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 7 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

 8 BIMONTHLY MEETING

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 14 2200 University Avenue

 15 St. Paul, Minnesota

 16 Thursday, August 1, 2024

 17 5:40 p.m.

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 1 APPEARANCES:

 2 REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND SSB STAFF

 3 Judy Sanders, Chairperson Dave Andrews

 4 Ryan Haenze, Vice Chair Jennifer Beilke

 5 Connie Berg Jon Benson

 6 Diane Dohnalik Brianna Holeman

 7 Frank Eller Lisa Rogers

 8 Sue Fager

 9 Tom Heinl

 10 Rob Hobson

 11 Thea Kramer

 12 Jeff Milhelich

 13 Corbb O'Connor

 14 Justin Salisbury

 15 Ryan Strunk

 16 Patrick Vellia

 17

 18 ALSO PRESENT:

 19 Natasha Jerde, Director of SSB

 20 Nyia Vang, State Program Administrator

 21

 22 Whereupon, the following proceedings

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

 24

 25

 3

 1 MS. SANDERS: All right. I want to

 2 welcome everybody to our Council meeting for August

 3 and most of you who at least are on our mailing

 4 list got the agenda, I think, I can go through it

 5 though.

 6 We will start with, well, we already

 7 started. We will have approval of minutes, we will

 8 have a roll call, we will have business for the

 9 Council and then we are going to have -- are we

 10 doing the game thing that's on the agenda, right,

 11 or whatever?

 12 MS. JERDE: Yes.

 13 MS. SANDERS: Is that Mohx?

 14 MR. WALSH: Yeah, just Mohx, we just

 15 added extra letters.

 16 MS. SANDERS: You want to have the h-x

 17 on so we start to pay attention.

 18 MR. MANAHAN: Yeah, it is an attention

 19 grabber.

 20 MS. SANDERS: That will be on our

 21 agenda tonight and then we will have Natasha's

 22 report. And then we will have a break and then we

 23 will have sort of a Budget Task Force and then we

 24 are going to have committee reports. And the thing

 25 that I think a lot of people are going to want to

 4

 1 know about a part of my report will be to tell you

 2 how we are organizing committees and then you will

 3 either approve it or change the whole thing, who

 4 knows.

 5 All right. So let's start at the

 6 beginning and I'm going to start with a roll call

 7 and let me find my roll call, here we go. And I

 8 hope -- do we have anybody on Zoom?

 9 (No response.)

 10 MS. SANDERS: Are we connected? There

 11 must be somebody.

 12 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. We have

 13 several people on Zoom and many of them are

 14 councilmembers.

 15 MS. SANDERS: Okay. But since they

 16 didn't respond, do we know that they can hear us?

 17 Is anybody on Zoom brave enough to say yes, I can

 18 hear you?

 19 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, I can hear you.

 20 MS. DOHNALIK: Diane Dohnalik, I can

 21 see you and hear you well.

 22 MS. SANDERS: All right. I am going

 23 to start with roll call. Connie Berg.

 24 MS. BERG: I am here on Zoom.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Good. Diane Dohnalik.

 5

 1 (No response.)

 2 MS. SANDERS: Not right now.

 3 MS. DOHNALIK: Yes, I am. I was

 4 having trouble with my mouse.

 5 MS. SANDERS: Frank Eller.

 6 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller here.

 7 MS. SANDERS: Sue Fager.

 8 (No response.)

 9 MS. SANDERS: We may not have Sue yet.

 10 Sam Flax, I believe, is excused.

 11 Hannah Harriman. Hannah, do we have

 12 you?

 13 (No response.)

 14 MS. SANDERS: Not at the moment.

 15 Ryan Haenze.

 16 (No response.)

 17 MS. SANDERS: No Ryan.

 18 Tom Heinl.

 19 MR. HEINL: Yeah, I am here.

 20 MS. SANDERS: Okay, good.

 21 Rob Hobson.

 22 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson is here.

 23 MS. SANDERS: All right. Thea Kramer.

 24 MR. KRAMER: Here.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Good.

 6

 1 Pat McGee.

 2 (No response.)

 3 MS. SANDERS: Pat was not feeling

 4 well. I don't know if she will make it on Zoom or

 5 not.

