 Plan submission.

1 So we are going to be still pursuing
2 that, still working on that request, but we are
3 looking to have that happen at the two-year period
4 when we do the update to our State Plan.

5 And we are, Natasha is also going to
6 be talking about this coming up, but working with a
7 consultant who is gathering feedback on our
8 services. And that information will be used in the
9 State Plan as well.

10 So really the State Plan work needs to
11 start this summer. It takes quite a while, there
12 are several sections and it needs to get started
13 this summer so we can have it voted on and

14 approved -- the Council does need to approve that
15 either before or at the February 2024 council
16 meeting, it will need to be before that because we
17 have to submit our portion of the State Plan to the
18 GWDB by like December because it goes out for a
19 30-day public comment period.

20 So we've run into problems with that
21 before because now that it's a combined plan their
22 timeline is earlier than SSB's timeline with RSA
23 for submission. So we can still make changes after
24 it goes out for public comment and it comes back,
25 we can still make changes before it gets submitted,

1 and usually we have to submit it by the end of
2 March, beginning of April so that the new -- the
3 State Plans can be approved by July 1.

4 Are there questions on that?

5 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. I
6 wonder, Jennifer, if you could clarify the
7 difference between the consultant that you said we
8 have retained to do this work and the request for
9 proposal that would not be in time?

10 MS BEILKE: Sure. So the consultant,
11 I believe, is for -- that's for workforce, yeah, I
12 can tell you the -- and Natasha may be able to talk
13 about that piece a little more, but I can tell you

14 about the Needs Assessment piece. We have a -- we
15 would be doing a request for proposal for another
16 agency to do the Needs Assessment. And what they
17 will be doing specifically is they are being asked
18 to do several things, but obviously those pieces
19 that I read to you, those required elements, those
20 need to be addressed. They will be doing things
21 like engaging the public, perhaps doing public
22 forums, reaching out to specific disability groups,
23 you know, constituency groups. They will be
24 addressing those specific items and helping us to
25 write up a plan that would show, you know, where

1 those gaps are in services that we provide. And
2 they are strictly going to be working on Needs
3 Assessment activities, so.

4 And so I don't know, Natasha, if you
5 want to talk about the other consultants.

6 MS. JERDE: Sure. And this is
7 Natasha. The consultant that we are working with
8 now is specific to our Evolve VR work and they are
9 doing a very focused type of focus group with a
10 variety of individuals, former customers, just to
11 get a sense of what's working and what's not.

12 So while that's for a very specific
13 purpose, there is going to be information coming

14 from those discussions that is probably going to be
15 very useful for the combined State Plan and the
16 Needs Assessment.

17 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Are
18 there any further questions?

19 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy Sanders.
20 I'm curious to know how many people here really
21 know who is combining with whom? That is, State
22 Services for the Blind is one entity and who else
23 are we combining with?

24 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. So it's
25 with all of the WIOA programs. So Title I will be

1 adult and dislocated worker, Title II is your adult
2 basic education and career and technical education,
3 Title III is the Wagner Peyser Program or Job
4 Seeker Services, Title IV is Vocational
5 Rehabilitation.

6 So all of the WIOA titles, including
7 here in Minnesota. We also have some state funded
8 programs that contribute to the combined State Plan
9 and the Governor's Work Force Development Board,
10 which is situated within our same department, is
11 the coordinator and submitter of the entire plan.

12 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer. That's
13 an interesting facet of this whole process, because

14 given that our program goes through the Rehab
15 Services Administration, you know, it has evolved
16 how we do this, but I have still been entering our
17 portion into the portal and then all those
18 different sections get entered into their portal by
19 a rep from those different agencies. And then as a
20 whole it gets submitted with all of those different
21 portions.

22 However, our portion, your know, once
23 it gets submitted, our portion, then, gets
24 separated and still goes to RSA for review, because
25 RSA reviews its arm, you know, administers our

1 program.

2 So it's kind of interesting how it all

3 works and it doesn't always seem like we fit or the

4 whole thing fits together. And I believe that

5 there's -- it's been mentioned by several

6 representatives at those meetings that it still

7 feels like each section is just submitting their

8 portion and there is no connection, there is no way

9 to tie them all together, you know, in our future,

10 in the future goals, you know, as one program. And

11 I agree that that is how it seems to work. So it

12 will be good if they can put some emphasis on that

13 and work towards that in the future.

14 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Are

15 there further questions?

16 (No response.)

17 MR. O'CONNOR: So I will throw out a

18 couple, again this is Corbb. I recognize that you

19 shared, Jennifer, that it would be more than we can

20 do to have that RFP out for the Needs Assessment.

21 And I remember that's what we were tracking

22 towards, so maybe I missed it but that's news to me

23 and maybe this is more of a Natasha question, I

24 wonder if the Council felt strongly that that's

25 something that was needed if that was at all doable

1 or if it's absolutely out of the realm of

2 timeliness that we could do at this point?

3 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. So the

4 RFP process could take up to nine months from start

5 to finish, just to get someone in place. And

6 calendars would show that that's when probably our

7 combined State Plan has to be done. So we had to

8 postpone that just for at least this four-year

9 round, but we have a two-year amendment period that

10 we should have the RFP done, we should have the

11 contractor in place and we should have a good year

12 of thorough research, evaluation and digging in to

13 help us inform that two-year amendment period. And

14 then moving forward we would be looking at seeing
15 how we can continue to use that contractor for the
16 future.

17 MR. O'CONNOR: And this is Corbb
18 again. So what you have outlined, Jennifer and
19 Natasha, to me it sounds a little overwhelming for
20 the Council to be putting together. Can you give
21 us a sense of the guidance that the agency would be
22 able to provide from a staff perspective and from
23 having done this before so as we ask for folks to
24 volunteer on this task force they have a sense of
25 the expected workload?

1 MS. BEILKE: Yes, this is Jennifer.

2 How can I say this? We can also -- I can give you

3 my perspective and you can also --

4 MS. OIEN: This is Kristin, sorry, can

5 you get closer to the mike, I can hardly hear you?

6 MS. BEILKE: Yes, I can. And of

7 course I haven't found my words yet.

8 So the Needs Assessment that we have

9 done typically in the past has been more of a

10 review of, you know, of literature, review of

11 what's available, gathering data and statistics, it

12 hasn't been as involved.

13 So it is involved, we have had --

14 there is always -- we've had the task force, Steve
15 Jacobson has been on it pretty much every year so
16 Steve is seasoned at this. We have had assistance
17 from councilmembers and committee members working
18 on it.

19 Generally it ends up being SSB that
20 does a lot of the putting it together, you know,
21 writing up the data, putting it together,
22 assembling it into a package that it needs to be in
23 for submission. A full-blown Needs Assessment
24 would involve quite a few hours, it would be a big
25 commitment. It's a much bigger process. And as we

1 are saying, we are not going to be able to do that

2 just yet, so -- go ahead Natasha.

3 MS. JERDE: And this is Tasha.

4 So we have a ton of data available and

5 I can see this task force really looking at all of

6 the information and putting the dots together. So,

7 for instance, we have our work that was being done

8 with the OKR groups, so OKR number 2 did that

9 thorough analysis of successful and unsuccessful

10 closures, we have demographic information, we have

11 information available around transition and

12 students with disabilities and youth. We have OKR

13 number 3 which focused on veterans, which is an

14 underserved community. We have our customer

15 satisfaction survey results.

16 We have a bunch of data that is

17 available. And the task force can really bring

18 those altogether to help us paint a more thorough

19 picture. And that task force also may have

20 questions like, you know, where are we at with

21 serving different ethnicities or different races,

22 can you pull some data for us? And we can get that

23 information and the task force can really look at

24 that and help us find those gaps and give ideas for

25 how to address them.

1 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer. One
2 thing, Natasha, that we didn't discuss, a different
3 possibility, part of the issue with the Needs
4 Assessment, according to, you know, according to
5 WIOA, the Needs Assessment needs to be done every
6 three years, that's what we used to do was every
7 three years. And before WIOA we did a State Plan
8 every year and a Needs Assessment every three
9 years.

10 Well, when WIOA came out, the State
11 Plan, it's no longer an annual thing, it's a
12 four-year plan. You have the initial year and then
13 you have a two-year update, but the Needs

14 Assessment never got switched off that three-year
15 schedule, so it's off kilter.

16 As an agency we decided to do our
17 Needs Assessment every two years so that it would
18 be on the same schedule as the State Plan, which is
19 fine, there is no reason it can't be done that way.

20 I'm wondering, you know, if it might be another
21 possibility if we did it instead of, you know, if
22 we waited one year to do it because then it would
23 still be within the three-year cycle. It might be
24 something to look into.

25 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb.

1 Recognizing that that question is hanging out
2 there, I would love it if Steve, if I could put you
3 on the spot as somebody who has worked on this in
4 the past, maybe your initial reaction to that
5 thought of postponing the Needs Assessment, which I
6 had not considered.

