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# 7 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

# 8 BIMONTHLY MEETING

9

17 Zoom Videoconference

18 Thursday, April 4, 2024

19 5:40 p.m.

20

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1 APPEARANCES:

2 REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND SSB STAFF

3 Judy Sanders, Vice Chairperson Dave Andrews

4 Ryan Haenze Jennifer Beilke

5 Diane Dohnalik Jon Benson

6 Frank Eller Brianna Holeman

7 Sue Fager Lisa Larges

8 Hannah Harriman Lisa Rogers

9 Tom Heinl Alana Strickler

10 Rob Hobson

11 Thea Kramer

12 Patricia McGee

13 Jeff Milhelich

14 Corbb O'Connor

15 Justin Salisbury

16 Ryan Strunk

17 Patrick Vellia

18

19 ALSO PRESENT:

20 Natasha Jerde, Director of SSB

21 Susan Kusz, State Program Administrator

22

23 Whereupon, the following proceedings

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

25

3

1 MS. SANDERS: I am going to call this

2 meeting to order. This is the meeting of the

3 Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council for the

4 Blind and this is our first meeting with a whole

5 new batch of people and several who aren't new

6 anymore and so we are glad to all be together.

7 We are going to have time to introduce

8 ourselves to everybody and all of you should have

9 agendas that will help you know what's coming up.

10 And we have an audience always as well, we are

11 going to allow them to introduce themselves shortly

12 and then we will go through the agenda. And I want

13 everyone to feel free to ask questions at any time

14 that seem appropriate.

15 And toward that end I want to remind

16 everybody of Zoom etiquette. We should all be so

17 conditioned to this, this probably isn't necessary,

18 but just in case it is. When you are not speaking

19 and you are listening, please mute yourself. And

20 for people who, probably everybody knows how to do

21 it, but there are three ways. If you are on a

22 telephone you can do it by hitting star 6 and it

23 will mute and unmute you. Star 9 will let you

24 raise your hand if you are asking to speak and then

25 when recognized you can hit star 9 and your hand

4

1 will go down. For computer users it's alt A. For

2 those of you who may be Mac users, you better just

3 know because I don't. And that is also true for

4 iphone users. I know that probably if you are an

5 iphone user you probably already know how to do it,

6 but if you don't, let us know and somebody can tell

7 us.

8 Okay. We will assume that everybody

9 is ready to go and everybody is muted and I am

10 going to begin. First of all I am Judy Sanders, I

11 am Vice Chair of this Council and I am conducting

12 the meeting tonight.

13 And so we are going to begin with a

14 roll call of first of Council and then we will

15 allow the audience to introduce themselves. So

16 what I have here is an alphabetical listing of

17 everyone who is supposed to be on the Council right

18 now and the reason you are going to want to pay

19 attention is that when we give -- we have to do a

20 lot of roll call votes on this Council, an unusual

21 amount to any that I have ever seen, and so it

22 helps that it's in alphabetical order and you can

23 anticipate when it's going to be your turn to talk

24 and that will help move it along faster. But I

25 will call the roll until we get used to it.

5

1 So let's begin with Connie Berg, do we

2 have Connie on the line? Give her a minute to --

3 if you know they are not on the line, Susan, and

4 you want to tell me, that's fine.

5 MS. KUSZ: Sorry, I had to unmute.

6 She is not on the call at this time.

7 MS. SANDERS: All right. How about

8 Diane? Diane Dohnalik?

9 MS. KUSZ: Diane is not on the call at

10 this.

11 MS. SANDERS: All right. Frank Eller.

12 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, present.

13 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Thank you.

14 Sue Fager.

15 MS. FAGER: Sue Fager, present.

16 MS. SANDERS: Yeah. Sam Flax.

17 MS. KUSZ: She is not on the call at

18 this time.

19 MR. O'CONNOR: Absent.

20 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Hannah Harriman.

21 MS. HARRIMAN: Hannah Harriman, I am

22 here, I am present.

23 MS. SANDERS: Good.

24 Ryan Haenze.

25 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, here.

6

1 MS. SANDERS: Thank you.

2 And Tom Heinl.

3 MR. HEINL: Here.

4 MS. SANDERS: Rob Hobson.

5 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, here.

6 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

7 Thea Kramer.

8 MS. KRAMER: Thea Kramer, here.

9 MS. SANDERS: All right.

10 Pat McGee.

11 MS. McGEE: Pat McGee is here.

12 MS. SANDERS: Very good.

13 Jeff Milhelich.

14 MR. MILHELICH: Jeff is here.

15 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

16 Jennifer Points.

17 MS. KUSZ: Jennifer is not on the call

18 at this time, but Diane just arrived.

19 MS. SANDERS: Okay. So Diane if you

20 want to say hello.

21 MS. DOHNALIK: Hello, sorry I had

22 trouble connecting.

23 MS. SANDERS: We are happy to have

24 you.

25 MS. DOHNALIK: Thank you.

7

1 MS. SANDERS: Justin Salisbury.

2 MR. SALISBURY: I am here.

3 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

4 Ryan Strunk.

5 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk is here.

6 MS. SANDERS: And Patrick. Patrick, I

7 do not know how to say your last name, but I know

8 you are here. Did you want to say that you are

9 here?

10 MR. VELLIA: Here.

11 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Some day I want a

12 lesson. Is it Vellia?

13 THE INTERPRETER: It's like calf meat,

14 veal.

15 MS. SANDERS: Oh, okay, that's not

16 hard. Thank you. I made it a lot harder than it

17 needed to be.

18 All right. So next --

19 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb O'Connor.

20 MS. SANDERS: Oh, Corbb O'Connor, yes,

21 I'm sorry.

22 MR. O'CONNOR: I am still serving out

23 a term that has not been reappointed, so I believe

24 I am still a voting member.

25 MS. SANDERS: Yes, I believe you are

8

1 too. And because I didn't pay attention to that,

2 you are going to come between Jeff Milhelich and

3 Jennifer Points if she comes or Justin Salisbury if

4 she doesn't.

5 MR. O'CONNOR: Got it.

6 MS. SANDERS: Okay. So if I forget,

7 just get pushy.

8 All right. So now what I want to do

9 is I want to make sure that everybody knows what

10 we -- we've done the roll call but let's find out

11 who is in the audience.

12 Susan, if you want to call on people

13 or something or those of you who are there can just

14 say your name.

15 MS. KUSZ: Okay. We will start with

16 the Director -- this is Susan. We will start with

17 the Director, Natasha Jerde.

18 MS. JERDE: I'm here.

19 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Let's do the --

20 MS. KUSZ: Rocky Hart. The rest of

21 the staff from SSB?

22 MS. SANDERS: Yeah, if you can do it

23 that way.

24 MS. KUSZ: Yes. Brianna Holeman.

25 MS. HOLEMAN: Here.

9

1 MS. KUSZ: Jon Benson.

2 MR. BENSON: Good to be here, thank

3 you.

4 MS. KUSZ: Dave Andrews.

5 MR. ANDREWS: Here.

6 MS. KUSZ: Jennifer Beilke.

7 MR. BEILKE: Here.

8 MS. KUSZ: Lisa Larges.

9 MS. LARGES: Here.

10 MS. KUSZ: Lisa Rogers.

11 MS. ROGERS: Here.

12 MS. KUSZ: And last but not least me,

13 Susan Kusz.

14 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Now let's do the

15 rest of the audience. I assume there is others?

16 MS. KUSZ: Yep. So Rocky Hart.

17 MR. HART: Present.

18 MS. KUSZ: Steve Jacobson.

19 MR. JACOBSON: Here.

20 MS. KUSZ: Jennifer Dunnam.

21 MS. SANDERS: Jennifer?

22 If you see her she must be here.

23 MS. KUSZ: She's on. And I apologize,

24 Alana Strickler is also one of SSB staff that's on

25 the call.

10

1 MS. SANDERS: Oh good, okay.

2 MS. KUSZ: She was on my second screen

3 and so I apologize, Alana.

4 MS. STRICKLER: Thank you for having

5 me.

6 MS. SANDERS: Thank you for being

7 here.

8 MS. KUSZ: And then Jennifer Dunnam.

9 MS. DUNNAM: Hello.

10 MS. SANDERS: Hello.

11 Anybody else?

12 MS. KUSZ: If I missed anybody please

13 speak out. We also have the captioner and the

14 court reporter and two tactile interpreters with

15 Patrick.

16 MS. SANDERS: Okay, very good.

17 All right. I think what we are going

18 to do now is approve the minutes. Those of you who

19 have not -- were not at the last meeting, of course

20 you don't need to vote on this unless for some

21 reason you want to after reading it, but I need to

22 approve the reading of the minutes and if there are

23 any corrections then we need to accept them.

24 So if I could have somebody make a

25 motion to approve the minutes.

11

1 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, so moved.

2 MS. SANDERS: Thank you. Can we have

3 a second?

4 MR. HAENZE: Second.

5 MS. SANDERS: Who said that?

6 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, second.

7 MS. SANDERS: Oh, thank you. Okay.

8 So Rob Hobson moves and Ryan Haenze seconds to

9 approve the minutes. Are there any corrections

10 that anyone has?

11 (No response.)

12 MS. SANDERS: Okay. I am going to go

13 through the roll call, only this time I think I am

14 going to try -- I will bypass, unless any --

15 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb O'Connor.

16 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Corbb.

17 MR. O'CONNOR: Sorry, I couldn't get

18 there fast enough.

19 Just one, two words to add to the

20 minutes.

21 MS. SANDERS: Oh, okay.

22 MR. O'CONNOR: There is a note that

23 says a motion to approve four attendees to the

24 spring conferences, it was up to four attendees,

25 those people hadn't confirmed that they would be

12

1 attending.

2 MS. SANDERS: Okay, right. Thank you.

3 So now we are going to vote to approve

4 the minutes as corrected. And I am going to try to

5 just do the people who were on the Council last

6 time.

7 So Frank Eller, you will be first to

8 vote. Frank if you could --

9 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes. Sorry

10 about that.

11 MS. SANDERS: That's okay. And I'm

12 assuming that the people who weren't here for the

13 first roll call, I will know if they have arrived.

14 Ryan Haenze.

15 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.

16 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Tom Heinl. Tom

17 Heinl, if you can do a star 6 maybe, you can

18 unmute.

19 MR. HEINL: Tom Heinl is yes.

20 MS. SANDERS: Thank you.

21 Rob Hobson cannot vote. Let's see,

22 who else have we got.

23 We have Ryan Strunk.

24 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, yes.

25 MS. SANDERS: All right. And I will

13

1 vote yes, so the minutes are --

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

3 MS. SANDERS: Oh God, Corbb, it

4 happened. I'm sorry.

5 MR. O'CONNOR: No problem.

6 MS. SANDERS: Thank you. Let's see

7 how long it takes me before I do it right.

8 Okay. Now what I would like us to do

9 is do a little bit more of an introduction than we

10 did the first time and I want to make sure that we

11 get everybody, but I don't want everybody to give

12 too long a speech so I'm going to ask that nobody

13 talks for more than two minutes about themselves.

14 And I will start by hopefully showing you how we

15 can do it.

16 Hi, I am Judy Sanders from

17 Minneapolis -- did somebody want something?

18 (No response.)

19 MS. SANDERS: Okay. I'm Judy Sanders

20 from Minneapolis and I am currently Vice Chair of

21 this Council. I have served on the Council for two

22 different iterations, everyone knows that we have

23 term limits around here and so when you finish a

24 couple of terms then you go off the Council for a

25 year and then you can come back and I am in my come

14

1 back phase. So I think that's probably all anybody

2 needs to know.

3 So we will go in the order, both new

4 and old. Connie Berg, I assume, is not here yet so

5 let's start with Diane, would you like to introduce

6 yourself to us?

7 MS. DOHNALIK: Okay. I am Diane

8 Dohnalik, I'm the specialist for Blind and visually

9 impaired through MDE and I am taking Kristin Oien's

10 position that she held previously. I've been a

11 teacher and a lead in a local district for a very

12 long time and I am just about to complete my six

13 months here at MDE.

14 MS. SANDERS: Oh, very good.

15 MS. DOHNALIK: Yes. And I'm finding

16 that I enjoy making all of these new partnerships

17 and finding out about all the initiatives that are

18 going on that I wasn't directly involved with

19 before. So thanks for having me.

20 MS. SANDERS: Thank you. I guess I

21 should add --

22 MS. McGEE: Madam Chairwoman, a

23 question.

24 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Pat.

25 MS. McGEE: This is Pat McGee. I was

15

1 wondering what MDE is?

2 MS. DOHNALIK: Sorry, Minnesota

3 Department of Education, this is Diane.

4 MS. McGEE: Thank you.

5 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Now, if you --

6 oh, and I will tell you that my position on the

7 Council is as liaison between this Council and the

8 Minnesota Independent Living Council, so that's how

9 I arrived.

10 Okay. Let's go to Sue Fager.

11 MS. FAGER: Good evening, everyone. I

12 work for PACER Center, I'm the board representative

13 for Minnesota's Parent Training and Information

14 Center. I am vintage, I'm not middle aged, I'm

15 vintage, a white woman with white hair, blue eyes

16 and I'm wearing red glasses tonight.