 6 Jeff Milhelich.

 7 MR. MILHELICH: Here.

 8 MS. SANDERS: Corbb O'Connor.

 9 MR. O'CONNOR: Here.

 10 MS. SANDERS: Jennifer Points.

 11 (No response.)

 12 MR. ANDREWS: She said she wasn't

 13 feeling well.

 14 MS. SANDERS: Oh, she did?

 15 MR. ANDREWS: Yeah, there was an email

 16 about an hour ago.

 17 MS. SANDERS: Justin Salisbury.

 18 MR. SALISBURY: Here.

 19 MS. RYAN: Ryan Strunk.

 20 MR. STRUNK: Here.

 21 MS. SANDERS: And Patrick Vellia.

 22 MR. VELLIA: Present.

 23 MS. SANDERS: And I'm Judy Sanders and

 24 I'm here as well.

 25 Now let's see whose here, let's start

 7

 1 with maybe the front row here. How about on the

 2 far side, the wall side by the windows where we

 3 didn't come in, start on that end.

 4 MR. ANDREWS: There are no windows in

 5 here.

 6 MS. SANDERS: We are going to start

 7 with you.

 8 MR. ANDREWS: Dave Andrews. And next

 9 to me.

 10 MR. HART: Rocky Hart.

 11 MS. SANDERS: Okay. And?

 12 MR. HANNINEN: Isaac Hanninen.

 13 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Anybody else over

 14 there on that end?

 15 MR. WALSH: Yeah, we got Mohx Games in

 16 the back corner. Taylor Brown and Gene Walsh.

 17 MS. SANDERS: So the machine is

 18 talking.

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

 20 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you.

 21 MS. GOURLEY: Alyssa Gourley.

 22 MR. HOBSON: Just as an FYI, we can

 23 barely hear the audience.

 24 MS. GOURLEY: This mike is not on, I

 25 don't know how to turn it on.

 8

 1 MR. ANDREWS: There is a bar at the

 2 bottom.

 3 MS. GOURLEY: Oh, dig it, there we go.

 4 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

 5 MS. GOURLEY: Now you can hear me.

 6 MS. SANDERS: All right. So I can

 7 repeat names if that would be helpful too. Do you

 8 want us to start over? Nah, we are not going to

 9 start over.

 10 All right. Who came after Alyssa

 11 Gourley?

 12 MR. ZHANG: Ben Zhang.

 13 MS. SANDERS: Ben Zhang.

 14 MS. BEILKE: Jennifer Beilke.

 15 MS. SANDERS: Jennifer Beilke.

 16 MS. JERDE: We have one more in the

 17 back corner, Ada.

 18 MS. TALIK: Ada Talik.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Ada Talik.

 20 And then do we have more people on

 21 this side of the room?

 22 MS. JERDE: Natasha Jerde.

 23 MS. SANDERS: Natasha Jerde.

 24 MS. VANG: Nyia Vang.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Nyia Vang.

 9

 1 (Loud background talking.)

 2 Do we have somebody who wants to turn

 3 down their JAWS thing or whatever that is? Thank

 4 you.

 5 Okay. Who else?

 6 MR. JACOBSON: Steve Jacobson.

 7 MS. SANDERS: Okay, Steve.

 8 All right. Now we will start with the

 9 Zoom people. So Steve Jacobson is on Zoom, who

 10 else?

 11 MS. ROGERS: Lisa Rogers.

 12 MS. SANDERS: Lisa. Oh, I guess I

 13 don't have to repeat your names.

 14 MR. BENSON: Jon Benson.

 15 MS. SANDERS: Okay.

 16 MS. HOLEMAN: Brianna Holeman.

 17 MS. SANDERS: Okay, Brianna.

 18 MS. DOHNALIK: Diane Dohnalik.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Yeah, your name

 20 was called in the roll call so we know that you are

 21 here, but we are glad you are here again.

 22 Anybody else who has not introduced

 23 themselves yet?

 24 (No response.)

 25 MS. SANDERS: If you are hiding, you

 10

 1 know, more power to you, I guess.

 2 Okay. So now that we have done the

 3 roll call and we are going to -- we are going to

 4 approve the minutes as mailed to you. Can I have a

 5 motion to approve the minutes?