7 And as you maybe make your way to a
8 microphone, just a quick piece of logistics for if
9 it is Joe or one of the engineers in the room, the
10 microphone that Jennifer has been using is much
11 quieter compared to the others, so if that's
12 something that we can adjust that would be great.

13 But Steve or anyone on the Council --

14 anyone in the room or on the call, any questions or

15 reactions to what we've heard so far?

16 MR. JACOBSON: Steve Jacobson here.

17 I've served on this in the past for quite a few

18 years and so forth and I know there has been some

19 disparity because of the timings and so forth. And

20 at least I don't really see an issue if Jennifer

21 and Natasha feel we can get by postponing it until

22 we change it over or possibly trying to do

23 something with the other data that we have being

24 involved in that.

25 I have to admit, I'm not entirely

1 clear how that would work with postponing or
2 incorporating other data if they are suggesting
3 that we do that as a task force or not, so maybe
4 they could clarify that. But, you know, I think I
5 do have to trust their judgment some on how we
6 handle this.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb, thanks
8 Steve.

9 Jennifer or Natasha would you like to
10 respond with your thoughts on that?

11 MS. JERDE: Well, this is Natasha.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Go ahead.

13 MS. JERDE: I probably won't have an

14 answer right this second because I am kind of

15 mulling over -- either way, the RFP is going to go

16 out and we are going to be doing more

17 comprehensive, it's just whether we are okay

18 postponing that a year and then we are kind of

19 going to be off cycle or we use what we have and

20 then at that two-year amendment, which is only one

21 year after the three-year point, oh my gosh there

22 are all these dates, my head is hurting, you know,

23 I guess I can go 50/50, I really could.

24 I just want to make sure when we are

25 doing the CSNA we are doing it thoroughly, we are

1 doing it better than we ever have and it gives us a
2 basis for future Needs Assessments because I want
3 to be able to do it wholeheartedly. So I don't
4 want to rush something and I don't want to push
5 something through that we are not going to be happy
6 with.

7 So I'm okay either way. I'm inclined,
8 I think, to keep within our cycle so we don't get
9 thrown off and miss some of our important
10 deadlines, but I can be swayed easily.

11 MR. HOBSON: This is Rob. Can you
12 guys hear me?

13 MR. O'CONNOR: Go ahead Rob, a little

14 louder would be great.

15 MR. HOBSON: Okay. So I guess what's

16 the time commitment? I'm assuming that there's an

17 ask here that some council members need to be a

18 part of this task force, what type of time

19 commitment, I guess, are we asking for? And I know

20 that's a rough question.

21 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb.

22 Jennifer, I think you would probably be the best

23 one to speak to that.

24 MS. BEILKE: Yes, that is Jennifer.

25 As far as a time commitment, I would

1 estimate perhaps maybe two to four hours a month,
2 you know, for meeting time. You might be doing an
3 hour or two of work outside of the meeting if you
4 are doing some research or some writing. We split
5 it up into sections so a lot of time task force
6 folks will work on one section. It's not a huge
7 time commitment, it probably would be over two to
8 three months, over that length of the time, but
9 about four hours a month, I would say.

10 MR. HOBSON: Okay. Well, I would be
11 able to help, I can definitely do two to four
12 months, I'm sorry, two to four hours a month and,
13 of course, there will be some expected work outside

14 of that, so I'm happy to help.

15 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Before

16 we move to that, and thank you Rob, are there any

17 other questions or comments?

18 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. Is anyone

19 confused about all the acronyms that we throw

20 around? Because I know we have people on the

21 Council who are new and I have a feeling people who

22 have been around for more years get confused about

23 them as well. I think of OKR and even WIOA, if you

24 are new to this Council you may not even know what

25 that is.

1 MS. FLAX: This is Samantha. I don't
2 have a question about the acronyms per se, but I am
3 wondering just before I forget the question, what
4 the difference in the work of the task force would
5 be depending on the issues? I know there was a
6 discussion about the disparity with the timing and
7 the choice about, you know, whether to wait and
8 stuff and I'm wondering what will that mean in
9 terms of whichever choice is made in terms of how
10 that will impact the work of the task force?

11 MR. O'CONNOR: So this is Corbb. Let
12 me take a stab at that and then open it up. My
13 inclination for the reason that Natasha mentioned

14 is to go forward with the State Plan and the task
15 force and get the work underway so that we don't
16 fall out of our two-year cycle. Now we would
17 technically/legally be in compliance if it's every
18 three years and we'd skip a year, but we would be
19 out of sync.

20 And so that said, what I would say is
21 that the group could start meeting and if we
22 determine as a group and in consultation with
23 Natasha, Jennifer and others at SSB that this
24 really is not -- we are not equipped to do this
25 well, we could change that decision down the road.

1 The difference, as I understand it,
2 Samantha, we either have a task force that is
3 meeting or we don't if we chose at this meeting not
4 to move forward with the State Plan for this year.

5 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer. We
6 would still need to have a task force because we
7 would still -- we would need to be -- well, we
8 would still need to have a task force because until
9 that decision is made, I mean, we would still need
10 to submit for the 2024 State Plan. If we postpone
11 it we will -- if we postpone a contracted Needs
12 Assessment we still have to submit a, you know, an
13 update. I would say a less involved Needs

14 Assessment, what we have been doing, which is more
15 just the review of data and that kind of piece.

16 MR. O'CONNOR: I see. This is Corbb,
17 thank you for clarifying.

18 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer. I
19 really second what Natasha has said, that is
20 something I wanted to see for a long time is a
21 thorough Needs Assessment. And, you know, I
22 believe the last time the task force met, I think
23 it was Kristin Oien who said you know, this just
24 feels like a review of data. And it really kind of
25 has been and it needs to be so much more.

1 It really needs to be getting out
2 there in the community and meeting with folks and
3 really, you know, finding out what their needs are
4 directly from them, you know, from the minority
5 groups or, you know, from the veterans group. And
6 really going to them and hearing it. And I'm
7 really excited for that to be happen because it
8 hasn't happened for us in so long.

9 And I really do want to make sure that
10 we are prepared for it, you know, we put a lot of
11 work and effort and thought and foresight into this
12 RFP so that we get out of it what we want. And it
13 will involve -- we will ask for a more involved

14 task force at that time. We will ask -- they will
15 be working with the Council as well. The Council
16 will be a part of that whole process, moreso than
17 they have been in the past. Thank you.

18 MS. OIEN: So this is Kristin. If I'm
19 understanding the conversation correctly, there is
20 an option to hold off for a year and I would almost
21 lean towards that option and spend that time being
22 much more thoughtful and planful about what you
23 want in the RFP for the needs survey that's being
24 developed. That's just my opinion. And if you can
25 hold off on a year then you can really concentrate

1 on developing a needs survey that is going to give
2 you the information that you need. Does that make
3 sense?

4 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb.
5 Kristin, would it be your thought that this task
6 force could help this agency with that work?

7 MS. OIEN: That's a possibility.

8 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha.

9 MS. FLAX: Samantha.

10 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Natasha
11 and then we will go to Samantha.

12 MS. JERDE: So from my understanding,
13 even if we are to hold off or postpone for a year,

14 we don't submit that anyway until the two-year
15 amendment period. So we just sit on the
16 information. It's weird, but RSA, there is no way
17 to submit the Comprehensive Statewide Needs
18 Assessment on those off years. You actually have
19 to, if you do it on the three-year mark, you just
20 got to wait and hold that information and wait to
21 submit it at the two-year amendment period. So
22 whether we do it at three years or what, we are
23 still going to submit it at the exact same time.
24 If that clears anything up.

25 MR. O'CONNOR: So this is Corbb. I

1 think that muddies things, Natasha, so let's ask

2 this and then we will go to Samantha.

3 Natasha, would you say that the task

4 force work, is this a decision that you would like

5 the Council to make this evening or is that a

6 decision that maybe we can still appoint the task

7 force to work on this initiative and that's maybe a

8 decision to make down the road in maybe the next

9 month or two?

10 MS. JERDE: This is Tasha. What could

11 be done is between now and our next Council meeting

12 we can gather a bunch of information from RSA about

13 kind of these time frames and how this looks if you

14 were to go on that three-year submission.

15 RSA is also heavily leaning towards

16 the two-year/four-year cycle, just because there is

17 no place to submit the Comprehensive Statewide

18 Needs Assessment on the off years, if that makes

19 sense.

20 So I can get some extra information so

21 we can all make an informed decision in June, but I

22 know that we want to get started on something in

23 June probably too, so.

24 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb.

25 Samantha.

1 MS. FLAX: I was actually going to say
2 something very similar to what you just said Corbb.
3 I'm wondering if it's possible that the task force
4 meets either way and then maybe even the task force
5 meets and sort of gives recommendations on what the
6 timelines should be, maybe that's part of the
7 purview of the task force. And I'm not sure if
8 that's out of the scope or not, but to me it makes
9 sense to me either way if we don't need to make
10 that decision tonight, that way the task force can
11 have more data and give better feedback as to what
12 timeline should be followed.