17 I've been supporting the disability

18 community in different jobs since 1981 with a big

19 focus on transition-aged youth, that's a passion of

20 mine. I have a family member who is Blind due to

21 macular degeneration and when she doesn't wear a

22 hearing aid she is deaf as well. So that's just a

23 little bit about me and I am really pleased to be

24 here.

25 MS. SANDERS: All right. We are happy

16

1 to have you.

2 We are missing Sam Flax so let's go to

3 Hannah Harriman.

4 MS. HARRIMAN: Hello. So trying to

5 keep this brief. As Judy said, my name is Hannah.

6 I have several years of work experience doing

7 hiring and recruiting for a medical transcription

8 company. I am now the office lead for a

9 construction company and I have four years of

10 experience working for a nonprofit that supports

11 children that are deaf and hard of hearing.

12 I am Blind myself and have unilateral

13 hearing loss and obtained my Bachelor of Arts

14 degree in relational communications from Bethel

15 University in 2019 and I serve as the industry

16 representative on this board.

17 MS. SANDERS: Thank you very much,

18 Hannah.

19 Ryan Haenze.

20 MR. HAENZE: Hi everybody, my name is

21 Ryan Haenze, I go by he, him, his pronounces. I am

22 a legal advocate at the Minnesota Disability Law

23 Center where I help provide legal advice, resources

24 and in-services for people with disabilities. I

25 primarily work on our youth services team, which is

17

1 special education cases, so I work primarily with

2 parents. And I also am on the employment team

3 where I work primarily on cases for transition-aged

4 youth. And I am the representative of our Client

5 Assistance Program or CAP program, and you will

6 hear me read the 16 page CAP report later today.

7 And prior to that I was a special ed teacher for

8 nearly six years in the Twin Cities, so it's great

9 to meet all of the new folks here.

10 MS. SANDERS: Okay, very good, thank

11 you.

12 Tom Heinl.

13 MR. HEINL: Tom Heinl, from Maplewood,

14 Minnesota. I represent the advocacy group United

15 Blind of Minnesota.

16 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you.

17 Then we want to go to Rob Hobson.

18 MR. HOBSON: Hello everyone, I am Rob

19 Hobson, I am the vocational rehab counselor for

20 State Services for the Blind. I'm sure you heard

21 Judy say that I can't vote, I don't have a voting

22 position, but I am on the Council. This is my

23 second iteration of being on the Council, I was

24 actually the Council chair probably about five or

25 six years ago, if I could do math I would tell you,

18

1 but I don't remember right now.

2 But either way, I have many, many

3 years experience working in the blindness field. I

4 have been working in the blindness field for over

5 15 years, I have been working for SSB for almost

6 five years. If you hear a baby or kid crying in

7 the background, that's my daughter. But either way

8 it is awesome to be here and I am excited to meet

9 all the new members, so nice to meet you all.

10 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you. And I

11 will tell you that although Rob can't vote, he can

12 and should offer an opinion at any time

13 appropriate.

14 All right. Let's go to Thea Kramer.

15 MS. KRAMER: Hi everybody, I'm Thea

16 Kramer. It's an honor to be with you all, thank

17 you for this opportunity. I am also vintage, I

18 have been working with individuals with

19 disabilities, a very large range, mostly adults and

20 all the way up to elderly, for over 30 years.

21 Currently I am very happy to be in the role with

22 Vision Loss Resources as the rehab manager, so I am

23 filling that low vision and Blind service provider

24 role on the Council.

25 I have not specifically worked with

19

1 blind and low vision individuals and was incredibly

2 inspired and intrigued, and so I am really enjoying

3 what I am doing. We provide Adjustment to

4 Blindness Training, we also have community services

5 in the form of support groups, work with seniors

6 through a senior grant and we also have a variety

7 of activities through that same grant.

8 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you.

9 Pat McGee.

10 MS. McGEE: Yes, ma'am.

11 MS. SANDERS: Welcome back.

12 MS. McGEE: It's like old home week

13 with Judy and Rob and Steve and Jennifer in the

14 audience. My name is Patricia McGee, call me Pat.

15 And I, too, am a recurring member of the Council

16 having been on for six years and then off actually

17 for four because it took me two years to get back

18 on the Council. I don't know quite why, but I am

19 here and I'm happy.

20 I don't really work in the field of

21 vision loss or vision problems, but I am pretty

22 much Blind at this moment having had a degenerative

23 eye condition. And my mother had it and I have two

24 daughters who have it as well, so I am happy to be

25 part of the group.

20

1 MS. SANDERS: All right, we are happy

2 to have you. And I would say that you are a

3 majority on this Council, those of us who don't

4 work professionally and work with the Blind, we are

5 the Blind.

6 MS. McGEE: Correct.

7 MS. SANDERS: So that puts us way

8 ahead of everybody.

9 All right. Jeff Milhelich.

10 MR. MILHELICH: Hi, I'm Jeff, I'm the

11 rep from the American Council of the Blind. My

12 husband and I live in Crystal on the northwest side

13 of the city and this is my second cycle through

14 being on the Rehab Council.

15 MS. SANDERS: Okay, we are happy to

16 have you.

17 Corbb O'Connor.

18 MR. O'CONNOR: Hi you all, Corbb

19 O'Connor. I am a six foot tall, white, Blind, red

20 head and my pronounces are he, him and his. I am

21 one of the industry reps on the Council and

22 previously served as chair for a couple of years.

23 I am also president of the National Federation of

24 the Blind of Minnesota, although my role here as

25 appointed is moreso from the industry perspective.

21

1 So I have been working in the field of

2 visual accessibility for the better part of the

3 last dozen years and have done a lot of hiring of

4 folks with disabilities in those various roles,

5 everything from starting my own business to working

6 Fortune 50 Company and then working in consulting.

7 MS. SANDERS: All right, thank you

8 very much.

9 I don't believe we have Jennifer

10 Points so let's go to Justin Salisbury.

11 MR. SALISBURY: Hello, my name is

12 Justin Mark Hideaki Salisbury, he, him pronounces

13 in English. I am here as the industry

14 representative. I have worked as a teacher of the

15 Blind orientation and mobility aka cane travel, as

16 well as rehabilitation teaching since about 2015.

17 And I have also worked in Senate

18 legislative positions, writing policy, doing a lot

19 of advocacy work, creating disability rights,

20 things like a right to parent for people with

21 disabilities as well as ending subminimum wage and

22 those kinds of efforts.

23 And right now I am serving here as the

24 industry representative and right now I am working

25 on a doctorate so that I can hopefully contribute

22

1 to the training of those future professionals to

2 help address the shortage of professionals in our

3 field, working on a doctorate in education with

4 hopes of doing that and becoming a professor.

5 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Thank you very

6 much.

7 Ryan Strunk.

8 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk and I am the

9 National Federation of the Blind representative on

10 the Council. This will be, gosh, I think probably

11 my sixth year in this position, so I am about up,

12 but I am pleased to have had the opportunity to do

13 this for a number of years.

14 My day job is working as an

15 accessibility manager for Optum. I have been here

16 for five years and prior to working in

17 accessibility I spent many years in vocational

18 rehabilitation.

19 Currently I am the president of

20 Blindness Learning and new Dimensions and

21 Adjustment to Blindness Training Center located

22 here in Minneapolis that is working on doing some

23 revamping and re-inventing that I would love to

24 talk to members of the community about that work at

25 some point. I believe that's everything.

23

1 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you.

2 And last but not least, Patrick

3 Vellia.

4 MR. VELLIA: Good evening. Patrick is

5 here. I identify as he, him, his. I live in

6 Minneapolis and I am a chef at both Target Center

7 and Target Field in their kitchen. And I just set

8 up my own food and consulting business. And I now

9 rent a commercial kitchen at George Floyd Square.

10 And I am also a contractor for the Minnesota

11 Commission for the deaf, deaf/Blind and hard of

12 hearing.

13 MS. SANDERS: Oh my goodness, okay.

14 So I take it that, Patrick, you were not working

15 today over at Target Field, you chose to spend your

16 time with us?

17 MR. VELLIA: Well, since I am running

18 my own business now and when that becomes

19 sustainable I can get rid of Target Field, Target

20 Center which frees up my schedule to work with the

21 Council because I am my own business owner.

22 MS. SANDERS: All right. But don't

23 deprive the people of Target Field of their food

24 because they will get grumpy.

25 All right. Thank you very much to

24

1 everybody for introducing yourselves and now we can

2 actually maybe do some business. And we are going

3 to start with elections.

4 So I am going to ask Corbb O'Connor as

5 previous chair to conduct the first election.

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

7 you, Judy. So our elections for chair will go by

8 nominations and we will plan to ask for nominations

9 three times and then at that point we will close

10 nominations and have a roll call vote.

11 So are there nominations for the

12 position of SRC-B chairperson?

13 MR. HOBSON: This is Rob Hobson, I

14 nominate Judy Sanders.

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

16 Sanders do you accept the nomination?

17 MS. SANDERS: I do. Thank you, Rob.

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

19 there further nominations?

20 MR. ELLER: This is Frank Eller, I

21 also nominate Judy Sanders.

22 MR. O'CONNOR: We don't need more than

23 one nomination so we are all set there.

24 Are there further nominations?

25 (No response.)

25

1 MR. O'CONNOR: Are there further

2 nominations?

3 (No response.)

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Hearing none, is there

5 a motion for us to have an election?

6 MR. STRUNK: This is Ryan and I would

7 move that nominations --

8 MR. VELLIA: I forgot to add in my

9 introduction that I served on the Deafblind

10 Committee for five years. Right now they don't --

11 MS. SANDERS: Pat, Patrick --

12 MR. STRUNK: I would --

13 MS. SANDERS: Oh, go ahead.

14 MR. STRUNK: Yeah, I would move that

15 nominations cease and that we select Judy Sanders

16 by acclamation.

17 MR. O'CONNOR: Ryan, would you accept

18 a friendly amendment for that to be a roll call

19 vote?

20 MR. STRUNK: Oh absolutely I would.

21 MR. O'CONNOR: All right. So Ryan

22 Strunk has moved that we elect Judy Sanders by roll

23 call vote. Is there a second?

24 MR. HANSEN: This is Hannah, I will

25 second that.

26

1 MR. ELLER: I will --

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Hannah beat you by a

3 millisecond. I heard Hannah second that motion. I

4 do not have the roll call list in front of me so

5 Judy I am going to ask for your help in running

6 down those names.

7 MS. SANDERS: Sure. It's a little

8 weird, but I will do it.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: Go ahead.

10 MS. SANDERS: We will start with

11 Diane.

12 MS. DOHNALIK: Yes.

13 MS. SANDERS: Frank.

14 MR. ELLER: Yes.

15 MS. SANDERS: Sue.

16 MS. FAGER: Yes.

17 MS. SANDERS: Hannah.

18 MS. HARRIMAN: Yes.

19 MS. SANDERS: Ryan.

20 MR. HAENZE: Yes.

21 MS. SANDERS: Tom.

22 MR. HEINL: Yes.

23 MS. SANDERS: Rob does not vote.

24 Thea.

25 MS. KRAMER: Yes.

27

1 MS. SANDERS: And Pat McGee.

2 MS. McGEE: Yes. Pat McGee, yes.

3 MS. SANDERS: Thank you.

4 Jeff.

5 MR. MILHELICH: Yes.

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

7 MS. SANDERS: Justin.

8 MR. SALISBURY: Yes.

9 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, yes.

10 MS. SANDERS: And Patrick.

11 MR. VELLIA: Yes.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: It's with all of us

13 unanimous. Congratulations, Judy, you are elected

14 as chairperson.

15 MS. SANDERS: Well, thank you all very

16 much. And I will do my best to be active in all

17 parts of what we do and I can expect you all to

18 keep me honest when I don't.

19 Okay. Now we have to elect -- the

20 only other person we have to elect is a Vice Chair

21 and we do not currently have a person in that role

22 because that was me. So I would like to accept

23 nominations for Vice Chair.

24 MR. STRUNK: This is Ryan Strunk, I

25 would nominate Ryan Haenze.

28

1 MS. SANDERS: Ryan Haenze, do you

2 accept?

3 MR. HAENZE: I accept.

4 MS. SANDERS: Thank you. Any other

5 nominations?

6 (No response.)

7 MS. SANDERS: Last call for more

8 nominations.

9 (No response.)

10 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. I would

11 move that Ryan Haenze be elected by roll call vote

12 to the position of Vice Chairperson of SRC-B.

13 MS. SANDERS: Is there a second to

14 that?

15 MR. ELLER: I second.

16 MS. SANDERS: Frank Eller seconds that

17 motion. So Corbb moves and Frank seconds a motion

18 to elect Ryan Haenze by acclamation with a roll

19 call vote. All those in favor say aye.

20 (Ayes.)

21 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Point

22 of order, Judy, unfortunately our bylaws require a

23 roll call vote.

24 MS. SANDERS: I did. You made that a

25 motion so I was voting to vote, I mean to accept

29

1 the roll call vote. I knew that.

2 All right. We are going to do it

3 again, we are going to begin with Diane.