 6 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, so moved.

 7 MS. SANDERS: Ryan Strunk moves.

 8 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, second.

 9 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Second.

 10 MS. SANDERS: We got a few seconds.

 11 Rob Hobson, I caught his name.

 12 Okay. Any additions or corrections to

 13 the minutes?

 14 MR. SALISBURY: Madam Chair, Justin

 15 Salisbury.

 16 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Justin.

 17 MR. SALISBURY: Near the bottom of the

 18 first page it's super minor, but there appears to

 19 be a misspelling of the name Corbb O'Connor and I

 20 just want to call attention to that if we could

 21 update that, but otherwise happy to approve.

 22 MS. SANDERS: Okay. We can look at it

 23 and correct it. Any others that anybody knows?

 24 (No response.)

 25 MS. SANDERS: All right. We have to

 11

 1 do a roll call, this is something that -- so vote

 2 yes, no or if for some reason you think you need to

 3 you can abstain.

 4 Connie.

 5 MS. BERG: Yes.

 6 MS. SANDERS: Diane.

 7 MS. DOHNALIK: Yes.

 8 MS. SANDERS: Frank.

 9 MR. ELLER: Frank, yes.

 10 MS. SANDERS: Do we have Sue Fager

 11 yet?

 12 (No response.)

 13 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Hannah, do we

 14 have Hannah yet?

 15 (No response.)

 16 MS. SANDERS: And do we have Ryan?

 17 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.

 18 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Tom.

 19 MR. HEINL: Yes.

 20 MS. SANDERS: Thea.

 21 MS. KRAMER: Yes.

 22 MS. SANDERS: And we don't have Pat

 23 McGee.

 24 Jeff.

 25 MR. MILHELICH: Yes.

 12

 1 MS. SANDERS: Jeff says yes.

 2 Corbb?

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

 4 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Justin.

 5 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury, yes.

 6 MS. SANDERS: And Ryan Strunk.

 7 MR. STRUNK: Strunk, yes.

 8 MS. SANDERS: And Patrick.

 9 MR. VELLIA: Hey.

 10 MS. SANDERS: That was yes, I believe.

 11 All right, the minutes are approved.

 12 Thank you everybody.

 13 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk.

 14 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Ryan.

 15 MR. STRUNK: Point of order, we do

 16 need a vote from you, Madam Chair.

 17 MS. SANDERS: Oh yeah, you know I'm

 18 not used to president voting.

 19 Judy, I vote yes. Now it is

 20 unanimous.

 21 MS. ROGERS: Madam Chair.

 22 MS. SANDERS: Who is this?

 23 MS. ROGERS: This is Lisa Rogers.

 24 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Lisa.

 25 MS. ROGERS: I noticed that I think

 13

 1 Ryan Haenze joined after you had already called his

 2 name, so just letting you know.

 3 MS. SANDERS: Right. He was on the

 4 roll call so we got him.

 5 MR. RODGERS: Okay, all right, super.

 6 Thank you.

 7 MS. SANDERS: But thank you though.

 8 And I am going to recommend that if

 9 you want the floor, the best way to get it would be

 10 to say your name and then I will know to recognize

 11 you.

 12 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson.

 13 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Rob.

 14 MR. HOBSON: I do recall that there

 15 was an email last week that Hannah said she would

 16 not be able to attend this meeting.

 17 MS. SANDERS: Oh okay, thank you for

 18 reminding me of that. I probably saw it, I think.

 19 MR. HOBSON: Yes.

 20 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Let's see, all

 21 right, I think now we are going to start with

 22 committee appointments and that's the big thing of

 23 the day. And what I want to say about them is that

 24 first of all I want to make sure everybody knows

 25 that if you served on a committee last year or

 14

 1 maybe even several years, it is not automatic that

 2 you are appointed to it this year.

 3 And so what we need to know is, I

 4 mean, that's why we asked people to let me know if

 5 they wanted to be on a committee. And plus we have

 6 a certain number of people who can be on each

 7 committee. And also I want people to know that if

 8 you are wishing that you had been on a committee

 9 and you are not on it, all committee meetings are

 10 open and you are welcome to come to the meetings

 11 without -- which is usually on Zoom, it probably

 12 always will be on Zoom for committee meetings, if

 13 you want to be you can come anyway even if you are

 14 not on the committee. The only thing you couldn't

 15 do is if they take a vote on something and I don't

 16 know, most of our committees I don't think do much

 17 voting. They do a lot of talking, but they don't

 18 do a lot of voting. So it should work out even if

 19 you don't have it.