13 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. That's

14 my suggestion as well.

15 Are there further questions or

16 comments before we go to identifying the folks that

17 will make up this task force?

18 (No response.)

19 MR. O'CONNOR: Hearing none I am

20 grateful that Samantha volunteered to lead this

21 task force, assuming that has not changed I will

22 give her a second to comment on whether that has

23 changed.

24 MS. FLAX: You didn't scare me away

25 yet.

1 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb.

2 Excellent. And would love to hear members of the

3 Council who would be interested in serving on that

4 task force. Sorry, let me rephrase, those who are

5 wishing to serve on that task force more broadly.

6 MR. HAENZE: Yes, I can. This is Ryan

7 Haenze, I can be on that task force.

8 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Thank

9 you Ryan. Who else?

10 MS. OIEN: This is Kristin, I can help

11 if needed.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Kristin.

13 This is Corbb. Logan Stenzel serves

14 on our Transition Committee and also raised his

15 hand to join this task force. Are there others?

16 Rob, I had heard you mention your interest earlier,

17 would you still like to keep your name forward?

18 MR. HOBSON: Yes. That's a lot of

19 people though, but yeah.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. Hearing no

21 others, interrupt me please if you have changed

22 your vote on this, would love to hear if there is a

23 motion to appoint the Comprehensive State Needs

24 Assessment Task Force chaired by Samantha Flax with

25 Rob Hobson, Logan Stenzel, Kristin Oien and Ryan

1 Haenze.

2 MR. HOBSON: This is Rob, so moved.

3 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, second.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Any discussion?

5 (No response.)

6 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. With that in

7 mind we will move to a vote. And this is on that

8 motion and we will start with Frank Eller.

9 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

10 MS. FLAX: Samantha Flax, yes.

11 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.

12 MR. HEINL: Tom Heintl, yes.

13 MR. O'CONNOR: Rob Hobson.

14 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, yes. Oh

15 sorry, pass.

16 MR. O'CONNOR: And Catalina Martinez I

17 don't believe has joined us yet.

18 Michael O'Day.

19 MR. O'DAY: Michael O'Day, yes.

20 MS. OIEN: Kristin Oien, yes.

21 MS. SANDERS: Judy Sanders, yes.

22 MR. VAN ACKER: Kyle Van Acker, yes.

23 MR. O'CONNOR: And Corbb O'Connor,

24 yes. Fantastic, thank you everybody. Really

25 grateful, Jennifer Beilke, for your comprehensive

1 presentation, pun not intended, of the
2 Comprehensive State Needs Assessment, but really
3 appreciative of the knowledge that you bring to the
4 agency and to this Council and for your clarity in
5 presenting and making interesting such complex and
6 technical pieces of our compliance, but more
7 importantly for the work that is important for
8 directing the agency.

9 And also really appreciate Natasha,
10 your leadership in making sure that this, you know,
11 Needs Assessment is not a formality but really
12 wanting to see it push the envelope of what's
13 ultimately going to benefit the people we don't

14 know yet or haven't met yet. So thank you both

15 very much for your leadership on this.

16 We will move next to our Director's

17 report and for that here's Natasha.

18 MS. JERDE: I am spinning the laptop.

19 I made a message on my paper and I was

20 trying to show it to Jennifer and what it said was

21 can we -- we have a company that we have been

22 working with to help do facilitation and writing

23 notes and they are facilitating our community

24 partner forums and they are called Lanterna

25 Consulting and I am wondering if perhaps we can get

1 them to come in and help facilitate with the task
2 force so that group has someone to take meeting
3 minutes and help do a lot of the heavy paperwork
4 stuff. So just know that if you guys need help we
5 can probably hook you guys up.

6 So greetings Council, I hope you all
7 made it through the big freeze. We are nearing
8 shorts and T-shirts weather on Saturday. I have
9 cabin fever, my dog has cabin fever, it's just been
10 rough.

11 So today's topics include legislative
12 and rulemaking updates, our 100 year celebration,
13 major projects and things to know including, of

14 course, the standing section on our progress with
15 Evolve, some staffing updates and VR performance
16 information.

17 I had planned to do a quarterly update
18 on all of our goals and priorities at this meeting,
19 but unfortunately there really hasn't been anything
20 considerable to discuss, apart from some updates
21 around measurable skill gains and credentials which
22 I will talk about in our performance section.

23 So starting with some legislative
24 updates around our state appropriation request. So
25 the \$4,000,000 biennium appropriation request was

1 packaged up with the rest of our department's asks
2 as part of an omnibus bill. So the House and the
3 Senate both came out with their own bills. The
4 House bill actually has us receiving \$5,000,000 for
5 the biennium, a million more than what we asked
6 for, but there was nothing noted in the tails. And
7 the tails are the next two years in the biennium,
8 so '26 and '27, which is not a huge concern, but
9 it's enough to know that okay, so in this biennium
10 we will have to the make the request again. The
11 Senate omnibus bill has us getting exactly what we
12 asked for, so \$4,000,000 in both bienniums.
13 The legislative update around the

14 Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund. The House

15 omnibus bill actually more than fully funds it.

16 They have \$5,000,000 for the biennium, which is

17 more than 1,000,000 more than we asked for. And

18 the senate has funded for exactly what we

19 requested, which was \$4,000,000. This is a

20 one-time appropriation, this is a pilot program so

21 it would only be for the '24/'25 biennium.

22 Rulemaking. So we have contracted

23 with Lanterna Consulting and a woman named Sue to

24 project manage our rulemaking activities. We have

25 decided to hold off on the BEP rule and instead

1 will only be focusing on Rule 3325, which is our
2 Voc Rehab and Independent Living rule. The reason
3 we are holding off on BEP is there are still some
4 things that are being worked out, there is also
5 something in the statute that would need to be
6 changed before what we really wanted to accomplish
7 could even happen.

8 So Jon, Courtney Wanek and I are doing
9 the very fun and exciting work of actually walking
10 through line by line the rule. And I think we got
11 through definitions and that is six hours just to
12 get through the definitions, and we are making tons
13 of notes for what we believe needs to be removed,

14 changed or added.

15 And so once we complete that initial

16 review we will then have enough information to

17 formally begin the process or to start the clock.

18 At that point we will begin forming our rulemaking

19 advisory committees and we will have two, we will

20 have one for the VR program and one for the

21 Independent Living program.

22 So some areas we are specifically

23 looking at, really specific to the VR program,

24 include the language we use with a big focus on

25 plain language and consistency. Our consultant,

1 Sue, actually was a former English teacher and she
2 is helping us have the keen eye of not using the
3 passive tense, I think she called it, which I use a
4 lot.

5 We are also going to be looking at
6 burdensome paperwork and signature requirements
7 that are not federally mandated but that we placed
8 on customers. For instance, having someone sign an
9 application is not federally required, but it is in
10 our rule.

11 During COVID we have learned getting
12 signatures on applications causes a huge delay in
13 people starting their services and it's just become

14 a barrier. We are looking at our eligibility
15 requirements, we don't have anything on pre-ETS in
16 our rule because that was created before WIOA came
17 out.

18 We are looking at the customer
19 financial participation requirements and we are
20 looking at the appeal time frames, which is a
21 request CAP had a few years back. The current
22 appeal time frame is 60 days and CAP requested that
23 we have that in alignment with what VRS has, which
24 is 120 days to appeal.

25 On to 100 Year Celebration.

1 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Before
2 we move onto another section, has anyone been
3 thinking of a question or said directly does anyone
4 have a question or comment?

5 (No response.)

6 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. We'll move on.

7 MR. STRUNK: This is Ryan, I do want

8 to let you know I have arrived.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb, welcome

10 Ryan.

11 MS. JERDE: There is a comment in the

12 audience.

13 MR. O'CONNOR: If that person in the

14 audience could get to a microphone, please. This

15 is Corbb, typically there is a microphone between

16 the two audience tables.

17 MR. HART: Can you hear me?

18 MR. JACOBSON: No, you have to get to

19 the tables.

20 MS. JERDE: Rocky is making his way.

21 MR. JACOBSON: He's on his way, Corbb,

22 it's Rocky Hart.

23 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb, thank

24 you, Steve.

25 MR HART: All right. Thank you guys

1 very much.

2 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. We can

3 hear you Rocky, go ahead.

4 MR. HART: Thank you very much,

5 Natasha.

6 This is Rocky. One question I have,

7 when you say you are looking at the consumer

8 financial participation policy, I recall several

9 months ago at a council meeting I think it was back

10 in December you mentioned that you were placing a

11 moratorium on that policy. Where are you currently

12 at that, are you still looking to permanently

13 eliminate that or is it just a moratorium right now

14 or can you further define that for us, please?

15 MS. JERDE: This is Tasha. Excellent

16 question. We are still in the moratorium and the

17 intent is while we are not going to remove CFP, we

18 are going to allow it to still be an option should

19 times get tight, but we want to maybe put some

20 parameters around, we would need to do a public

21 hearing before instituting CFP again, but the plan

22 is we do not want to have financial participation

23 requirements. That is the plan.