4 MS. DOHNALIK: Diane Dohnalik, yes.

5 MS. SANDERS: All right. Frank.

6 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

7 MS. SANDERS: Sue.

8 MS. FAGER: Sue Fager, yes.

9 MS. SANDERS: Hannah.

10 MS. HARRIMAN: Hannah Harriman, yes.

11 MS. SANDERS: Ryan.

12 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.

13 MS. SANDERS: Tom.

14 MR. HEINL: Tom Heinl, yes.

15 MS. SANDERS: Thea.

16 MS. KRAMER: Yes.

17 MS. SANDERS: And Pat McGee.

18 MS. McGEE: Pat McGee says yes.

19 MS. SANDERS: Jeff.

20 MR. MILHELICH: Yes.

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

22 MS. SANDERS: Justin.

23 MR. SALISBURY: Yes.

24 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, yes.

25 MS. SANDERS: Patrick.

30

1 MR. VELLIA: Yes.

2 MS. SANDERS: Thank you everybody.

3 Congratulations, Ryan. Is there anything that you

4 want to say?

5 MR. HAENZE: You know, just thank you

6 and, you know, I will do my best to help Judy in

7 any way I can, so.

8 MS. SANDERS: Thank you. All right,

9 Very good. Now let's see where we are going to go

10 next. I think what we are going to do is we are

11 going to have -- we have a Council Committee

12 Structure Task Force to talk about and so I want to

13 explain -- I want to talk about the committees

14 first a little bit and then what we want, so you

15 can think about if you want to be on this, we need

16 a task force of maybe two or three people to go

17 through all our committees and there is a document

18 that you have to look at to see if we need to make

19 any changes.

20 The document tells us how many people

21 can serve on each committee and sometimes it

22 signifies certain people whose position on the

23 Council says that they should be a part of a given

24 committee. And I believe we have eight committees,

25 eight or nine, something like that.

31

1 So we need three people to do this

2 task force that will go through this document and

3 make any changes and then we will approve it at the

4 June meeting. At that time we will ask for all of

5 us to volunteer for whatever committees we want to

6 serve on and then we will -- everyone will let me

7 know what committees they wish to serve on, this is

8 for councilmembers, also to say that we welcome and

9 encourage people in the community, in the blindness

10 community to serve on these committees. You are

11 the backbone of all of this and most of the work we

12 do is done that way. So people who are not

13 appointed to the Council can serve on these

14 committees and can, in fact, be chair of them.

15 Now, the Council, I will recommend who

16 will be chair and who will be members of each

17 committee and the Council will then vote on it and

18 that vote will be in August.

19 So you might be wondering what about

20 now? So right now we will fill vacancies if we

21 have any that we know about, but we will not make

22 new appointments to the Council until August. But

23 what I want to make clear is that all meetings for

24 committees are open and if you have a particular

25 interest in one of our committees, and you may have

32

1 seen them on our website, but we will go through

2 them later. You certainly are welcome to come to

3 any of the meetings and offer your opinions and

4 ideas and that sort of thing.

5 So it need not -- don't worry about

6 the fact that you came to this Council when we are

7 not currently appointing people, you are more than

8 welcome to take part in it.

9 So with that in mind I am looking for

10 maybe three volunteers to work on this task force

11 structure document. Anybody want to be brave and

12 take it on? Everybody is just jumping right --

13 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb O'Connor

14 volunteers.

15 MS. SANDERS: Thank you, Corbb.

16 All right. We have Corbb O'Connor,

17 who else would like to help? By the way, I will

18 tell you it may sound more daunting than it is, I

19 suspect you will only need one, maybe two meetings

20 to go through it and you will do it on Zoom so you

21 don't have to go anywhere.

22 And what we will do is if you are on

23 this task force is we will send you a copy of the

24 latest version of it and you can look at it so that

25 you can think about whether you think any changes

33

1 need to be made. So it's that simple.

2 Anybody want to join Corbb?

3 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Madam Chair.

4 MR. SALISBURY: This is Jeff, I will

5 join.

6 MS. SANDERS: I think a couple of you,

7 who asked for the floor?

8 MR. SALISBURY: Justin Salisbury.

9 MS. SANDERS: Okay, which leads me to

10 believe, if you want to speak please say your name

11 so that there will be no confusion about who is

12 doing this.

13 So Justin has volunteered, thank you.

14 And did I hear someone else?

15 MR. MILHELICH: This is Jeff, I will.

16 MS. SANDERS: All right, Jeff, we have

17 our three. So Jeff Milhelich, Justin Salisbury and

18 Corbb O'Connor. And Corbb, if you don't mind I

19 will ask you to chair this particular task force.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb, happy to

21 chair.

22 MS. SANDERS: Okay. So you three can

23 decide when you want to call your meeting and when

24 you do let me know and I will work with Natasha to

25 figure out which staff person will help you. There

34

1 will be a staff person that helps with each

2 committee and we won't worry about who it will be

3 right now unless Natasha wants to say, otherwise

4 when we know when you want to meet we will make

5 sure you have someone to do it with.

6 Thank you all very much, that didn't

7 hurt too much, did it?

8 Okay. Let me see what time it is.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: O'Connor, lest you

10 think I am only here for the votes, we do need to

11 vote on that motion.

12 MS. SANDERS: You are right, thank

13 you. See this is why I like it when people keep me

14 honest or on course, whichever it is.

15 So we are going to vote for this

16 particular task force of three including Jeff,

17 Justin and Corbb as its chair. So we are going to

18 vote again and we will start with Diane Dohnalik.

19 MS. DOHNALIK: Diane Dohnalik.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: We need a motion, Judy.

21 MS. SANDERS: Excuse me?

22 MR. O'CONNOR: We need someone to move

23 and second.

24 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller moves.

25 MS. SANDERS: All right. Frank moves

35

1 that we have this task force. And who is going to

2 second it?

3 MR. HEINL: Tom Heinl, I will second

4 it.

5 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Tom Heinl seconds

6 it.

7 Okay. And now let's vote. So Diane

8 vote again.

9 MS. DOHNALIK: Diane Dohnalik, yes.

10 MS. SANDERS: Frank.

11 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

12 MS. SANDERS: Sue. Sue Fager, would

13 you like to vote on that motion?

14 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: It looks like

15 she left for a moment.

16 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Hannah.

17 MS. HARRIMAN: Hannah Harriman, yes.

18 MS. SANDERS: Thank you.

19 Ryan Haenze.

20 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.

21 MS. SANDERS: Tom.

22 MR. HEINL: Tom Heinl, yes.

23 MS. SANDERS: Good job, Tom.

24 Thea.

25 MS. KRAMER: Thea Kramer, yes.

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1 MS. SANDERS: And Pat.

2 MS. McGEE: Pat McGee, yes.

3 MS. SANDERS: Jeff.

4 MR. MILHELICH: Jeff Milhelich, yes.

5 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

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

7 MS. SANDERS: Justin.

8 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury, yes.

9 MR. STRUNK: Strunk, yes.

10 MS. SANDERS: Okay. And Patrick.

11 MR. VELLIA: Aye.

12 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you

13 everybody and thank you for keeping me honest, I

14 expect you to keep it up.

15 Okay. Now let me see where we are on

16 this lovely agenda. I think that right now -- oh,

17 we have one last thing to approve and Natasha, I

18 don't know if you want to comment on this. We have

19 to vote for the -- there are officers who are

20 judicial hearing officers and if SSB has any

21 disputes that go before it and they need a ruling,

22 there is a panel of I think it's three people who

23 serve as judicial reviewers for whatever it might

24 be.

25 I don't know, we could probably count

37

1 on our hands the number of times this has been

2 done, but we are supposed to okay these hearing

3 officers. And, you know, it's really a pro forma

4 unless somebody knows something that I don't know

5 about these people that would cause us to doubt

6 them, is there anything that I should add to that,

7 Natasha?

8 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. So in

9 Minnesota we pretty much just use one group of

10 people and that's Administrative Law Judges through

11 the Office of Administrative Hearings, through our

12 federal regulations we call these folks impartial

13 hearing officers. We don't really have other

14 choices, but fortunately the choice we do have is a

15 great one.

16 There are about a dozen Administrative

17 Law Judges that are completely impartial and will

18 basically oversee administrative hearings which

19 Judy described as something that doesn't occur

20 often, but it does occur from time to time.

21 MS. SANDERS: So we don't have to

22 choose which three we get?

23 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. No, in

24 fact, during these proceedings we only have one

25 judge assigned to the case and it's randomly

38

1 assigned, but we typically see the same judgers who

2 specialize in disability law and disability rights.

3 MS. SANDERS: Okay, all right. So I

4 would like a motion that would say that we work

5 with the judicial law judges in Minnesota to handle

6 our disputes.

7 MR. HEINL: Tom Heinl, so moved.

8 MS. SANDERS: All right, Tom Heinl

9 moves, is there a second?

10 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, second.

11 MS. SANDERS: Thank you, Ryan.

12 Ryan seconds. Any discussion about

13 this?

14 (No response.)

15 MS. SANDERS: Hearing none I think we

16 will vote. All right. Diane.

17 MS. DOHNALIK: Diane Dohnalik, yes.

18 MS. SANDERS: Thank you.

19 Frank. Frank Eller.

20 (No response.)

21 MS. SANDERS: We will come back to

22 Frank.

23 Sue.

24 MS. FAGER: Sue, yes.

25 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Hannah.

39

1 MS. HARRIMAN: Hannah Harriman, yes.

2 MS. SANDERS: Ryan.

3 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.

4 MS. SANDERS: Tom.

5 MR. HEINL: Tom Heinl, yes.

6 MS. SANDERS: Thea.

7 MS. KRAMER: Thea Kramer, yes.

8 MS. SANDERS: Pat.

9 MS. McGEE: Pat McGee, yes.

10 MS. SANDERS: Jeff.

11 MR. MILHELICH: Jeff Milhelich, yes.

12 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

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

14 MS. SANDERS: Justin.

15 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury, yes.

16 MR. STRUNK: Strunk, yes.

17 MS. SANDERS: And Patrick.

18 MR. VELLIA: Yes.

19 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Did we get Frank?

20 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes. I

21 apologize, my fault.

22 MS. SANDERS: That's all right, thank

23 you, sir.

24 All right. The motion passes. Okay,

25 that was easy.

40

1 Now what I think we are going to do is

2 take a short break and then we will -- let me make

3 sure that we don't have anything else, okay, and

4 then we would like to go into Natasha's report.

5 So how about five minutes for this

6 break, does that work and help any interpreters?

7 (No response.)

8 MS. SANDERS: Everybody, we are on a

9 five minute break and I am going to time it.

10 (Break taken from 6:29 to 6:34 p.m.)

11 MS. SANDERS: Okay, everybody, welcome

12 back. I hope everybody came back, I'm going to

13 assume that you did and that everybody is listening

14 attentively because we are ready to hear from our

15 director, Natasha. I think everybody here knows

16 Natasha, so you will if you don't pretty soon. So

17 Natasha, it's all for you.

18 MS. JERDE: Excellent. Thanks, Judy.

19 And before I get into my report a 30 second blurb

20 about me. My name is Natasha Jerde, I've worked

21 for State Services for the Blind for a little over

22 16 years, I became the director August 2019.

23 Before that I was a baby intern, I was a Deafblind

24 counselor, I was the director of Policy and Program

25 Administration and I did a little bit of everything

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1 at SSB.

2 So greetings everyone, I want to

3 welcome all our new and returning councilmembers.

4 The SRC-B, as we call it, acts as an advisory body

5 to provide recommendations and a diverse

6 perspective to our programs and services. Your

7 participation in not only the Council meetings but

8 also our committees and task forces is very much

9 appreciated. You all help us become a better

10 organization and we thank you for that.

11 My first update is around Evolve VR.

12 So for new members to the Council, Evolve VR is a

13 our branding of a multi-year systemic change

14 process to improve our service delivery in the

15 Vocational Rehabilitation program or VR.

16 We have a framework that we are

17 working from that we call MAPPP, M-A-P-P-P, it

18 stands for mindset, awareness, process, personnel

19 and performance. And under each of those areas we

20 have several strategies that we have been working

21 on. This entire plan, if you want to read it, is

22 actually posted on our website. And you can look

23 at the various components that we are tackling.

24 The philosophy of Evolve VR has

25 actually expanded to many of our other units at SSB

42

1 so it has gone from Evolve VR to Evolve SSB.

2 So we have two updates under this

3 area. The Workforce Development Unit team, which

4 is also known as our Voc Rehab team, will be

5 meeting with the innovation lab later this month to

6 begin working on our current referral and intake

7 processes. We have had a centralized model for

8 about the last ten years and we are looking at

9 either refining that centralized model or exploring

10 other methods.

11 That first point of contact is one of

12 the most important connections we have with people

13 entering into our program and we want it to be the

14 most positive experience possible, while also

15 quickly getting people into that very first

16 service.

17 And the second update is that in

18 November we quietly launched a pilot electronic

19 interest form on our website. Vocational

20 Rehabilitation Services, or VRS, they are the

21 sister agency, they originally launched their

22 version before ours and they actually received

23 several inquiries from people with vision loss. So

24 we decided well, we need to have a similar interest

25 form that we can point people to.

43

1 Since that very quiet launch we have

2 received well over 100 interest forms for both our

3 Workforce Development and our Senior Service

4 programs. So because of its success we have moved

5 from a quiet pilot to having our interest form

6 prominently displayed on our website.