 20 Most of the committees are at

 21 capacity, but not all of them. And so where we

 22 have not filled all the spots we'll keep looking.

 23 And then the Council has to approve the people who

 24 are on these committees so then we will fill in the

 25 rest of the blanks hopefully in October.

 15

 1 Okay. So we have eight committees and

 2 I'm gonna start out with the Communication Center

 3 Advisory Committee that can have as many as nine

 4 people. I think we still have one vacancy.

 5 So on this committee Steve Jacobson is

 6 the chair, Diane Dohnalik, Tom Heinl, Jeff

 7 Milhelich, Ryan Strunk, Catherine Durivage, Rocky

 8 Hart and Lynn Johnson.

 9 Then we have Community Partners

 10 Outcomes and Measures Committee. This committee

 11 can have five people on it. Chairing that

 12 committee is Steve Saucin and the rest of the

 13 people are Rob Hobson, Thea Kramer, Briley

 14 O'Connor, Kimberly Strickland.

 15 The next one is Customer Satisfaction

 16 and Goals and Priorities. And, you know, I think

 17 this is an error. Maybe those of you who have been

 18 on that committee, I wrote down five, but was that

 19 supposed to be seven? Let me see how many we have,

 20 nobody is telling me. I do have five people on it,

 21 so we are going to assume that maybe that is

 22 correct.

 23 Chairing the Customer Satisfaction

 24 Committee is Corbb O'Connor. And then on the

 25 committee is Ryan Haenze, Thea Kramer, Jennifer

 16

 1 Points and Steve Jacobson.

 2 Then for the Deafblind Committee there

 3 can be seven people on that. Patrick Vellia is

 4 going to be the chair of that committee. And on it

 5 is Hannah Harriman, Rocky Hart, Ann Mayes, Kim

 6 Johnson and one other person whose name I just read

 7 the email on my way out the door, Wendy DeVore will

 8 also be on that committee.

 9 Then we have --

 10 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb O'Connor, I may

 11 have missed it, but who is the chair of that

 12 committee?

 13 MS. SANDERS: Patrick.

 14 MR. CONNOR: Thank you.

 15 MS. SANDERS: Diversity, Equity and

 16 Inclusion Committee has seven people or can have

 17 seven people. Samantha Flax is chairing that. And

 18 we have Connie Berg, Justin Salisbury, Kotumu

 19 Kamara and Ada Talik and Ben Zhang.

 20 Then on the Employment Committee

 21 Justin Salisbury is chairing that. And we have

 22 Connie Berg, Hannah Harriman, Rob Hobson, Alyssa

 23 Gourley and that's that committee right now.

 24 The Senior Services Committee has

 25 seven people and Pat McGee is chairing that. We

 17

 1 have Tom Heinl, Jeff Mihelich, Jan Bailey, Theresa

 2 Gfroerer, Barb Klein and Linda Warren.

 3 And then the Transition Committee.

 4 The chair of that is Joya Musa. And then Diane

 5 Dohnalik is on that committee and we have Sue

 6 Fager, Sam Flax, Ryan Haenze, Ryan Strunk and Ben

 7 Zhang.

 8 And that is all the committees. So we

 9 still have a little bit of work to do on some of

 10 them and if anybody has any questions right now we

 11 will approve the people that I have just named or

 12 disapprove, I guess you could go either way on it,

 13 couldn't you. So any questions, though, before we

 14 actually take the vote on any of them?

 15 (No response.)

 16 MS. SANDERS: If not, the vote is to

 17 accept these committees as formed and so you can

 18 vote yes, no or abstain.

 19 Connie Berg.

 20 MS. BERG: Connie Berg, yes.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Diane Dohnalik.

 22 MS. DOHNALIK: Diane Dohnalik, yes.

 23 MS. SANDERS: Frank.

 24 MR. ELLER: Frank, yes.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Let's see, