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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

 2

 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.

 36

 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

 41

 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,

 51

 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

 53

 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

 54

 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

 108

 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.

 109

 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.

 111

 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

 112

 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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 113

 1 STATE OF MINNESOTA)

 2 ) ss.

 3 COUNTY OF HENNEPIN)

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 5

 6

 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

 17 \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 KIMBERLY K. EVAVOLD

 18 Court Reporter