7 One of the goals in Evolve VR is

8 increasing the number of people that we are serving

9 and when I talk a little bit about some data, you

10 will see that we have increased our numbers quite a

11 bit.

12 So onto rulemaking. We finalized our

13 internal review of Rule 3325. This rule governs

14 our Voc Rehab and our Senior Services or Older

15 Blind programs. We had a few areas that need our

16 General Council's office to weigh in to make sure

17 that we aren't proposing something that is

18 contradictory to other state and federal laws.

19 Once they finish their review we are

20 going to initiate the approval process with the

21 governor's office and then at that time the DEED

22 legal team said we can launch our rulemaking

23 committee. And so there will be an application

24 process so that stakeholders like you all can

25 advise, guide and provide feedback on those

44

1 proposed changes.

2 Some of the proposed changes include

3 streamlining and cleaning up our definitions,

4 aligning with the updated federal requirements

5 including adding pre-employment transition

6 services, removing burdensome signature and

7 paperwork requirements whenever possible, updating

8 and expanding our eligibility criteria, eliminating

9 customer financial participation, lengthening the

10 amount of time a person has to appeal a decision,

11 clearing up contradictory and confusing policies

12 and time frames, and basically restructuring

13 everything so that it's actually in plain language.

14 My next update has to do with the

15 Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund. For new

16 councilmembers, ERAF, as we call it, is a brand new

17 legislatively appropriated program, it's a pilot

18 program for two years, where we are able to

19 reimburse small businesses for accommodations they

20 make for people with disabilities.

21 This was an idea that we had and it's

22 sitting within State Services for the Blind right

23 now, we are finishing up year one. ERAF is

24 actually continuing to catch the attention of

25 entities around the country. We are the first in

45

1 the nation to have something like this and many

2 other states want to replicate it.

3 Ray McCoy, who is the coordinator, was

4 contacted by Cornell University and they invited

5 him to speak on May 1 virtually at the EARN Small

6 Business Webinar on Disability Inclusive Resources

7 for Small Businesses. There will be entities in

8 different states as part of this initiative to show

9 similar efforts launched by other states

10 nationwide.

11 In addition to this initiative, ERAF

12 will also have a profound reach to the types of

13 businesses we are looking for here in Minnesota.

14 Next up is I want to talk a little bit

15 about the Dan Gausman Innovation Award. For those

16 who may remember Dan, Dan was our librarian in

17 audio services and he suddenly passed away in

18 November. And at our recent all staff in February,

19 Jon Benson announced our first annual Dan Gausman

20 Innovation Award with Dan being the posthumous

21 first recipient. In the future the award will be

22 given to a nominated staff person who took risks to

23 implement innovative and unique services or

24 programs that benefit the people we serve.

25 In the spirit of Evolve SSB we want to

46

1 celebrate when staff try something new even in the

2 face of hurdles and barriers. And with that I will

3 pause and see if there are any questions.

4 MS. SANDERS: Anybody have any

5 questions for Natasha?

6 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury.

7 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Justin, thank you.

8 MR. SALISBURY: This sounds really

9 cool, thank you for coming and talking with us

10 about it.

11 In the notion of how you talk about

12 philosophy it occurs to me that I don't actually

13 know if SSB has itself a defined philosophy about

14 blindness that I would imagine, then, this

15 philosophy of this program would then like kind of

16 merge with. So can you talk a little bit more

17 about philosophies and where they, like, exist?

18 MS. JERDE: Sure. So we have our

19 mission and our philosophy as the organization and

20 then we have really what we are behind with Evolve

21 VR and I can explain both and they do work

22 together.

23 So our philosophy as an organization

24 is actually posted on our website. And I won't

25 read it all word for word, but we believe that

47

1 blindness is a natural part of the human experience

2 and it's a characteristic like the hundreds of

3 others that exist and that we believe that people

4 who are Blind are the ones at the core that guide

5 their own lives, we are not here to tell someone

6 what they should do or who they should be. People

7 would are Blind are a cross-section of society as a

8 whole, mirroring our society in every way in that

9 everyone has different dreams, expectations,

10 attitudes and aptitudes and so it's a really

11 important ingredient as part of our customer

12 choice.

13 And so we believe in high expectations

14 with jobs with independence and providing services

15 that are guided by the people we are serving. We

16 are public servants, after all, and success depends

17 greatly on the effort and commitment by the

18 customer, by the people we are serving.

19 Our philosophy of Evolve VR and more

20 like it's our goal we have, one is to provide

21 services that actually are transformational and

22 positively impact the people we are serving, that

23 we are not here to help people just get a job, we

24 are here to support people in getting life

25 sustaining, family sustaining careers that set them

48

1 up for the life that they want, not the life others

2 think that they should have.

3 And we also want to be an organization

4 that people want to work for and that people want

5 to work with. That means that we have high

6 expectations for ourselves with how we have

7 customer service, how we work with everyone. And

8 that means constantly getting feedback, because we

9 are not perfect, and making adjustments and

10 improvements every step along the way.

11 So kind of a long winded answer to

12 your question, but I hope that answers it a little

13 bit.

14 MR. SALISBURY: Yes, thank you very

15 much.

16 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. I want to

17 add that this agency has a long history and I think

18 many of us would be very pleased about that or are

19 very pleased about that description and to say that

20 it has not always been that.

21 I remember a time, and I won't comment

22 on when, but there was a director who said that we

23 shouldn't have a philosophy because we shouldn't

24 tell people how to think I guess, something on that

25 order. We have come a long way since then and we

49

1 appreciate it.

2 Any other questions?

3 MR. HILL: This is Jeff Milhelich.

4 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Jeff.

5 MR. MILHELICH: The ERAF thing sounds

6 really interesting as a small business owner. Is

7 the Zoom link and other information for that

8 meeting in May going to be pushed out in some kind

9 of email to us?

10 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha.

11 Absolutely. I don't believe it's been announced

12 yet, but Jeff, we also offer a variety of webinars

13 and you -- actually if you are even remotely

14 curious about the program, I will send you a

15 connecting email to Ray McCoy, he would love to

16 just sit down and explain the program to you if you

17 would be open to that.

18 MR. MILHELICH: That would be very

19 nice, please. Thank you.

20 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Anybody else with

21 a question before she goes on?

22 MR. HART: Rocky Hart.

23 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Rocky.

24 MR. HART: Well, thank you very much,

25 Natasha, for your report, it's always very

50

1 informative.

2 MS. SANDERS: She is not done.

3 MR. HART: One question that I have,

4 you mentioned definitions, that there has been some

5 clarification of definitions. Can you elaborate a

6 little bit more on that? And specifically I am

7 interested in Deafblindness, if any definitions

8 have changed there? Because I know there have been

9 some changes over the last couple of years in how

10 Deafblind is written and we have adopted that as a

11 state agency. So can you elaborate a little bit

12 more on those definitions that you mentioned?

13 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. I will be

14 sure to include that and more specifics in my next

15 Council report, but I can tell you there is a

16 definition of Deafblindness that we have and I

17 remember having conversation about it on what that

18 definition -- where that definition came from and

19 is that the right definition.

20 There is a lot of definitions we got

21 rid of because we defined it and then never ever

22 talked about it again and it seemed very strange it

23 was even in there. And there were some definitions

24 that are were old and archaic.

25 But there are some definitions,

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1 specifically like the definition of DeafBlindness,

2 we are really going to want the community to weigh

3 in on what that should be. Because you could use

4 all kinds of definitions, Social Security, I think

5 Helen Keller National Center has a definition, so

6 we are going to be relying on our community to kind

7 of guide us on what that should be.

8 MR. HART: Thank you.

9 MS. SANDERS: How about one more

10 question if anyone has it and then we will let her

11 move on.

12 (No response.)

13 MS. SANDERS: Okay. I didn't mean to

14 intimidate everybody, but go on.

15 MS. JERDE: Excellent. Now onto some

16 more administrative updates. We have an

17 administrative team, these are the teams that are

18 working tirelessly behind the scenes to keep our

19 operations running.

20 So first I have a staffing update.

21 You all may have read my recent email announcement

22 about our new SRC-B staff liaison. We welcome Nyia

23 Vang who will start on April 17. She will be back

24 from her Adjustment to Blindness Training about

25 maybe a week before the June council meeting and I

52

1 appreciate Susan holding down the fort until Nyia

2 is back and trained in.

3 And after 47 years of state service

4 Chris Johnson, our fiscal coordinator, retired on

5 April 5 -- oh, retires tomorrow. She will be

6 taking one month off and then returning to us under

7 something called a post-retirement option on

8 May 14. We call it a PRO.

9 So a PRO is essentially a short-term

10 work assignment that allows retired staff to return

11 to state government to work on special projects.

12 Chris will be working on the fiscal aspects of our

13 Communication Center Software System Replacement

14 project. She will also be documenting all of our

15 fiscal policies and procedures and putting them

16 into writing.

17 And then onto Community Partnerships.

18 We have a strategic plan that we rolled out to you

19 all at the February Council meeting. So here are

20 some updates from that plan. Our new monthly

21 Community Partner newsletter, titled the Partner

22 Post, will be debuting its first edition in

23 mid-April, work has begun on the Community Partners

24 webpage redesign and the next Community Partners

25 and SSB staff forum is on Tuesday, April 16 from

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1 10:00 to noon and a reminder notice will be sent

2 out on Monday, the 8th, or you can contact Susan

3 Kusz or Jennifer Beilke to have the registration

4 link sent to you.

5 We are working to repost the request

6 for proposals for our master contract of Adjustment

7 to Blindness Training and Employment Related

8 Services. It comes down every so often we clean it

9 up, we refresh it and then we repost it.

10 There are three new contracts in

11 negotiations. There is one current contract

12 needing an assignment agreement. We are working to

13 complete an equity select contract for

14 pre-employment transition services podcasting and a

15 corresponding transcription contract to go along

16 with it.

17 And we are working on what we call

18 Joint Powers Agreements with Structured Discovery

19 Centers in other states. When BLIND, Incorporated

20 went on temporary hiatus we had a number of

21 centers, including Louisiana and Colorado, reach

22 out to us offering to help provide that structured

23 discovery.

24 Our outreach group, Lisa Large and

25 Lisa Rogers, they are continuing to work on their

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1 goals for 2024. One of our big goals is increasing

2 awareness of the Communication Center. Not many

3 people know that anyone with a difficulty reading

4 print can access the National Library Service audio

5 books. This includes people with reading

6 disabilities like dyslexia and physical

7 disabilities or limitations that make it difficult

8 to hold printed materials.

9 Another goal of the outreach team is

10 to promote SSB services in the northeast part of

11 the state, the Arrowhead. We are looking at media

12 buys and advertising to help spread the word.

13 Outreach is planning to share stories

14 of success and uplifting public interest stories to

15 publish in newspapers or feature on news broadcasts

16 not just in the Twin Cities, but also putting an

17 emphasis on small town and rural markets. Our plan

18 is not to really share stores of SSB's success, our

19 plan is to share stories of individuals who have

20 maybe gone through our program or are doing really

21 cool things in their career.

22 We had that recent story about Judy

23 Breuer who works up in Duluth who is going through

24 her Master's program. So we are not highlighting

25 SSB, we want to highlight folks that are working

55

1 and living independently out in the community.

2 Since the February council meeting the

3 outreach team has held vendor booths at two

4 conferences, conducted presentations at St. Paul

5 College and the Minnesota Social Service

6 Association Conference. We have also promoted SSB

7 Senior Services with groups at senior living

8 facilities and places of worship. There will be

9 many more conferences and opportunities to spread

10 the word throughout spring and early summer.

11 In an effort to reach underserved

12 communities the outreach and communication team is

13 working on getting materials translated into

14 languages reflective of Minnesota's immigrant

15 communities. We are also looking at offering audio

16 descriptions in these languages.

17 Collaboration efforts are also

18 underway between SSB's outreach team and the VRS

19 outreach team, Voc Rehab Services. We will be

20 working together on what our centralized office

21 calls Marcomm which is the marketing and

22 communication plan.

23 The outreach team has ongoing

24 collaborations with other state departments,

25 particularly the Olmsted Implementation office and

56

1 the Department of Natural Resources. These

2 collaborative projects focus on accessability for

3 Blind and low vision Minnesotans.

4 The team is also looking to refresh

5 our marketing materials. We have reviewed our

6 printed flyers and brochures, we are creating new

7 banners for vendor booths at conferences and are

8 working on refreshing the SSB website to make it

9 clean, clear, appealing and easy to navigate. The

10 goal is to complete the website refresh by end of

11 summer and the changes are happening one department

12 and one page at a time. If you have been to our

13 website in the last few days it is noticeably

14 different, the landing pages.

15 News information and other

16 communications that are being shared go out to

17 about 5,000 subscribers through our monthly

18 newsletter.

19 Onto some facilities updates. Thank

20 you all for once again having a Zoom only meeting,

21 but our conference room upgrades are almost

22 complete and we should, knock on wood, I'm knocking

23 on my head, we plan to be fully ready in time for

24 our June Council meeting.

25 Dave knows the technology much better

57

1 than I, but we were waiting for some sort of

2 switch, in my mind it is a switch, that allows us

3 to turn on all of our functionality and have

4 everything work together. That will be done later

5 this month.

6 We finished all the federal paperwork,

7 all of the federal paperwork needed to our

8 cafeteria remodel. We are turning our cafeteria

9 into almost a rehab teaching space, so not only our

10 internal rehab teaching staff, but community

11 partners as well can come in and use this space for

12 teaching independent living skills. There will be

13 a fully functioning kitchen, washer/dryer, all that

14 fun stuff.

15 We had a lot of federal paperwork we

16 had to do. We got through that only to encounter a

17 mountain of state paperwork to navigate through, so

18 I don't anticipate being able to start this project

19 until after July 1.

20 So the meals that will be served in

21 June will still be in the old cafeteria. And a

22 small team of Voc Rehab Services staff will be

23 moving into SSB around January 2025. This group

24 which is mainly comprised of their deaf and hard of

25 hearing staff will be taking over one office and

58

1 four cubes on the administrative side of our office

2 building.

3 The Fairview University and Fairview

4 career force location is actually shutting down and

5 moving to Metro Square and that team did not want

6 to be downtown and they wanted to still have access

7 to the public transportation offering, so we had a

8 little bit of extra space.

9 And onto fiscal matters. Almost every

10 year we take part in a process called a single

11 audit. Typically Unemployment Insurance and

12 Disability Determination Services are also

13 included.

14 And a single audit is like a mini

15 monitoring visit that looks at all of our

16 financials, but instead of the federal government

17 doing that monitoring it's actually completed by

18 state auditors. And generally during these audits

19 they pull everything from federal reports to

20 authorizations and payments to plans for employment

21 and they are looking at fiscal compliance.

22 Well this is the first time I have

23 ever gone through an audit without one single

24 finding. And if that's not impressive, the

25 auditors even said that they have only ever seen

59

1 that a handful of times in their entire career, so

2 it was incredible.

3 So I'm gonna pause before I go into

4 program services updates to see if there are any

5 questions.

6 MS. DUNNAM: Jennifer D.

7 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Jennifer.

8 MS. DUNNAM: Yes. Just a quick

9 question about the move of the VR staff. You gave

10 a good explanation of why they are moving, as

11 people who are perhaps a bit, you know, overly

12 careful or sensitive about the importance of the

13 separateness of our agencies, is it correct that

14 it's only about the location? There is not going

15 to be changes in service delivery or any other

16 impacts from those staff being located in the SSB

17 offices, this is just about the location for them?

18 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. Thank

19 you for bringing that up. It is just about the

20 location. Though I will say having the deaf/hard

21 of hearing team on-site, sometimes our Deafblind

22 counselor will have an opportunity to collaborate

23 when it comes to deaf and hard of hearing

24 resources, so that is a positive thing that they

25 will have better networking opportunities. But

60

1 there is no, not any blurring of service delivery

2 whatsoever.

3 MS. SANDERS: And this is Judy. My

4 question about that is does that mean they get to

5 pay this agency rent, I hope?

6 MS. JERDE: This is Tasha, yes, they

7 would be paying us money, it's not a free space at

8 all.

9 MS. SANDERS: All right, good. Any

10 other questions?

11 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury.

12 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Justin.

13 MR. SALISBURY: So I think this is

14 really interesting and I am wondering as they are

15 coming to be a part of, you know, the staff and the

16 space, you know, incidental interactions with SSB

17 customers it is just, you know, it is going to

18 happen because people are in the same space. And

19 so I wonder if there is any intentional kind of

20 programming to teach them about blindness? Because

21 sometimes the way that people might interact with

22 people, you know, can be informed by certain kinds

23 of, you know, attitude training and stuff like

24 that, you know, how to introduce yourself and, you

25 know, what visual descriptions really mean, like

61

1 all those kinds of things. Is there any kind of,

2 like, onboarding training to being in that space?

3 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. No, not

4 originally, but there will be now, because I think

5 that's a fantastic idea.

6 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. Yeah, I

7 think it's a good idea too, but I also would point

8 out that that's more going to happen when people

9 are on breaks because the side of the building that

10 they are on, as they are in their work cubes, you

11 know, it's very separate.

12 But you raise a good point about their

13 encountering each other when they are using other

14 parts of the building for their leisure. So that's

15 a good idea.

16 MR. VELLIA: This is Patrick.

17 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Patrick.

18 MR. VELLIA: Right now the deaf and

19 hard of hearing team is in the Griggs Building,

20 right?

21 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. Yep,

22 Midway Griggs.

23 MS. SANDERS: Any other questions?

24 MR. MILHELICH: Yes. This is Jeff

25 Milhelich.

62

1 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Jeff.

2 MR. MILHELICH: The outreach segment

3 sounded really interesting. Are there plans to

4 include the other consumer groups to maybe

5 collaborate with this process like ACB, UB, NFB?

6 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. Both of

7 our outreach coordinators are on this meeting and

8 so if they haven't already had plans for

9 collaboration I am sure it is now tucked away as

10 they are working on their outreach planning.

11 MR. MILHELICH: That's good to hear,

12 thank you.

13 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. Rocky

14 put a question in the chat about the Pre-ETS

15 podcast effort. I am not sure if I am able to say,

16 when we are in contract negotiations, the

17 specifics, but it is just podcasting geared around

18 towards students and pre-employment transition

19 services. But Jennifer Beilke would be able to say

20 how much I can say.

21 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Well, we are

22 going to turn it over to you to say whatever is

23 left that you can say.

24 MS. JERDE: Excellent.

25 This is Natasha, I will move onto our

63

1 Program Services Updates. Now program services,

2 for new councilmembers, these are our direct in the

3 field services that we provide. So it's our Older

4 Blind Program, our Voc Rehab Program and our

5 Business Enterprises Program.

6 And I am going to start with Business

7 Enterprises, also known as BEP. We are working

8 with the elected committee on a plan to update our

9 policy and procedure manual and we are hoping to

10 complete this in 2024. John Hulet meets with

11 committee chair, Mike Colbrunn, next week to

12 discuss preliminary steps in this process. And if

13 you do have ideas on revisions or updates, please

14 let John know.

15 We have been researching the potential

16 of reallocating our BEP technician to a higher

17 level so that any work provided by technicians

18 could be performed by either of those staff

19 members. We have two technicians. We believe this

20 will create more support for our staff and provide

21 greater continuity of overall services provided to

22 BEP operators. And we hope to post this position

23 sometime in April.

24 We have created a position description

25 for a part-time administrative position who would

64

1 support all things related to BEP bookwork like the

2 ledgers and the payments. This will create more

3 support for staff, including Cara Martin, who is

4 our accounting technician, and provide better

5 service delivery to our operators. This position

6 will hopefully be posted in May or June.

7 We have notified MinnCOR, and MinnCOR

8 is MinnCOR Industries under the Department of

9 Corrections, that we will not be able to include

10 language in the upcoming interagency agreement that

11 requires operators to pay a commission. The

12 current agreement expires in September 2024.

13 MinnCOR has indicated it will be challenging, but

14 they believe we will be able to work something out.

15 We are working with the elected

16 committee on reviewing the current BEP training

17 process to determine what is working and what needs

18 to be improved. Our elected committee member, Alex

19 Lee, has volunteered to actually go through the

20 training again and provide firsthand feedback on

21 what aspects of the training he finds beneficial

22 and what we should consider changing. And, of

23 course, if you have any ideas please let John know.

24 And we are working with Kia Yang, who

25 is our rehab teacher in the Workforce Development

65

1 Unit, on developing a BEP assessment process as

2 part of the discovery phase in our whole training

3 process. In the past we've used a few different

4 SSB staff to conduct those assessments, but now

5 that we have more qualified staff to help us we

6 would like to tap into their expertise to create

7 and administer a more comprehensive assessment to

8 ensure that our applicants have the knowledge,

9 skills and abilities to become successful

10 operators.

11 And we have submitted requests to DEED

12 legal for feedback, which we hope will help us

13 better understand what is our exclusive authority

14 and vending stand as it relates to the BEP statute.

15 And nationally BEP and the whole

16 Randolph-Shephard program is the talk of the town.

17 The federal language around BEP is incredibly old,

18 it's barely been adjusted since the '40s, and the

19 upcoming conference next week at the National

20 Council of State Agencies for the Blind, NCSAB,

21 there is a huge, I think, one and a half days'

22 worth of Randolph-Shephard and BEP conversations.

23 Short update from the Senior Services

24 Unit. May 15 is the Senior Possibilities Fair at

25 SSB, conference room should be ready to roll. This

66

1 is being held in partnership with the NFB. Staff

2 are currently covering Fergus Falls territories as

3 Lauren is out until June 1 on maternity leave.

4 And exciting news, we were approved to

5 receive some one-time funds of $15,000 from the

6 Statewide Independent Living Council, SILC, for our

7 Aging Eyes Program. We are looking forward to

8 using those funds to provide more aids, devices and

9 trainings to our partners and their customers.

10 And onto Workforce Development Unit.

11 I will start with a little bit of data. Since

12 July 1 we have received 177 applications for

13 services. We currently have 755 open cases and for

14 historical context, during COVID we had been as low

15 as 520. We have six applicants currently pending,

16 35 successful closures, 53 unsuccessful. We had 16

17 closures in March, we received 18 applications in

18 March alone and the caseload size per counselor is

19 38 customers per counselor.

20 Kathy Enter, our VR tech or basically

21 a VR tech is a counselor, case support, a VR tech

22 in the southwest region of Minnesota who was

23 officing out of Mankato, she retired on April 1 and

24 we are working on backfilling.

25 We welcome Eric Van Dam, he is a new

67

1 VR tech starting on April 3. And we are welcoming

2 Ruth Jamison as our newest counselor and she is

3 assigned to the Southwest Metro. Her first date is

4 April 16. We welcomed Karen Aldrige as our new

5 data analyst. Now that Monsoor Ahmed has returned

6 from his extended leave, the two will be working

7 together on all of our data needs across the entire

8 organization, not just in our VR program.

9 Karen is skilled at data visualization

10 and does a great job of making data understandable,

11 even for people like me who need things in very

12 plain language.

13 We have some updates on pre-employment

14 transition services from Sheila Koenig. The

15 posting for our Systems and Pathways Navigator

16 position has closed and Sheila will be working with

17 HR on next steps. The Systems and Pathways

18 Navigator is essentially a person working with

19 students with the most significant of disabilities,

20 helping them navigate life after school, connecting

21 them with wavered services, connecting them with

22 all the resources so that they can go onto

23 employment in however employment looks for them.

24 We are hosting our first Tools for

25 School event on April 12 at the University of

68

1 Minnesota Carlson School of Management. There will

2 be various panels throughout the day, including a

3 student panel where current students or recent

4 graduates will take questions and share insights on

5 their college experience and the technology tool

6 kit they use, a professional panel where

7 professionals who work with Blind and visually

8 impaired students will chat about how they can help

9 students gain tech skills needed for college, and a

10 couple of technology panels dedicated to hardware,

11 software and mobile apps that college students need

12 to know about.

13 Our peer ambassadors will also be

14 there to connect with students and share their

15 experiences. And as summer gets closer, we are

16 updating our resources for students and families

17 about the various summer opportunities.

18 Before I go to the Communication

19 Center updates I will pause for any questions.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

21 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

22 MR. O'CONNOR: Speaking of college, I

23 saw in the news there's been some confusion of late

24 with the free application for federal student aid

25 and they wondered if SSB had any communication that

69

1 was planned to students about that that may be

2 ongoing through that process, recognizing many

3 don't with the services that you offer, but I

4 wondered if there was an impact there?

5 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. I just

6 saw that announcement as well around it.

7 Jon, unless you happen to know if

8 there is anything planned, I will take that

9 question back to Sheila? We do require all of our

10 students to apply for financial aid, we don't

11 require them to take out loans, but we do require

12 them to apply, so this will be important.

13 Jon? I heard Jon for a second maybe.

14 Just kidding. I will absolutely take that back to

15 Sheila.

16 Oh, is that you, Jon?

17 MR. BENSON: Yes, this is I. I had to

18 get hooked up here. So basically, yeah, we require

19 any person who is -- and it's actually not us, this

20 is actually a federal element that any person who

21 is planning to attend an academic institution does

22 need to apply for financial aid.

23 And then from there we can determine

24 what level of resource we have available.

25 Typically financially it is for focus primarily on

70

1 Bachelor degrees, so once you hit the Master's

2 level and beyond we are going to be looking at a

3 different situation. But it's a given certainly in

4 that respect and is something we go through and

5 make sure that our students are aware of and

6 understand as their caregivers, whether those are

7 parents, guardians or whomever, as well.

8 MS. JERDE: Excellent. We will want

9 to talk with Sheila and see if they are doing any

10 guidance on the new FAFSA requirements or new FAFSA

11 process.

12 MR. BENSON: I would expect so, but

13 yes, we can certainly double-check that.

14 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb, thanks.

15 The issue is, for those who haven't seen the

16 headlines, that nationally one in five applicants

17 got the wrong numbers thanks to the FAFSA's

18 calculation error which then every college and

19 university can now decide what they want to do with

20 that. Some can still offer that number, some will

21 recalculate which could cause problems for folks'

22 second year in college or next year in college, so

23 thanks for flagging that.