24 MR HART: Sure, thank you.

25 MS. JERDE: You are welcome.

1 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Barring

2 any questions, we can move on.

3 MS. JERDE: All right. So the 100

4 year celebration. We are working on our RSVPs and

5 gifts for the celebration and that will be on

6 June 22 at the Mendakota Country Club. And on

7 June 22 SSB will be celebrating our 100 years of

8 service. It's an in-person celebration and on that

9 day we will have special guests, including

10 representatives from Minnesota's Blind and

11 DeafBlind advocacy organizations and current and

12 former customers who will be reflecting on the

13 progress made by Blind, DeafBlind and visually

14 impaired Minnesotans and the contribution of SSB in
15 those successes.

16 We have also invited the Lt. Governor,
17 Peggy Flanagan, to come and present as well and we
18 anticipate a proclamation from Governor Walz
19 declaring June 22, 2023 as 100 years of Minnesota
20 State Services for the Blind Day. There will be
21 food, fun and reinvigorated energy to make the next
22 100 years even better. Space limitations for the
23 event require a by invitation guest list. And from
24 what I saw the Council and former councilmembers
25 who have made such a key impact on SSB should be

1 invited as a priority guest.

2 Lisa Larges has been working on the

3 communication plan in coordination with the 100

4 years to further get the message out about SSB and

5 continue to let the public know about our

6 organization and services.

7 And onto a number of projects and

8 notable news, starting with Evolve VR. So on

9 March 30 we had our first human-centered design

10 activity also known as the innovation lab where we

11 had counselors and VR techs come into the office,

12 they met separately and then they met together.

13 And from the feedback we are receiving it was well

14 worth the time spent.

15 The staff shared a number of areas

16 that have room for improvement including clarifying

17 roles and responsibilities between counselors and

18 VR techs, ensuring we have the best complement and

19 number of staff for a more even distribution of

20 workload which will allow for counselors to have a

21 counselor from their region, increasing automation

22 within our case management system, reducing or

23 eliminating redundant processes, having a much

24 easier way to navigate the policy manual and

25 offering more opportunities for career advancement

1 and recognition.

2 A few of the items identified in the

3 innovation lab are things we are already working

4 on. We are working intensely with HR on the

5 counselor classification and the rates of pay for

6 these positions. We know to attract and retain

7 staff we need to pay a competitive wage.

8 After we tackle this area we are

9 looking at ways to build in more career pathways

10 and promotional opportunities for our VR techs. We

11 have also procured a policy management system

12 called DocTract that will allow for folks to access

13 our policies and forms easily and accessibly.

14 And finally, as I mentioned before,
15 our rulemaking process will be an opportunity to
16 review burdensome policies and other things that we
17 have in there that get in the way of our customers
18 engaging in the program.

19 Jon, the supervisors and I are meeting
20 next week to review all of the notes and come up
21 with a plan for making and communicating out
22 changes and improvements. In addition, Jon and I
23 plan to arrange for more innovation lab activities
24 this summer, with the next one focused on better
25 integrating our employment and training staff into

1 the team structure.

2 We kicked off our work with the

3 management analysis division who we call MAD. They

4 will begin soliciting feedback from staff, past and

5 current customers and stakeholders in SSB services.

6 Susan invited the MAD folks to the April DeafBlind

7 Committee meeting to talk more about the work that

8 they will be doing. The DeafBlind Committee has

9 been really interested in this activity and we do

10 want to hear feedback from the DeafBlind community

11 as part of Evolve VR.

12 I also, if given the opportunity,

13 would like to invite MAD to speak with and

14 interview the Council to get your feedback on what
15 is working and not working in our service
16 provision. And I will be working with Corbb on how
17 best to structure and make that happen.

18 I will do a pause on the Evolve VR
19 stuff before I move on.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Thank
21 you, Natasha. Are there questions or comments?

22 (No response.)

23 MR. O'CONNOR: All right. We'll move
24 on.

25 MS. JERDE: Community partner

1 highlights. So first things first, little
2 contracts count. We currently have 28 contacts for
3 ATB and employment-related services. We have two
4 that are in negotiations or contract development.
5 We have one that's processing, one applicant and
6 two amendments needing to be done.

7 Second on this is the staff ATB
8 training request for proposals. This RFP was
9 posted on March 6 and it came down right after
10 March 28. The submissions are with the evaluation
11 team right now. The goal is to have the new
12 contracts executed by May 1. And as a reminder,
13 this is the training that we do for staff,

14 especially counselors where they are six weeks

15 under a sleep shade prior to taking on a caseload.

16 The third section is around our

17 community partners projects. So several projects

18 are in progress that stemmed from our January

19 community partner forum and we are working with our

20 consultant at Lanterna to help us plan, track and

21 implement a number of projects to better engaged

22 with our partners.

23 So one of the things that we are doing

24 are these joint workforce development community

25 partner sessions. It's, one, a chance to do meet

1 and greets and, two, it's a chance to do joint

2 training.

3 One of the big ones we are going to

4 start with is all around comprehensive Adjustment

5 to Blindness Training and the value that that type

6 of training offers. And we are going to be

7 inviting the CRPs, the Community Rehab Programs,

8 that would be BLIND, Inc. and Vision Loss Resources

9 in Duluth to that training. We will probably be

10 asking them to help us do that training, as well as

11 Helen Keller. And we are going to have our staff

12 there too, so everyone will be in the same room,

13 virtual room having some training and getting to

14 know one another.

15 Another project we are doing is around

16 granting our partners access to Workforce 1, this

17 will allow them to put their progress reports

18 directly into the system, do case notes, check

19 authorizations and really allow for better seamless

20 paperwork instead of having to email a bunch of

21 stuff that probably is getting lost in places.

22 And phase 2 is we have this ap called

23 Workforce 1 Connect for customers which very few

24 remember or use, but we are hoping to add all of

25 the different contractors we have so customers can

1 go in and actually make an informed choice on oh,
2 this so and so, I went to their website, I learned
3 more about them and now I am interested in working
4 with them.

5 We also are adding a community partner
6 search tool in Workforce 1 so we can actually put
7 this, you know, John is interested in orientation
8 mobility training, he is in Scott County, who is
9 available? And that search tool will generate all
10 of the providers who are available to serve that
11 area.

12 We are also working with Wisconsin on
13 cross border contracting so that the contractors we

14 have here in Minnesota can continue to drum up
15 business, because one of the reasons our
16 contractors leave is if there is not enough
17 business to keep them around. So we have a few
18 vendors/partners interested in working in Western
19 Wisconsin as well.

20 And then finally we are redesigning
21 our website not only for community partner
22 information, but our website all around to be
23 better laid out. But there will be much more
24 cleaner and clearer community partner information
25 on our website. Our next forum is on April 11.

1 And finally for community partner
2 updates: The contractually required training for
3 contractors to provide employment-related services
4 has been under redevelopment and an updated version
5 is near complete. The training on
6 placement-related issues specific to employment of
7 people who are Blind, visually impaired and
8 DeafBlind will be presented at the July 11
9 community partner's forum and we hope to also
10 include that on our website so people can get that
11 training in realtime.
12 And then moving onto Pre-ETS and
13 Transition.

14 MR. HOBSON: I have a question.

15 MS. JERDE: Rob has a question.

16 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb, go

17 ahead, Rob.

18 MR. HOBSON: Okay. So going back to

19 the six week of Adjustment to Blindness Training

20 for staff members, is that for all departments or

21 is it only for rehab counselors?

22 MS. JERDE: This is Tasha. The RFP is

23 really specific to the six weeks Adjustment to

24 Blindness Training, but we use it for other staff

25 as well. But I think Jennifer has a look on her

1 face that I am questioning myself now, so.

2 Jennifer is coming up to the mike.

3 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer. I was

4 going to actually look up the exact language, but

5 to my knowledge the law, because it is in law,

6 specifically says -- it refers to counselors

7 providing the services. But I can find that exact

8 language if you would like.

9 MS. JERDE: This is Tasha. While the

10 law does only require it for counselors, we do end

11 up sending more staff and we use those contracts

12 for that.

13 MR. HOBSON: A follow-up question. I

14 know that -- I just want to reiterate how important
15 that six weeks of Adjustment to Blindness Training
16 is specifically with the nonvisual skills, because
17 if it's less than that period of time it doesn't
18 allow the person to really gain the understanding
19 and the knowledge necessary to really believe and
20 have that positive attitude about Blindness.

21 MS. JERDE: Thanks, Rob.

22 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Thanks,
23 Rob. Any other questions or comments on this
24 section of the report?

25 MR. ELLER: This is Frank. I just

1 wanted to say that I totally agree with Rob, that
2 means a lot. That was my comment. Frank Eller,
3 sorry.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Frank.

5 Barring anyone else we can move on to
6 the next part.

7 (No response.)

8 MS. JERDE: Okay. Pre-ETS and
9 Transition. So our Pre-ETS team has put together a
10 resource detailing summer opportunities for
11 students. Staff are sharing with students,
12 families and teachers to encourage students to
13 participate in a summer program. And this resource

14 is also available on our website.

15 Sky's the Limit will be coming to

16 Minnesota to facilitate a day of the summer

17 transition program and they will return in the fall

18 to facilitate a workshop at the Academy for the

19 Blind. This is the company created by David

20 DeNotaris and Eileen Rivera Ley that offers various

21 skill and advocacy building workshops.

22 We are also working with Wilderness

23 Inquiry to again provide a canoe trip experience

24 this summer. This day-long canoe trip teaches

25 self-advocacy and team building skills.

1 Our multi-state initiative continues
2 with Delaware, Kentucky and Michigan. In fact,
3 student ambassadors and staff are part of a virtual
4 presentation coming up at NCSAB.

5 And several pre-ETS staff are
6 attending the Annual Child & Adolescent Mental
7 Health Conference in Duluth at the end of April.

8 And onto Business Enterprise Program.

9 As part of Evolve BEP we are looking at additional
10 vending opportunities. The BEP elected committee
11 chair, Mike Colbrunn, and John Hulet actually went
12 to Tennessee a few weeks ago to learn more about
13 the BEP commissary operations at county jails.

14 The Minnesota BEP is considering
15 providing commissary services at the two state
16 hospitals which is St. Peter and Moose Lake. And
17 while we don't have the exact inmate numbers or
18 sales data for these facilities, based on what we
19 learned or what they learned in Tennessee they
20 would anticipate these commissary businesses could
21 generate a livable wage for a Blind person.

22 Mike and John visited four commissary
23 businesses, two in Nashville and two in Memphis.
24 Tennessee has 27 Blind vendors that operate in 47
25 county jails. John visited the regional office in

1 Nashville, a county jail and a company called
2 VendEngine. And Tennessee is unique because they
3 have a state statute that allows priority at all
4 government municipalities including city and
5 county.

6 John shared that they believed the
7 day-to-day tasks are similar and in some cases
8 easier than filling vending machines, however, you
9 don't have as much flexibility if you need time
10 off. So John put it that you could think of a
11 commissary as you think of a post office, the
12 expectation from the jails is neither snow nor rain
13 nor heat nor gloom of night shall prohibit the

14 consistent and swift completion of the weekly

15 commissary operation. You may have disgruntled

16 customers with vending machines, but in a jail

17 there is no -- you cannot take a day off.

18 And another challenge is the

19 accounting systems and hardwares that are used. So

20 Tennessee pays between 200 to 400 thousand dollars

21 a year just in fees for the software. Though

22 VendEngine said if we were to partner with them we

23 would incur only hardware costs for the two

24 locations in Minnesota. So there is much to be

25 discussed with the elected committee before any

1 final decisions are made on commissaries.

2 Minnesota Braille and Talking Book

3 Library move. So the Minnesota Department of

4 Education's Assistant Commissioner Bobbie Burnham

5 shared with SSB earlier this week that MBTBL will

6 be relocating to the Minnesota Department of

7 Education building in Minneapolis. This move will

8 take place on July 1, this year.

9 This move was first considered several

10 years ago, they shared with me, as MDE leadership

11 discussed the need for modernized space for MBTBL

12 and the advantages of being co-located with MDE

13 colleagues. In addition the Minneapolis location

14 allows MDBTL to serve a larger audience from a
15 centrally located modern facility. And Jeff Behl,
16 our supervisor in audio services, said now we can
17 have in-person visits and lunch dates with our
18 colleagues.

19 The new location will include space
20 for staff, visitors, volunteers, a recording
21 program and a small collection of library
22 materials. Due to the MDE building's location,
23 there is a great potential for improved in-person
24 access and mail delivery of materials to patrons.
25 The new location allows for increased outreach

1 opportunities with schools and the community and
2 stronger relationships and collaboration with
3 internal colleagues at MDE and other state
4 agencies.

5 MGTBL staff members have been given
6 the opportunity to retain their current positions
7 at the new location. And when I reached out to
8 Catherine Durivage she is planning on making the
9 commute into the Cities. She said at that time no
10 staff have resigned or said that they weren't going
11 to make the move, but she thinks as the weeks come
12 they will learn if there is going to be any staff
13 changes.

14 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy.

15 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Go

16 ahead, Judy.

17 MS. SANDERS: I wonder maybe there

18 isn't enough attention, I know that one of the

19 advantages to having the Library for the Blind in

20 Faribault was that students from the school next

21 door could go to the library. And I don't know

22 whether that was a common thing and will make much

23 difference or not, but I would think that it might.

24 MS. OIEN: This is Kristin. I asked

25 the same question and Catherine let me know that

1 some of the data on the foot track-it from the
2 Academy, it has gone down and I don't think -- she
3 didn't feel it was going to be a big impact for
4 students. Most of the interactions are, you know,
5 through BARD and electronic means and things. The
6 collections that they have physically right now in
7 Faribault, I don't think they are used very often
8 with MSAB students. I could check with John Davis
9 on that too, if you would like me to.

10 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. I would
11 add as well that there were many structural
12 concerns with that building as being a -- at the
13 campus, the school campus. And to Kristin's point,

14 a lot of the hard copied Braille materials are not
15 stored in Minnesota, but are brought in as needed,
16 especially now with the Braille on Demand Program
17 where you can get a book a month embossed and sent
18 to you.

19 Are there other questions?

20 (No response.)

21 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Just
22 one other for you, Natasha, and that is what is the
23 Minnesota state statute about BEP preference in
24 government facilities as contrasted with what you
25 shared about Tennessee's?

1 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. So it's
2 Statute 248 is the Minnesota statute regarding
3 Business Enterprise Program. Of course I don't
4 have the language memorized, but if you want to
5 take a gander it's Minnesota Statute 248. And I
6 can look that up later, too, during our break.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. I
8 thought it might be a tall ask, but you've known
9 many data points off the top of your head in the
10 past. Awesome, thank you.

11 We can move on unless there are other
12 questions or comments?

13 MS. JERDE: Okay. Communication

14 Center Updates. And actually this wasn't in my
15 report, but I actually got an email that I pulled
16 up that I wanted to share first.

17 So on Thursday we will be hosting a
18 visit from the National Library Service Equipment
19 and Infrastructure section managers. Kevin and
20 Joseph are traveling the country to meet personnel
21 and learn about equipment repair, their primary
22 focus will be the digital talking book machine
23 repair. But besides looking and learning about our
24 repair options, they will be sharing the successes
25 of other libraries. They are also working on

1 developing the tools and processes needed to
2 support the new equipment that NLS will be
3 fielding.

4 Our group has volunteered to be part
5 of the development team to repair and support the
6 new Braille e-Reader. And the majority of the work
7 that the engineering unit does is ongoing.

8 To that end we placed 33 books on BARD
9 in February and March. We also placed 21 new home
10 recording work stations with Audio Services and
11 Radio Talking Book volunteers. And we have about
12 35 more to go.

13 Our request for proposals for the

14 DAISY recording software that's going to be used by
15 the Communication Center is up, it will be open for
16 21 days and then we will evaluate submissions.

17 The Go Live date for the moving the
18 Braille Unit to the KLAS software system is set for
19 May 8. We did have to delay it a few weeks because
20 of the complexity of the task, but the technology
21 replacement project is going quite well.

22 And onto Audio Services. So as you
23 probably all are very aware, we continue to expand
24 our offerings and languages other than English, so
25 to that end there was a Dakota and Ojibway language

1 symposium at the Grand Casino Mille Lacs in
2 February and our Audio Services librarian, Dan
3 Gausman and one of our Braillists, Anna Warner,
4 attended.

5 In addition, the Minnesota Indian
6 Education Association has their conference at the
7 end of April at Mystic Lake which Dan will also be
8 attending. Events such as these have afforded
9 valuable relationships between Audio Services and
10 various authors who have supported our efforts to
11 expand our language offerings, including our noted
12 author and professor of Ojibwe Dr. Anton Treuer of
13 Bemidji State.

14 And something cool is that the One

15 Book One Minnesota book club selected Follow the

16 Blackbirds by Gwen Westerman. If you remember I

17 had shared earlier this year that Dr. Westerman had

18 actually come in to record her book, which is now

19 available on BARD. And it's a collection of poetry

20 in both Dakota and English.

21 And moving onto SSU who have been

22 rocking it. We are a few months into our

23 partnership with the Mayo Clinic. And we are, of

24 course, working out some bugs, but we are very

25 optimistic we are going to get into a groove and

1 this is going to work amazingly. Should we get
2 through the legislative process additional dollars,
3 that's going to help us tremendously in being able
4 to have a staff person on-site much more often.
5 Right now we can only be there once a week at most.

6 And we did a big shout out to Stacy
7 Shamblott, she's our Aging Eyes coordinator, but
8 she's also been helping serve seniors in Dodge and
9 Mower Counties and has been staffing the Mayo site
10 twice a month.

11 And SSU with their rate of referrals,
12 they are going to come very close to serving a
13 record number of seniors. Our previous record was

14 4,200 and we are on track to meet or exceed that.

15 Our St. Cloud staff person, Barb

16 Klein, will be out on medical leave indefinitely

17 which does stress our capacity a bit. But there

18 are five other staff that are helping cover her

19 territory. And her condition is improving and all

20 signs point to her eventually making a full

21 recovery.

22 And finally for notable news and

23 projects, just a brief outreach update. A Reuters

24 reporter will be doing an in depth piece or series

25 on the labor force shortage in Minnesota. He is

1 interested in how the State helps people with
2 disabilities and employers to provide for workplace
3 accommodations. He will be coming to SSB next week
4 or two weeks from now, two weeks from now, to
5 interview one of our employment specialists, as
6 well as an employment specialist with VRS to learn
7 about workplace accommodations. And we invited him
8 to also tour our resource room and actually touch
9 and look at some of the technology we have onsite.

10 And before I go onto staffing I just

11 want to take a moment and pause.

12 (No response.)

13 MS. JERDE: Okay. So staffing

14 updates. We welcomed Debra or Debbie Jensen Hobson

15 to Workforce Development Unit as a vocational

16 rehabilitation technician. She started on

17 March 22.

18 Michell Gip started on Wednesday as

19 our new O & M instructor who will be working with

20 Workforce Development and Senior Services. We

21 hired one new intermittent driver named Michael

22 Garbish and we are interviewing again for a second.

23 Due to the large amount of travel that is happening

24 we have decided to hire a part-time driver position

25 so that we have someone with a more established

1 schedule available to our staff.

2 The job coach position closed on

3 Friday, March 31. I think we had over 20

4 applicants and 16 resumes that were forwarded on

5 and we are planning on hiring two additional job

6 coaches that would serve and really be focused in

7 greater Minnesota.

8 The low vision assistive technology

9 trainer will be posted soon. Courtney Wanek is

10 going to be hiring a second data analyst, Monsur

11 Ahmed is still out on medical leave and given the

12 work of the combined State Plan and a lot of other

13 things, we really have a need for another data

14 analyst as well as someone to do our data
15 dashboards.

16 We are also planning on hiring a
17 second communications and outreach specialist.

18 This position would work in tandem with Lisa Larges
19 to allow for greater outreach of all SSB programs
20 and will better help us achieve our Evolve
21 strategies around awareness. This position will
22 also coordinate the completion of the combined
23 State Plan, as we all know our next four-year plan
24 is due March 2024. And then those are my staffing
25 updates.

1 And then my last section is around
2 some VR program performance. But I am going to
3 pause.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Any
5 questions or comments on this latest piece?

6 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. What's in
7 March, what did you --

8 MS. JERDE: This is Tasha. March 2024
9 is usually when we have to have our combined State
10 Plan in.

11 MS. SANDERS: Oh, 2024.

12 MS. JERDE: Not last month.

13 MS. SANDERS: That's why I wondered,

14 did we miss it?

15 MR. ELLER: This is Frank Eller. You

16 confused me also for a second.

17 MS. JERDE: Next year, we have a year.

18 Okay. VR Program Performance. So

19 here is a snapshot of where we are at. So since

20 July 1 we have received 190 applications. Right

21 now we are serving 641 individuals. We have 59

22 successful closures. 86 unsuccessful closures

23 which brings our employment rate to 42.4 percent,

24 which was much better than last year's but still

25 not where we want to be. Our average caseload size

1 per counselor is 40, with the lowest being 16 in
2 the metro and 57 in the north central region.

3 The average length of time a person
4 receives services from us is three years and five
5 months. And the average cost per client is \$3,558
6 and that was for program year 2022.

7 And we continue to focus efforts on
8 measurable skill gains and credential attainment.
9 These are two really important performance measures
10 we negotiate with the feds. We reported and
11 negotiated alongside VRS, but we also track our own
12 numbers.

13 So in program year 2021, which was

14 actually last year, July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022

15 that negotiated rate was 30 percent. And as a

16 state we blew it out of the water, we got

17 45.5 percent. But our rated on its own was

18 35.6 percent. This means that out of 100 people

19 going to school, approximately 35 of them submitted

20 grades and they made progress in their schooling or

21 their apprenticeship.

22 So the current year we have to have

23 50.3 percent and next year we need to have

24 51.8 percent. And please don't cringe when I say

25 this, but our current rate right now is

1 15.7 percent. But this is not uncommon, this is
2 through December of 2022 because this number tends
3 to start going up after fall semester ends and we
4 get grades, which isn't until January. And so we
5 will have the most current updated numbers here in
6 the coming months.

7 So we are doing some intensive reviews
8 on the 175 people who have unclaimed skill gains
9 and we are hoping we will be able to get that
10 number up.

11 And as for credentials, this is a new
12 performance measure we just negotiated for this
13 year. So our baseline last year was 33.1 percent,

14 so out of 100 people who went to school, 33 got a
15 credential of some sort. SSB's rate last year was
16 16.4 percent. Even though that out of all the
17 Blind agencies in the country we are number one for
18 enrollment rate of people with disabilities, but we
19 were almost dead last for credential attainment.

20 So we had a bunch of strategies we put
21 in place and that credential attainment rate nearly
22 doubled. And so now we are at 27 percent as of
23 December. So next year we need to hit 31 percent
24 and the year after we need to hit 33 percent. And
25 we are pretty confident we are going to meet that

1 all because we are doing some documentation
2 reviews.

3 And that is all that I have for my
4 Director's report.

5 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Thank
6 you, Natasha. I will take the Chair's privilege
7 and throw out a first question for you. Regarding
8 the credential achievement or attainment, has there
9 been any connection with the national data base, I
10 forget the name of it, that tracks diplomas and
11 integration to Workforce 1?

12 MS. JERDE: This is Tasha. So the
13 National Student Clearinghouse, I believe, is the

14 system. We do have a data sharing agreement with
15 them and were able to get it, the problem is the
16 data analyst was the one who took all of that
17 information and then matched it with our records,
18 so we haven't been able to keep on that as often as
19 we want to, but I think our quality assurance
20 specialist is taking on that work.

21 MR. O'CONNOR: Excellent, great. For
22 those who are unaware, it means that instead of
23 necessarily needing to submit your diploma,
24 students should still submit their diploma, I am
25 just saying we could get it, but if all the stars

1 align we could get it from the National Student
2 Clearinghouse as the documentation which then gets
3 our attainment number to more reflect reality.

4 The kinds of exciting things you learn
5 when you go to CSAVR and NCSAB conferences. Any
6 questions or comments on this last section or the
7 report as a whole?

8 MR. O'DAY: This is Michael, I have a
9 question.

10 MR. O'CONNOR: Go ahead, Michael.

11 MR. O'DAY: Yeah, I was wondering,
12 Natasha, regarding the credential piece if a
13 student was obtaining a four-year degree is it true

14 that they would go through the four years and then
15 the fourth year they'd get the credential, but it
16 would look like they received a credential
17 25 percent of the time because they went to school
18 for four years and got credentialed once, is that
19 how that works, or maybe you could explain that?

20 MS. JERDE: This is Tasha. That's a
21 really great question and I will actually explain
22 both MSG and credential. So the measurable skill
23 gain you can claim one per person per year. A
24 credential you can only claim one and you can only
25 claim it, it actually doesn't even register until,

1 I think, after one year after they are closed. So
2 you can claim a credential up to 365 days after
3 case closure and that then isn't reported until
4 another two more quarters.

5 So our credential rate is severely
6 lagged and it's a very confusing measurement. So
7 we call them cohorts, the people that were
8 reporting in these credentials could have been
9 closed two years ago. It's very odd. But you can
10 only get one and it's not reporting it year after
11 year like you are in a four year and you are
12 missing out, it only counts it once and it doesn't
13 count until they leave our program.

14 MR. O'DAY: Okay. Thank you.

15 MS. JERDE: You are welcome.

16 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. So that

17 means we are not -- the data is not showing us as

18 penalized for somebody who is still active in

19 school and has an active open case until their case

20 is closed; is that correct?

21 MS. JERDE: Correct.

22 MR. O'CONNOR: What other questions or

23 comments are out there?

24 (No response.)

25 MR. O'CONNOR: I think that's seven

1 seconds. Hearing none, thank you, Natasha, for
2 your report. And very excited about the progress
3 that's being made and appreciate you sharing those
4 data points with us as well so that we know where
5 we stand.

6 Why don't we take a ten-minute break;
7 does that sound good? I don't hear any objections.
8 So we will reconvene at 7:26.

9 (Break taken from 7:16 to 7:26 p.m.)

10 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. We will
11 go ahead and get started. And we will start with
12 our Budget Task Force report, Ryan Strunk served as
13 its chair and I presume will be giving the report

14 this evening.

15 MR. STRUNK: Yes, sir, so this is Ryan

16 and sadly I don't have a lot to report. We met as

17 a committee a couple of weeks ago and in the

18 process of meeting we found out that there were a

19 number of expenses that had been miscoded, that is

20 to say, when an expense is incurred and it's put

21 into the accounting system, you have to say

22 essentially what it is for. So if it's food you

23 have to make sure that it either says for food, not

24 food service, or for in-state -- I'm sorry,

25 out-of-state food which would be like if you went

1 to a conference and you ate something and you
2 charged for it.

3 So there were a lot of these that were
4 placed in odd places, there was even one expense,
5 a significant expense, that had been entered in two
6 separate categories and so double charged. And so
7 as a result we ended up with we were not able to
8 put together a comprehensive budget, or even to
9 review the comprehensive budget because of all of
10 things that had been mislaid and miscalculated.

11 Even then, unfortunately when we got a
12 revised budget back, there were still some numbers
13 that had seemed a little off, for example, one of

14 our pieces was overdrawn by \$990, which is not

15 something that we would have approved or

16 recommended.

17 So our goal over the coming two months

18 as a budget task force will be to obtain an updated

19 list of expenditures where everything is properly

20 coded. And then once we have that list of properly

21 coded expenditures we can then review the budget

22 and make recommendations for adjustments and the

23 like.

24 So while I unfortunately don't have

25 that updated budget for you this evening, please

1 know that we are doing everything we can to make
2 sure that we get a proper budget for you and we
3 will have that at the June meeting.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Ryan and
5 committee. Are there questions for the group, or
6 comments?

7 (No response.)

8 MR. O'CONNOR: Okey-dokey. This is
9 Corbb. We will go ahead and move on, then, to a
10 report from the Professional Development Task Force
11 and grateful that Samantha Flax has served as its
12 chairperson. And I will turn it to you.

13 MS. FLAX: Thank you, Corbb. So the

14 Professional Development Task Force has met, I
15 believe, twice since our last meeting of this
16 Council and we've gotten a lot done. We've started
17 compiling a list of resources talking about
18 different ideas of what we might want to hear about
19 as a Council, so we've talked about information on
20 working with DeafBlind customers, we've talked
21 about working with people of different backgrounds.

22 And so we are planning to hopefully
23 have speakers at our June meeting and maybe even
24 August. It looks like potentially our first
25 speaker will be someone talking about the

1 experience of DeafBlind people. And so we are
2 really doing a focus on multiple disabilities and
3 things like that. So there will be more
4 information to come.

5 My main announcement for everyone,
6 though, is if people can contact me if you are on
7 the Council or if you just come to meetings and you
8 have any ideas or requests about things that you
9 would be interested on having professional
10 development in a certain area, please email me,
11 contact me. I can give my email here, I can put it
12 in the chat as well for those of you who are
13 virtually and, of course, it could be in the

14 minutes and Corbb has it as well, so anyone can

15 contact him for it.

16 So again, if anyone has things that

17 you feel like if you had information on that would

18 help you advise SSB, I would love to hear ideas or

19 things that people are interested in learning

20 about.

21 So before I go does anyone have any

22 questions, concerns, comments, anything you want

23 clarification on?

24 (No response.)

25 MR. O'CONNOR: All right. Well, my

1 email is samflax, S-A-M-F-L-A-X, 926@gmail.com if
2 anyone wants to contact me. And most people have
3 my information so feel free to send me a text, give
4 me a call, send me an email and I look forward to
5 hearing from everyone.

6 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Thank
7 you, Samantha. We will move next, as I mentioned,
8 we don't have a presentation from the NCSRC,
9 National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils
10 this evening, so we will move next to our Task
11 Force on Council Committee Structure.

12 So every meeting we review the
13 progress that has been made across several

14 committees and the liaisons between this committee
15 and other councils around the state. One of the
16 things that we get the opportunity to do at this
17 April meeting is appoint a task force that will
18 meet before June to make recommendations to the
19 Council about what committees make sense for us to
20 have, how we should make up those committees, so
21 recommendation on what kinds of individuals should
22 serve on those committees and advise the Council on
23 the charges for each of those committees.

24 So, for example, this could be

25 suggestions about what as a -- what do we want to

1 focus on as an employment goal for SSB and for the
2 Council to be monitoring and aware of, you know,
3 what are the kinds of things that that committee
4 should work on over the coming year and what kinds
5 of reports do we want to hear about employment?

6 So what I would ask for is members of
7 the Council, this is a very, I don't want to say
8 the commitment level on this task force is lighter,
9 usually it's settled in one or two meetings and we
10 review the document that's out on the website that
11 we've used for and adapted over the years. It just
12 has, as I said, the names of the committees,
13 recommendations on who should serve on them and

14 then a few bullet points on what we would like from
15 those committees over the coming year.

16 So looking for individuals willing to
17 serve on that task force and Dan Ashman has sent
18 his name through, I know he couldn't make it this
19 evening, but he has volunteered to again serve on
20 that committee he served in years past as well.

21 Are there others interested in serving
22 in this work?

23 MR HART: Rocky Hart.

24 MR. O'CONNOR: Rocky Hart, thank you.

25 Others? We could use one or two more

1 folks to serve on this task force.

2 MS. OIEN: This is Kristin, I will

3 help with this one.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Kristin.

5 And maybe one other?

6 MR. HAENZE: I can be on the task

7 force, Corbb.

8 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Ryan Haenze.

9 Pause just a second in case there are

10 others?

11 (No response.)

12 MR. O'CONNOR: So among Rocky, Kristin

13 or Ryan, actually I take that back, Kristin or Ryan

14 should probably serve as the ones that are on the
15 Council, either of you willing to serve as chair of
16 this task force? And I will be there to support
17 you.

18 MS. OIEN: This is Kristin, I will
19 serve as chair.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you very much,
21 Kristin, I really appreciate that.

22 Is there a motion for appointing
23 Kristin as chair with Ryan Haenze, Dan Ashman and
24 Rocky Hart to our Task Force on Council Committee
25 Structure?

1 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, motions.

2 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, second.

3 MR. FRANKLIN: Franks moves, Rob

4 seconds. Any other discussion on that task force?

5 (No response.)

6 MR. O'CONNOR: Hearing none we will

7 move to a vote. Start with Frank Eller.

8 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

9 MS. FLAX: Samantha Flax, yes.

10 MR. O'CONNOR: Ryan Haenze.

11 MR. HAENZE: Yes, Ryan Haenze, yes.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Tom Heinl.

13 (No response.)

14 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, yes.

15 MR. O'CONNOR: I just want to double

16 check, I did not hear Tom Heinl.

17 Michael O'Day.

18 MR. O'DAY: Yes.

19 MS. OIEN: Kristin Oien, yes.

20 MS. SANDERS: Judy Sanders, yes.

21 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, yes.

22 MR. O'CONNOR: Kyle Van Acker.

23 (No response.)

24 MR. O'CONNOR: Let's see, we haven't

25 heard from Kyle, Trevor I believe is absent, or

1 from Tom Heidl. Tom, I see you are unmuted. There
2 we go.

3 MR. HEIDL: Yeah, can you hear me now?

4 MR. O'CONNOR: I can hear you now,
5 yes.

6 MR. HEIDL: I vote yes.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Tom. He
8 votes yes.

9 And Corbb O'Connor yes as well. So
10 thank you very much for your support on that one.

11 We will move next to committee reports
12 and we will start with the State Rehabilitation
13 Council. Is there anyone to give a report on the

14 SRC meeting? I don't believe so, but I pause in

15 case I am incorrect.

16 (No response.)

17 MR. O'CONNOR: How about the State

18 Independent Living Council?

19 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy Sanders.

20 One of the most interesting things that we have

21 been dealing with on this Council is, and I don't

22 know whether you would call it an episode, but a

23 concern on behalf of a particular individual who

24 had been in the hospital and wanted to come home.

25 And the powers that be weren't going to let her do

1 it because she -- she is a wheelchair user, she
2 uses, you know, some care and she had been living
3 alone by herself and they weren't going to let her
4 do it and it caused quite a brouhaha.

5 There were letters to the editor about
6 it and we -- our Council wrote one. There were
7 meetings about it and there was going to be a big
8 show about it and then the day that that was going
9 to happen the Department of Human Services backed
10 down and is going to let her go home.

11 So that bit of consumerism and
12 consumer-led activity was maybe one of the most
13 active that I've ever seen -- I mean, there are

14 probably a lot more things that I don't know about,
15 but that was a good result to have, that people
16 spoke up and helped her get what she knew she could
17 do, she knew she could live independently and she
18 wanted to do it and now she is.

19 Okay. So that's one of the main
20 things that -- probably the most exciting thing
21 that's come. We are going to have for our May
22 meeting a tour of one of the Centers for
23 Independent Living, the one down in Marshall. And
24 so we will be taking a field trip for that. And I
25 think that's about it.

1 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Thank

2 you, Judy.

3 Questions or comments for Judy and the

4 SILC report?

5 (No response.)