24 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Anymore

25 questions?

71

1 MR. MILHELICH: This is Jeff

2 Milhelich.

3 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Jeff.

4 MR. MILHELICH: Your data for

5 replacement sounds really good, except I am always

6 concerned about breaking down the statistics

7 between people getting placed that are totally

8 Blind or partially visioned. Do you have data that

9 kind of reflects that breakdown?

10 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. I don't

11 from this current data set, but I absolutely can

12 get that.

13 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. You know

14 one of the things to be careful about such figures,

15 though, is that it stands to reason that the

16 majority of eyes will have some vision just because

17 that's the lay of the land and the population. So

18 we wouldn't want to infer that someone is getting

19 or a group is getting short shrift because they

20 have a lower number without knowing the total

21 numbers.

22 MR. MILHELICH: This is Jeff

23 Milhelich.

24 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Jeff.

25 MR. MILHELICH: I guess my comment

72

1 would be that as far as placement I would tend to

2 think that it is easier to find placement when you

3 are low vision compared to when you have no vision,

4 that's my point of looking at the data.

5 MS. SANDERS: Right. But you also

6 have to have enough of either category to make that

7 work.

8 Any other questions?

9 (No response.)

10 MS. SANDERS: All right, quick go on.

11 MS. JERDE: All right. I am at the

12 finish line Judy, I am at the finish line.

13 MS. SANDERS: Woo-hoo, all right.

14 MS. JERDE: All right. Onto the

15 Communication Center updates and starting with

16 audio services. So this team is thrilled to

17 announce Molly McGilp, our new librarian. Molly

18 earned her Master's in Library and Information

19 Science from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

20 and she brings a wealth of library and information

21 specialist skills from her time with the Hennepin

22 County Library System. Molly is your first point

23 of contact in the custom recording process.

24 We are currently in the process of

25 recording a 270 page English/Somali legal

73

1 dictionary. Our Workforce Development Unit has a

2 client who wishes to become a certified court

3 interpreter. The book features the English word

4 first, then the full interpretation and explanation

5 of the word in Somali. Sometimes the Somali

6 interpretations are more than a page long.

7 Workforce Development hired a native

8 Somali speaker from a local interpreting service

9 and we record in two-hour sessions. We recently

10 completed the letter E.

11 Updates from Braille. So the Braille

12 Association of North America I believe is what

13 BANA, B-A-N-A, stands for, just released the

14 Revised Guidelines and Standards for Tactile

15 Graphics 2022. The purpose of these guidelines is

16 to provide transcribers, educators and producers

17 with information about best practices, current

18 methods and design principles for the production of

19 readable tactile graphics. Our very own Allison

20 O'Day and Anna Werner had a huge part in developing

21 these standards.

22 And speaking of Allison, Allison has

23 been on this committee that produced these

24 standards and they have been working on this for

25 close to two decades. And Anna is creating the

74

1 Braille version of the publication for BANA.

2 Annette Plant, office specialist,

3 joined the Braille section on February 28. She

4 replaces Mary Flynn who retired after 18 years

5 working as a copyholder. Annette volunteered for

6 the past 21 years in the Braille section doing

7 multiple job functions and assisting SSB Braille

8 transcribers. People who may have been around for

9 a long time may remember Darlene Plant which is

10 Annette Plant's mom.

11 And just a few numbers of Braille

12 services. For what we have provided

13 kindergarteners through grade 12 since July we have

14 provided Braille to 40 students. This amounts to

15 394 Braille titles and almost 200,000 Braille

16 pages.

17 Dave Andrews shared some information

18 about Engineering and Radio Talking Book. So for

19 some time Dave has been telling you that an update

20 to the apps was coming out any day and he is now

21 happy to report that he is telling the truth, we

22 have released an update to the apps for Apple and

23 Android. And the most notable improvement is the

24 ability to speed up or slow down playback when

25 listening to an archived program or newspaper.

75

1 So to download the app you can search

2 for Radio Talking Book and look for Minnesota. And

3 be careful, there are several apps with similar

4 names.

5 And we are working with HR in hiring a

6 replacement electronics technician and that job was

7 just posted on our Careers website.

8 And finally a note from our

9 development and fund-raising office. So our 2024

10 annual fund, which starts from October 1, has

11 resulted in about $116,000 which includes about 432

12 gifts from 403 donors. And as March 31 our

13 November solicitation resulted in 285 gifts

14 totaling about $23,000. And the April Planned

15 Giving Newsletter will be dropping in mailboxes in

16 just a few weeks and that goes out to about 3,000

17 targeted donors.

18 And with that I conclude my report and

19 we will turn it over for any questions.

20 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Last call for

21 questions and then we need to --

22 MR. VELLIA: Patrick here, question

23 about the Braille books. We still do it in paper

24 Braille?

25 MS. SANDERS: Do we still do books in

76

1 paper Braille was his question.

2 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. Yes, we

3 do. And we send those Braille books out to

4 students. Our mailroom is very busy right around

5 each semester.

6 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. But I'll

7 bet you that they can get electronic books, can

8 they if they wanted? Can they get files like that

9 for the schools?

10 MS. JERDE: You know, that's a great

11 question, I always see a lot of paper.

12 David, do we send out from our Braille

13 Department electronic digital versions?

14 MR. ANDREWS: Yes, we can provide

15 files or paper.

16 MS. SANDERS: That's what I thought,

17 good.

18 Okay. And I have one quick question

19 as a clarification. For seniors who want to get

20 technology recruiting, for a long time, I can't

21 remember if you changed it in the last little

22 change, seniors could only get ten hours of

23 training. Have we expanded that yet?

24 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. That is

25 on the list to get cut, meaning we want to get rid

77

1 of that maximum requirement.

2 MS. SANDERS: Yes, I thought so.

3 Okay, good.

4 All right, thank you. I am going to

5 stop any further questions because we need to move

6 along. But we thank you for all the details that

7 you have given us.

8 And I know that we were scheduled for

9 a ten-minute break, if it is agreeable I would like

10 us to go for five minutes and I hope that doesn't

11 make it too difficult for anybody and then we can

12 work to catch up. So that's what we are going to

13 do, so everybody we are beginning now.

14 (Break taken from 7:24 to 7:29 p.m.)

15 MS. SANDERS: Okay, everybody, we are

16 back. I hope everybody had a lovely break and we

17 are going to get right back to work.

18 Our next item is going to involve our

19 Client Assistance Project and Ryan Haenze is going

20 to present it. I want to say a couple of words

21 first about that because it may not be familiar to

22 a lot of our new councilmembers.

23 The Client Assistance Program is run

24 by Minnesota Legal Aid, among other things, they

25 handle any disputes that Vocational Rehabilitation

78

1 and State Services for the Blind have if they file

2 an appeal or a dispute. One of the ways that it

3 can be handled is through this program. And so

4 every year we as a Council are given a report on

5 what's happening with the status of all that.

6 And we received in our packets a

7 lovely report and so I'm sure that Ryan will be

8 able to make it all clear. And so let's turn it

9 over to -- Ryan Haenze is the representative for

10 the Client Assistance Program, that's his job and

11 that's why he is appointed to this Council.

12 So Ryan, I am going to turn it over to

13 you.

14 MR. HAENZE: Thanks, Judy, for that

15 introduction. Before I start I just kind of want

16 to describe a little bit about, you know, we are

17 the Client Assistance Program but we are, you know,

18 we are the Disability Law Center, Minnesota

19 Disability Law Center, so we are the designated

20 protection advocacy group in Minnesota so we serve

21 people with disabilities on legal issues.

22 We have offices all over the state in

23 Minneapolis, Duluth, Mankato, Crookston, we have no

24 income or citizenship requirements, we are a

25 completely free service, we are funded through

79

1 grants from the federal government. So one of our

2 grants that we bill to is the Client Assistance

3 Program, as Judy brought up, you know, and this is

4 based on employment issues.

5 So following that report I'm sharing,

6 based on the work our CAP attorneys and advocates

7 completed in fiscal year 2023, besides providing

8 individual service on cases, I will also explain

9 how we advocate on policy issues and engage in many

10 outreach opportunities and provide legal rights

11 presentations for stakeholders across the whole

12 state.

13 We also have access authority to

14 monitor and investigate facilities that serve

15 people with disabilities and we monitor facilities

16 throughout the year, so the report will describe a

17 little bit about that.

18 I'll say before I start that it's a

19 lot of numbers and figures, but there is going to

20 be a lot of great explanation of the work we do.

21 So if you want to follow along you can, if you

22 don't want to that's perfectly fine, but I'm going

23 to start with Part I, non-case services.

24 So we provide information and referral

25 services and this isn't related to cases, I believe

80

1 this is related to outside organizations. I wish

2 it would provide a little more detail about like

3 who they provided this to to, but according to this

4 information regarding the VR program we -- besides,

5 you know, not sharing it to, you know, non-case

6 related, four times.

7 Information regarding Independent

8 Living programs, we didn't do any last year.

9 Information regarding American Indian VR service

10 projects was zero for last year. Information

11 regarding Title 1 of the ADA we shared 12 times.

12 Other information provided is five times.

13 Information regarding the Client Assistance

14 Program, 11 times.

15 And the total INR services or

16 information and referral services that we provided

17 outside of cases were 32 different times. And I

18 wish that explained a little bit more about what

19 that meant, but the next parts will describe a

20 little bit more.

21 So we do a lot of training activities,

22 so the number of training sessions that we

23 presented to community groups and public agencies

24 was 13 training sessions. We had 700 individuals

25 who attended those training sessions. So when we

81

1 did the training our Client Assistant Programs --

2 Project, excuse me, staff delivered training

3 throughout the state providing hundreds of

4 attendees with information about CAP and vocational

5 VR issues. CAP staff conducted 13 trainings and

6 presentations during fiscal year 2023, engaging

7 approximately 700 individuals.

8 CAP staff presented to attendees

9 across Minnesota and participated in national,

10 state and local virtual events. These events

11 provided participants with information and training

12 on CAP services, vocational rehabilitation rights

13 and services and other disability topics.

14 Presentation attendees included

15 individuals with disabilities, transition-aged

16 youth, parents of individuals with disabilities,

17 disability advocacy organizations, service

18 providers, vocational rehabilitation counselors,

19 business representatives, attorneys, potential

20 volunteers, law school students and community

21 organizations.

22 During fiscal year 2023 CAP staff

23 provided training to SSB counselors and staff about

24 the Disability Law Center and CAP services and

25 about civil rights laws governing reasonable

82

1 accommodations in employment.

2 As a designated CAP member of the

3 State Services for the Blind Council I presented

4 and shared the CAP Annual Report last year.

5 CAP staff made a presentation to

6 community members, primarily parents of persons

7 with disabilities, and self-advocates and service

8 providers sponsored by PACER regarding MDLC and CAP

9 services and options for students with disabilities

10 as they leave secondary school settings, assisting

11 people to navigate these service systems.

12 CAP staff in Northwestern Minnesota

13 joined the West Regional Quality Council which

14 addresses employment and education issues regarding

15 persons with developmental disabilities, employment

16 and transition services and disseminated

17 information about the Disability Law Center and our

18 CAP advocacy services.

19 CAP staff made a presentation to

20 conference attendees at the Autism Society of

21 Minnesota's 2023 State Autism Conference. The

22 presentation covered Minnesota's Subminimum Wage

23 Task Force activities, anticipating impacts to

24 persons with disabilities once subminimum wage is

25 no longer available to sheltered workshops and

83

1 centered-based employment providers.

2 The presentation provided information

3 about the availability of state vocational rehab

4 services and MDLC and CAP services to access VR

5 services in the community.

6 We also engage in a lot of tabling and

7 so in fiscal year 2023 we provided information

8 about MDLC and CAP services to attendees at the

9 Southern Minnesota Autism Community Resource Fair

10 held in North Mankato. Attending this event

11 included parents, students, professionals who are

12 providing services in the community.

13 As in previous years many CAP

14 presentations were to populations that have been

15 unserved or underserved by Minnesota vocational

16 rehabilitation agencies. Such outreach activities

17 are going to be summarized below in our agency

18 outreach.

19 So we really work to, you know, serve

20 and outreach previously unserved or underserved

21 individuals including minority communities. So we

22 reached unserved and underserved individuals

23 including minority communities through a

24 combination of outreach, publication of online

25 materials, videos, podcasts and monitoring

84

1 employment service providers and other congregate

2 care facilities.

3 CAP staff conducted outreach that was

4 specifically targeted toward reaching historically

5 unserved and underserved populations and minority

6 communities. In fiscal year 2023 we allocated to

7 outreach employees to reaching diverse communities.

8 Our outreach staff have participated

9 in awareness and education events specific to

10 Somali people with disabilities, LGTB+ people with

11 disabilities and we were invited to the Bilal Oromo

12 Dawa Center to talk about our services.

13 So we outreach to transition-age

14 students often and one of the ways that we do that

15 is through presentations in tabling. Last year we

16 delivered a presentation to the Mankato Area

17 Community Transition Interagency Committee or CTIC

18 at their information night. The presentation was

19 aimed at young adults with disabilities, parents,

20 teachers and other service providers. Topics

21 covered included Disability Law Center, CAP and

22 vocational rehabilitation services and advocacy.

23 We also presented our Into Adulthood

24 Guide for transition-aged youth. To reach

25 transition-aged youth we continue to promote our

85

1 Into Adulthood projects. Into Adulthood is a

2 multi-media project that includes information for

3 youth about their right with vocational

4 rehabilitation, high school, post secondary

5 education, work, transportation, health insurance

6 and other benefits needed to work.

7 CAP's experience after talking with

8 youth and their families during Outreach Across

9 Minnesota is that many youth and families do not

10 know about their rights and the services that are

11 available to them.

12 The goal of the Into Adulthood project

13 is to provide information about rights and services

14 that youth need to transition into competitive

15 integrated employment and more independence.

16 Last year we staff focused the Into

17 Adulthood work to target youth in a mediam where

18 they seek information, so we specifically targeted

19 on social media, working with Mid Minnesota Legal

20 Aid and MDOC Social Media Communications Manager.

21 Throughout the year we strategized about how to

22 best distribute the Into Adulthood materials to a

23 wider audience at gatherings such as transition

24 fairs aimed at transition-aged clients interested

25 in employment.

86

1 Accordingly, CAP staff attended events

2 where they delivered presentations and disseminated

3 information about the Into Adulthood resource.

4 This included Columbia Heights Pride Festival, the

5 People's Pride Festival in Powderhorn Park, the

6 Dakota Transition Fair and the Anoka County

7 Transition Fair.

8 Additionally CAP's Into Adulthood

9 website helped us share our guide, videos, podcasts

10 and other resources. We have five versions of the

11 Into Adulthood guide on our website, including a

12 version with a fun engaging design in English, and

13 accessible pdfs in English, Spanish, Hmong and

14 Somali.

15 CAP staff shared the Into Adulthood

16 materials when doing monitoring activities of

17 Brooklyn Avenues, a metro area residential facility

18 for high school and young adults at risk for

19 homelessness.

20 Next it's other outreach to

21 transition-aged youth. CAP staff also provided

22 materials about transition and employment services

23 during monitoring visits to juvenile detention

24 facilities to inmates with disabilities, including

25 Minnesota Correctional Facility in Red Wing, Ramsey

87

1 County's Juvenile Detention Center and Washington

2 County's temporary hold-over facility and East

3 Central Regional Juvenile Detention Center in Lino

4 Lakes, Anoka County.

5 So we did monitoring of center-based

6 employment facilities in fiscal year 2023. We

7 continued our monitoring of facilities that provide

8 employment services in Minnesota to assess how

9 employment services to persons with the most severe

10 disabilities were addressing the transition

11 providing services aimed towards competitive

12 integrated employment.

13 We monitored Opportunity Partners in

14 Minnetonka, a metro area center-based employment

15 services provider, transitioning to a model where

16 service is provided primarily for integrated,

17 competitive employment. We gathered information

18 about that facility and its business and funding

19 sources and trends. And we interviewed facility

20 management, supervisors, staff and program

21 participants.

22 In fiscal year 2024 we will continue

23 this monitoring work, planning to monitor

24 facilities in outstate Minnesota at various stages

25 of the transition to integrated, competitive

88

1 employment.

2 We also did other monitoring. We

3 provided information about the Disability Law

4 Center and CAP services during monitoring visits to

5 Bemidji, congregate care facilities including

6 Evergreen, a juvenile shelter for adolescents,

7 Winniesusu and Hawkins House, both group homes for

8 juvenile girls as well.

9 CAP has just begun a project of

10 visiting all the ILCs in Minnesota, this will occur

11 throughout this fiscal year and that's currently in

12 progress.

13 So just talking about our fact sheets

14 and brochure. We reviewed and updated it this

15 year, so we reviewed and updated all our fact

16 sheets and it is available to the general public at

17 Lawhelpmn.org. These fact sheets cover CAP

18 services, eligibility for VRS and SSB services, the

19 scope of VR services, how to develop an individual

20 employment plan, VR services for

21 self-employment/small businesses and appealing a

22 VRS or SSB decision.

23 Lawhelpmn.org contains basic legal

24 information about many other areas impacting

25 persons with disabilities, including public

89

1 benefits, housing and other disability programs to

2 name a few, including special education as well.

3 CAP staff also redesigned, published

4 and disseminated its CAP brochure which has not

5 been updated since the mid '90s, so we spent a lot

6 of work time on that.

7 We reviewed how CAP services are

8 publicized in other states, using those ideas to

9 expand and make the information in the brochure

10 more accessible to Minnesotans with disabilities

11 interested in work.

12 The brochure graphics were entirely

13 redesigned resulting in a publication much more

14 attractive and easier to read with plain language

15 accessible to a wider audience. And I will make

16 sure to, after this meeting, share that with all of

17 you in an email.

18 CAP staff provided trainings, outreach

19 and expertise to diverse communities across the

20 State of Minnesota. In fiscal year 2023 we

21 conducted five targeted outreach opportunities for

22 people of color, these engagements reached

23 approximately 600 individuals. We also conducted

24 outreach at Augsburg University, providing

25 information on special education law to a diverse

90

1 student body.

2 We are also invited to the Bilal Oromo

3 Dawa Center Nonprofit for a tour and discussion

4 about our services. We also spoke to an

5 administrator from the Somali Parents Autism

6 Network about the resources we could provide to

7 their organization.

8 So next is just information kind of

9 shared to the public. So we were interviewed one

10 time on radio and TV, you know, we had an article

11 about the Client Assistant Program, you Know, two

12 times we had a PSA and videos aired, we didn't have

13 that aired this year, but we disseminated 700

14 publication booklets/brochures so we are very

15 active in the community.

16 And then the number of times we

17 exhibited at conferences/community fairs in fiscal

18 year 2023 was 26. And we also have an informative

19 document called Ending the Subminimum Wage in

20 Minnesota which I can also share in the email

21 later.

22 All right. So next is individual case

23 services. So these are under our CAP program. So

24 individuals who are still being served as of, you

25 know, going into this fiscal year were five,

91

1 additional individuals who were served during the

2 year were 36, the total individuals served were 41.

3 Individuals who had multiple case files opened and

4 closed this year were five and individuals still

5 being served as of this fiscal year was five.

6 Some of the problem areas we see is,

7 you know, individuals requesting information,

8 sometimes communication problems between individual

9 and VR counselor, four different cases revolving

10 around that. Conflicts around VR services to be

11 provided, we have seven cases around that. Issues

12 related to VR application and eligibility process,

13 we had ten cases revolving around that. We didn't

14 have any cases related to assignment.

15 And Order of Selection, priority

16 category because we know that Order of Selection is

17 gone now, which is great. Related to IPE

18 development implementation, we had six cases

19 related to that. We didn't have any related to

20 Independent Living Services. We didn't have any

21 Rehabilitation Act related problems, though we do

22 this year, so next year that will be changed.

23 Non-Rehabilitation Act related was 11.

24 Related to Title I of the ADA we had 28 cases. And

25 then some intervention strategies we used when

92

1 closing cases was short-term technical assistance,

2 25. In 25 cases we had investigations and

3 monitoring in six cases. We didn't have any

4 negotiations this last year, but we did have three

5 cases where we had mediation and other methods of

6 alternatives, dispute resolution. He had seven

7 administrative informal reviews. We didn't have

8 any formal appeals/fair hearings in fiscal year

9 2023. We didn't have any legal remedies or

10 litigation. So the total intervention strategies,

11 the total cases were 41.

12 And then some reasons for closing the

13 individuals' case files is all issues resolved in

14 the individual's favor, we had eight cases. Some

15 issues resolved in the individual's favor we had

16 four cases. We didn't have any CAP determines VR

17 agency position/decision was appropriate for the

18 individual. You know, we did have some individual

19 case lacks legal merit, 15, which is unfortunate.

20 Sometimes there is issues where we know something

21 is wrong, but sometimes there isn't legal, you

22 know, steps that we can take to help in that

23 situation.

24 Individual chose alternative

25 representation, two times. Individuals withdrew

93

1 complaints, one time. Issue not resolved in the

2 clients favor was three times. And I can just kind

3 of go past some, CAP services not needed due to

4 individual's death. Individual not

5 responsive/cooperative with CAP was six times. CAP

6 unable to take case due to lack of resources was

7 two. We didn't have any conflict of interest,

8 which was great.

9 So some results achieved for

10 individuals was we have 18 cases where controlling

11 law and policy was explained. We didn't -- we had,

12 I'm just going to go down to some of the ones that

13 we had here. We had three cases where the IEP was

14 developed, implemented and services were provided.

15 We had two cases where communication was

16 re-established between the individual and other

17 party. We had one case where the individual was

18 assigned to a new counselor office. We had eight

19 cases where the alternative resources were

20 identified for the individual, we had eight cases

21 around that. And then we had other, nine other

22 cases that we identified. And others is like

23 referred elsewhere, for example, or brief service

24 was partially resolved.

25 And some of the program data, some of

94

1 the ages that we worked with on these cases up to

2 18 was one, 19 through 24 we had three cases, 25 to

3 40 we had 12 cases, 41 to 64 we had 24 cases and 65

4 and over we had one. So as I said before, we had

5 41 CAP cases that we worked on.

6 Last year, you know, when it comes to

7 gender we had 25 who identified as females, 16

8 cases where the person identified as male, zero

9 nonbinary or another genders, zero unknown. So

10 again 41 total cases.

11 And race/ethnicity of our individuals

12 served. Hispanic/Latino of any race was 1.

13 American Indian or Alaskan Native was zero. Asian

14 was zero. Black or African American was 6. Native

15 Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander was zero. White

16 was 25. Two or more races, zero. Race/ethnicity

17 unknown, 9. You know, even though we are trying --

18 that's why we are trying to reach, you know,

19 underserved communities because as you see, you

20 know, some of our demographics are, you know, our

21 cases are more, you know, we are taking on cases

22 that are, you know, people that are white. That's

23 why we are really trying to make sure that we are

24 identifying and reaching out to the broader

25 community.

95

1 And then some of the, you know,

2 disabling conditions of individuals we served, and

3 Judy, do you think I need to read all of this? I'm

4 just, you know --

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

6 MR. HAENZE: Good.

7 MS. SANDERS: In fact, the one thing

8 that I think might interest people is to be sure we

9 understand that most of these figures are a

10 compilation of VR services and SSB services.

11 MR. HAENZE: Yes, correct.

12 MS. SANDERS: So it is difficult to

13 know particularly how SSB is affected, but in the

14 interest of time if you have any information about

15 that and you want to email us, we could share it.

16 MR. HAENZE: Yeah, you know, I can do

17 that. You know there is also some, you know, there

18 is also some just like rates, information on some

19 positive cases that we did, you know, working along

20 SSB and VR where we worked together. So there is,

21 you know, stories in there about that as well.

22 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

23 MR. HAENZE: So you all have that in

24 the email, so you can read it from there.

25 MS. SANDERS: That's fine, thank you.

96

1 Thank you very much. And thank you for all that

2 detail. In the interest of time, unless anybody

3 has a question that you think won't be answered

4 through this report, we can take one or two

5 questions maybe.

6 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

7 MS. SANDERS: Corbb, yes.

8 MR. O'CONNOR: I'm curious, Ryan, you

9 talked about some of the work that you have done

10 with prisons and when I say prison I am referring

11 to prisons, jails, facilities of that like.

12 MR. HAENZE: Yes, right.

13 MR. O'CONNOR: Can you tell us at all

14 about your experience with blindness in those

15 facilities generally?

16 MR. HAENZE: You know we really

17 haven't -- because we really have tried to go into

18 like a lot of the folks like juvenile facilities

19 and the ones that we have, you know, monitored and

20 sometimes investigated, we really haven't seen

21 anyone who was Blind or visually impaired when we

22 are monitoring.

23 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you.

24 MS. SANDERS: And one last question

25 anybody have?

97

1 (No response.)

2 MS. SANDERS: Okay, Ryan, thank you.

3 MR. SALISBURY: Justin Salisbury.

4 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Justin.

5 MR. SALISBURY: Sorry. Just as a

6 brief follow-up to the question from Corbb

7 O'Connor, you know, because sometimes there are

8 people who are Blind maybe because they go Blind

9 while they are in prison, but who are Blind who are

10 in there who need to access services from an agency

11 like SSB and just kind of like need help doing so.

12 And so they may not even fall under the CAP radar

13 yet because they are not even accessing services,

14 so I am wondering if you think there is anyway that

15 you can be a part of helping to find and bring

16 those people into service?

17 MR. HAENZE: Yeah, I mean, that's

18 definitely something that, you know, as a Council

19 we can work on together and that's something that I

20 can do some research on and kind of consult with

21 the other attorneys and advocates at MDLC about.

22 MS. JERDE: Judy, this is Natasha.

23 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Natasha. I will be

24 brief, but I do know that there have been instances

25 where our Communication Center has mailed out

98

1 materials to the various correctional facilities

2 for inmates who access that, but I think there are

3 probably more who could benefit from those services

4 that may not be aware that they exist.

5 MR. HAENZE: Yeah, absolutely. Thank

6 you for bringing that up.

7 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Thank you

8 everybody.

9 We are going to move on now. Ryan

10 thank you again.

11 Corbb, would I be correct to say that

12 your budget report should wait until the next

13 meeting because of material that you weren't given?