6 MR. O'CONNOR: Great. Thank you,

7 Judy.

8 The Communication Center Committee,

9 Steve.

10 MR. JACOBSON: Good evening,

11 everybody, Steve Jacobson here. The Communication

12 Center Advisory Committee met on March 2 and you

13 will see minutes eventually, but we concentrated in

14 conjunction with the history of State Services for
15 the Blind, a little on the history of the
16 Communication Center. It had a long history
17 started well before it became officially a part of
18 State Services for the Blind, I think it was 1954,
19 in fact, and became part of the State Services for
20 the Blind in the early '70s. So it was an
21 interesting meeting.

22 We also were able to go through the
23 power point that Jon Benson had created regarding
24 the overall history. Jon Benson and, oh, I can't
25 think, Tara created regarding the history of State

1 Services for the Blind. So it was a good meeting.

2 We covered a lot of other issues as

3 well as we always do. Our next meeting is

4 scheduled for May 25 at 2 o'clock.

5 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Steve, and

6 the Communication Center Committee.

7 Questions, comments for the committee?

8 (No response.)

9 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. We'll move next

10 to Customer Satisfaction Goals and Priorities,

11 Jennifer.

12 MS. DUNNAM: There is no report at

13 this time, we are at a light point in our cycle.

14 MR. O'CONNOR: Jennifer reports that
15 there is no report, we are at a light point in the
16 workload for that committee. And thank you very
17 much. I should say in the Council committee
18 structure document we do outline the different work
19 for the committees and some of them don't meet
20 every other month, so not uncommon to hear no
21 report.

22 DeafBlind Committee. Do we have a
23 representative to give a report?

24 MS. KUSZ: This is Susan. There
25 really is no report other than the DeafBlind

1 Committee's next meeting is this coming Tuesday, so
2 we will be reporting out at the next Council.

3 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Thank
4 you to Susan.

5 We have next our Employment Committee.
6 Dan Ashman wasn't able to make it this evening but
7 sent a report that we attached to the meeting.

8 Are there any other questions or
9 comments for the Employment Committee?

10 (No response.)

11 MR. O'CONNOR: I will say just a note
12 that that committee had some good discussion about
13 metrics and monitoring those over time so I am

14 excited to see the progress on that.

15 The next committee is officially

16 called our Minority Outreach Committee, but we

17 would rather it be known as the Diversity, Equity &

18 Inclusion Committee. I don't see Yadiel its chair

19 here to give a report. Does anyone on the

20 committee wish to give a report?

21 MR. ELLER: Yes, this is Frank Eller.

22 I'm on the committee.

23 MS. FLAX: Samantha.

24 MR. ELLER: This is Frank Eller. I've

25 been watching my email, but we haven't been meeting

1 lately the last few months, so I'm not sure what's
2 really happening. Thanks.

3 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. This is Corbb.

4 Samantha.

5 MS. FLAX: Hi. So the committee did
6 meet last month and we are currently in the process
7 of working on a few different things. We are
8 working on looking at data from SSB that already
9 exists on Customer Satisfaction and looking at how
10 to give recommendations that are more inclusive to
11 customers, such as having opportunities to learn
12 about working with English language learners. And
13 then we are also looking into doing different

14 outreach with different communities such as the

15 Hmong community here in Minnesota.

16 So there is a lot in process, but we

17 do have a lot of exciting things coming up and a

18 lot of different research we are doing.

19 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Samantha.

20 Frank, you mentioned not seeing an

21 invite, I would recommend reaching out Yadiel. I

22 can get you in contact with him, that may help.

23 MR. ELLER: This is Frank Eller. I

24 think I know why. My email address that I

25 previously had for close to 20 years this October

1 it got compromised in February, so maybe I lost
2 communication and I failed to report, I apologize.
3 I have been going through living heck for the last
4 month or two trying to get all my stuff back in
5 order with my new email address, et cetera.

6 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Frank,
7 let's connect after the meeting and happy to get
8 you in touch.

9 Any questions or comments on the DEI
10 Committee report?

11 (No response.)

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. Senior Services,
13 Judy.

14 MS. SANDERS: Yes. We started at the
15 beginning of this year trying to brainstorm ways to
16 get the word out about the Senior Services unit and
17 get it more business, but then we have discovered
18 in the last couple of months that there is an
19 upsurge in activity for the unit and they probably
20 couldn't handle much more than they are doing. And
21 they are going to be serving for this year over
22 4,200 people.

23 So we are not sure that we would be
24 doing them a favor if we promote it too much more.
25 So anyway, we thought that was an interesting

1 turnabout and a lot of it has to do with what
2 Natasha mentioned with the Mayo Clinic down in
3 Rochester now that they are having hours there. So
4 we are not sure where we will be headed. We can
5 celebrate all the activity or find a way to make it
6 grow even more, I'm not sure which way we will go.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Thank
8 you, Judy. That sounds like a great point for our
9 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment to be
10 factoring in, the upsurge in Senior Services
11 traffic and potential needs there.

12 Thank you, Judy.

13 Any questions or comments for the

14 Senior Services Committee?

15 (No response.)

16 MR. O'CONNOR: Great. The Transition

17 Committee. Wendy is not here, is there a member of

18 that committee that wishes to give a report?

19 MS. OIEN: This is Kristin. We met on

20 March 10. Shane shared all the exciting transition

21 programming that's going on through SSB. All of

22 our stakeholders shared our updates. We are going

23 to be meeting again on May 12 and Shane will be

24 sharing data specific to students who are in

25 college. So we are looking forward to that.

1 MR. O'CONNOR: Any questions for the
2 Transition Committee?

3 (No response.)

4 MR. O'CONNOR: And the Vendor Outcomes
5 and Measures Committee, again Daniel is not here
6 but sent a report of a very dynamic meeting looking
7 at all kinds of different ways that maybe we should
8 be factoring in the measurements for vendors.

9 And I know the committee has some --
10 will be planning a more thorough report with
11 hopefully a presentation, a more dedicated time
12 presentation at this meeting likely in June or in
13 August with some recommendations on how we can

14 better assess the outcomes and measures of our
15 vendors through means of our surveying,
16 particularly how we are surveying folks. Because
17 clearly the email and text message survey is not
18 getting the response rate that the committee would
19 expect.

20 Are there questions or comments from
21 anyone on Vendor Outcomes and Measures?

22 (No response.)

23 MR. O'CONNOR: Before we move to the
24 public comment period I will remind you that our
25 next meeting is on June 1, it will again be a

1 hybrid meeting, would encourage all those who are
2 able to join us in person.

3 Is there anyone wishing to make public
4 comment?

5 MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Chair.

6 MR. O'CONNOR: Go ahead, Steve.

7 MR. JACOBSON: Steve Jacobson here. I

8 just wanted to mention that there are still a few

9 days left of the National Federation of the Blind

10 of Minnesota state scholarship application process.

11 Our deadline is April 15 so it's still possible for

12 students in college, especially to get an

13 application in for one of our two \$2,000

14 scholarships.

15 Just go to

16 nfbmfminnesota.org/scholarship-program with a

17 hyphen between them or you can find it on the home

18 page as well. So that's our most current activity,

19 of course we are starting to think about our state

20 convention in July in Houston, Texas already.

21 MR. O'CONNOR: And this is Corbb. I

22 think you mean nfbmn.org.

23 MR. JACOBSON: If I didn't say that,

24 this is what I meant. Slash scholarship-program.

25 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. Also the

1 convention I think that you are referring to in

2 July is a national convention.

3 MR. JACOBSON: Did I say state?

4 MS. SANDERS: Um-hmm.

5 MR. JACOBSON: Oh well. Goodnight

6 everyone.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. All is

8 well that ends well. Thank you.

9 Others wishing to make a public

10 comment?

11 MR. O'CONNOR: Hearing none. I wonder

12 if there is a motion for us to adjourn a few

13 minutes early?

14 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller motions.

15 MS. FLAX: Second.

16 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, second.

17 MR. O'CONNOR: I heard Frank move and

18 thank you for the second, Samantha.

19 I'm assuming there is no discussion so

20 just interrupt me if there is. Frank Eller.

21 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

22 MS. FLAX: Samantha Flax, yes.

23 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.

24 MR. HEINL: Tom Heintl, yes.

25 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, pass.

1 MR. O'DAY: Michael O'Day, yes.

2 MS. OIEN: Kristin Oien, yes.

3 MS. SANDERS: Judy Sanders, yes.

4 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, yes.

5 MR. VAN ACKER:

6 MR. O'CONNOR: Kyle Van Acker stepped

7 away I think.

8 Corbb O'Connor, yes.

9 We are adjourned, see you in June.

10 And committees, I look forward to meeting with you

11 as your meetings come up. Have a good evening you

12 all and happy celebrations this weekend.

13 (Matter adjourned at 7:52 p.m.)

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1 STATE OF MINNESOTA)

2) ss.

3 COUNTY OF HENNEPIN)

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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 92 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: April 12, 2023

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KIMBERLY K. EVAVOLD

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Court Reporter

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