14 MR. O'CONNOR: I got the material

15 yesterday.

16 MS. SANDERS: You did.

17 MR. O'CONNOR: So I can give a report.

18 MS. SANDERS: Okay, then.

19 MR. O'CONNOR: So the Budget Task

20 Force did not need to meet, did not have a chance

21 to meet, but what we did do is review the

22 financials that we were given yesterday. There

23 was, I think, just a couple of items of note. One

24 is that we -- this is the budget, I should say --

25 let me start over for the new folks.

99

1 We have about $35,000 a year that is

2 allocated to the Council. This goes toward paying

3 things like per diem, toward travel, food when we

4 serve dinner before the Council meetings, awards,

5 interpreters, court reporters, all of those

6 expenses of running the Council. So we evaluate

7 the budget twice a year, the one that we will do

8 later on is the creation of next year's budget for

9 Federal Fiscal Year '25.

10 This is the mid year update on Federal

11 Fiscal Year '24, yes. Okay. The main items of

12 note are that we are underbudget in most of our

13 categories, as to be expected, because we are

14 halfway through the year and we didn't have a full

15 Council last year. So we, for example, had funding

16 available for folks to attend the fall and spring

17 conferences. It was a little bit higher expenses

18 than expected for the one person who did attend

19 last fall, but we don't have anyone to my knowledge

20 going to the spring conference so that opens up

21 some funding for us, there is plenty of funding

22 available for interpreters and the like.

23 We can send out the full budget to

24 those who wish to review it. The one item of note

25 is that we are currently seeing a zero dollar

100

1 amount for a court reporter. We recognized that we

2 have had a court reporter, but this is likely due,

3 what I am hearing, to DEED's new invoicing and

4 processing system and I know some folks have gotten

5 their reimbursements much later than anticipated

6 over the last few months. I think that's really

7 all that is of most note here, happy to take any

8 questions.

9 MS. SANDERS: Any questions for Corbb?

10 MR. VELLIA: This is Patrick. When is

11 the spring conference?

12 MR. O'CONNOR: The spring conference

13 is later this month. Natasha may have the dates in

14 front of her.

15 MS. JERDE: Yes, this is Natasha. We

16 fly out Saturday and Sunday, so the conference

17 technically starts on Saturday and goes through

18 Friday of next week.

19 MR. O'CONNOR: In a couple of days.

20 MS. SANDERS: That includes both the

21 general agency conference and the one specifically

22 for agencies for the Blind. And they go -- they

23 are not concurrent, one is after the other. And

24 it's too late for anybody who didn't sign up to do

25 it now, but next year will be your chance.

101

1 Okay, thank you, Corbb.

2 All right. We are going to go through

3 committee reports and we will do them as

4 efficiently as we can. But also do we have, Susan,

5 I don't know, does anybody have a report from the

6 State Rehabilitation Council, the general agency

7 Council?

8 MS. KUSZ: I don't, I never received

9 one, no.

10 MS. SANDERS: Okay, but I don't think

11 anyone goes. We should think about that. Well, I

12 mean --

13 MS. KUSZ: This is Susan. I do

14 believe that Kyle -- I'm sorry, I had my microphone

15 up. I do believe that Kyle Van Acker was from the

16 Governor's Workforce Development Council, he had

17 the position that was going to both council

18 meetings and so I think he was the one that was

19 reporting, but we no longer have him on our

20 Council.

21 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Thank you.

22 MS. KUSZ: You might want to, perhaps,

23 think about asking Carla Eckhoff, maybe I could

24 suggest that to the new admin, of getting their

25 minutes or what have you to be included in our --

102

1 MS. SANDERS: Maybe, but it would be

2 better if we found a person to do it so if they

3 wanted to impart something from us to them they

4 could actually do it. So we should think about

5 that.

6 All right. With respect to the State

7 Independent Living Council, I'm the representative

8 for that and I will just tell you that they are

9 working on their State Plan for Independent Living.

10 They will be having a public hearing around

11 April 15 and then they hope to get it out after

12 that. I think that's all I will bother to say

13 about that right now.

14 So we will now go through the order,

15 through these committees. Steve Jacobson, would

16 you like to report on the Communication Center

17 Committee?

18 MS. JACOBUS: Yeah, hi everyone. The

19 Communication Center Committee has continued in its

20 efforts to make sure we understand all aspects of

21 the Communication Center, as well as trying to

22 provide input when it's appropriate.

23 During our last meeting on March 26,

24 for example, we looked at how books are selected,

25 particularly in the Braille section and for the

103

1 Radio Talking Book. We will be looking at the

2 audio section's process as well, probably at our

3 next meeting.

4 We have also taken a pretty deep dive

5 in an earlier meeting into the new applications

6 that are being used by the Radio Talking Book. For

7 those who have been around a while, the Radio

8 Talking Book is not, what they say, your father's

9 Radio Talking Book anymore, it's not a radio that

10 you turn a knob on and listen. It's all done

11 through various apps including the A Lady, as I

12 like to call her so that I don't get her talking to

13 me right here, and so forth. And that was very

14 interesting to hear how those apps work.

15 And at that meeting Dave Andrews is

16 also very clear that they are looking for any

17 suggestions people have, if you are a user of the

18 Radio Talking Book app or on the A Lady or

19 whatever, if you see something that you think that

20 would be helpful, he would like to hear about it.

21 We've also taken an in depth view in

22 past meetings of just general processes of all the

23 sections of the Communication Center. One of the

24 things we haven't done for a while, if we ever

25 have, is take a close look at NFB Newsline which is

104

1 run through the Communication Center. They

2 administer it and keep it operating in conjunction

3 with the National Federation of the Blind.

4 Our next meeting is going to be on

5 May 22 and we plan to take a close look at all the

6 aspects of Newsline, which is far more than just a

7 dial-in service now. Yeah, it involves also the A

8 Lady and email distribution and some other things

9 as well. So if you are interested please come and

10 join us on May 22 at 2:00 p.m. Thank you.

11 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you.

12 Jennifer Dunnam, do you have a report

13 for the Customer Satisfaction, Goals and Priorities

14 Committee?

15 MS. DUNNAM: There is no report and

16 that's expected at this point in our cycle.

17 MS. SANDERS: Okay, that sounds good.

18 Our Deafblind Committee currently is

19 without leadership and I know Patrick, that you are

20 going to want to help with that so we will talk

21 about that and then plan for the next meeting.

22 Do we have a report -- oh, I don't

23 believe we have anybody from the Employment --

24 anybody from the Employment Committee around,

25 that's Samantha Flax?

105

1 MR. O'CONNOR: Samantha Flax wishes to

2 report that the meeting will be scheduled soon.

3 MS. SANDERS: It sounds good to me.

4 And is that the same thing with the

5 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee maybe?

6 MR. O'CONNOR: I believe Briley is the

7 chair of that committee, I don't have a report.

8 MS. SANDERS: Oh, that's right, she

9 is. But nobody here, I don't think, can comment on

10 it, right?

11 (No response.)

12 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Now the Senior

13 Services Committee has been very active in helping

14 get ready for the Possibilities Fair and

15 everybody -- there is all kinds of people who are

16 volunteering to help with that. That's going to be

17 where seniors can come visit exhibits that will be

18 here at State Services for the Blind. And then

19 there will be a keynote address and we hope -- it's

20 designed for seniors who are not yet a part of the

21 system so that they can learn what is available out

22 there.

23 So that's the main thing that

24 committee is doing. Is there anybody who would

25 like to comment on the Transition Committee?

106

1 That's for our youth. Anybody who was there?

2 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb.

3 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: The committee, I

5 believe, was scheduled to meet recently and I

6 believe they needed to postpone that meeting, but

7 we can get a report from Samantha emailed.

8 MS. SANDERS: I was there.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: Then minutes are

10 forthcoming.

11 MS. SANDERS: I was at something, I

12 get confused.

13 MR. O'CONNOR: I think minutes are

14 coming, so they met, I believe it was just last

15 week.

16 MS. SANDERS: Yeah, all right. And I

17 don't have a lot to say yet about the Vendor

18 Outcomes and Measures Committee either because we

19 don't have current surveys to look at, I don't

20 believe, we already discussed the past ones.

21 Did I miss a committee? I don't think

22 so.

23 MR. HART: Rocky Hart.

24 MS. SANDERS: Rocky, yes.

25 MR. HART: Yes, I just want to comment

107

1 a little bit on the Transition Committee, the

2 minutes have not been released and, Judy, as you

3 know we discussed the Tools for School event which

4 is coming up next Friday. That is something that

5 was brought up with -- we had a discussion about --

6 a little bit about technology and a few other

7 transition-related activities. So that's kind of a

8 brief update, but minutes will be forthcoming.

9 MS. SANDERS: Thank you, Rocky.

10 Anybody else have any committee things

11 to add?

12 (No response.)

13 MS. SANDERS: All right. I can't

14 believe it, we are going to -- we caught up. Is

15 there any other business that anyone has before we

16 vote for adjournment?

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

18 comment.

19 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Corbb.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: For public comment, the

21 National Federation of the Blind Scholarship

22 Programs, there are two of them, so an academic

23 scholarship for the state program you can still

24 apply by April 15, details on the NFB of

25 Minnesota's website. Those are two $2,000

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1 scholarships.

2 And then if you are looking to attend

3 the National Convention of the National Federation

4 of the Blind and it's your first time attending, we

5 have a scholarship program for that. Deadline is

6 also April 15 and you can get details by emailing

7 the president at NFBMN.org. If it is not your

8 first convention we will also have financial

9 assistance available, but this is a specific

10 program with a specific deadline, April 15. And as

11 I said, we are supporting the Possibilities Fair in

12 May and super excited for that event.

13 MS. SANDERS: Okay. With respect to

14 the first timers convention, that is the only

15 requirement, right, was that they have never been?

16 MR. O'CONNOR: That and they are a

17 member, I believe, is a requirement. But we can

18 figure those details out if you are interested in

19 joining we are happy to have you.

20 MS. SANDERS: Yes, yes, all right.

21 Anybody else have public comments?

22 I'm sorry I didn't mean to skip that, but that's

23 what you guys are here for, to make me do it right.

24 Any other public comment from anybody?

25 MR. VELLIA: This is Patrick.

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1 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Patrick.

2 MR. VELLIA: Patrick speaking. As

3 Susan explained, the Deafblind Committee has no

4 leader right now. I have been serving on that

5 committee for five years, now I am appointed to the

6 Council but we have no chairperson for the

7 Deafblind Committee. Do you guys want to vote me

8 in as the chair or should I -- or do we have to

9 wait until September for that?

10 MS. SANDERS: What I suggest we do,

11 Patrick, is you and I can talk. I want to look and

12 see who is on the committee and I think it very

13 likely that it would be very appropriate for you to

14 do, unless somebody else pops up and says they are

15 interested, then I will make a decision and then we

16 will vote on it at the Council, because I think you

17 should work with it.

18 It is appropriate because the chair

19 that we had resigned from the committee, so I think

20 it makes good sense for us to find someone to do

21 it. But rather than do it today we should probably

22 talk about it and think about who else is there

23 still for you to have a committee with, will that

24 work?

25 MR. VELLIA: Yeah, sure, that sounds

110

1 fine. Thank you.

2 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Any other

3 business to come before us?

4 (No response.)

5 MS. SANDERS: If not --

6 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb, I move

7 we adjourn.

8 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, second.

9 MS. SANDERS: Okay. And I can't even

10 say all those in favor. I would love to do that

11 one time, I just want to rebel, but we won't do it

12 today.

13 Diane, how would you vote, should we

14 adjourn?

15 MS. DOHNALIK: This is Diane. Yes, we

16 should.

17 MS. SANDERS: Frank.

18 (No response.)

19 MS. SANDERS: Frank.

20 (No response.)

21 MS. SANDERS: Sue.

22 (No response.)

23 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I think they've

24 made the decision already.

25 MS. SANDERS: They have.

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1 Hannah.

2 MS. HARRIMAN: This is Hannah, yes.

3 MS. SANDERS: Good for you.

4 Ryan.

5 MR. HAENZE: Ryan, yes.

6 MR. HEINL: Tom Heinl, yes.

7 MS. SANDERS: You guys are getting

8 good at this.

9 Rob.

10 MS. KRAMER: Thea Kramer, yes.

11 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Oh, Rob, you

12 don't get to vote.

13 MR. HOBSON: Rob passed.

14 MS. SANDERS: All right.

15 Pat.

16 MS. McGEE: Pat McGee, yes.

17 MS. SANDERS: Jeff.

18 MR. MILHELICH: Jeff, yes.

19 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb, yes.

21 MS. SANDERS: Justin.

22 (No response.)

23 MS. SANDERS: Justin.

24 (No response.)

25 MR. STRUNK: I saw him leave and then

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1 I saw him come back.

2 MS. SANDERS: Ryan.

3 MR. STRUNK: Ryan, yes.

4 MS. SANDERS: And Patrick.

5 MR. VELLIA: Yes.

6 MS. SANDERS: All right. Then we are

7 adjourned. Thank you everybody.

8 (Matter concluded at 8:15 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 112 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 8, 2024

16

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KIMBERLY K. EVAVOLD

18 Court Reporter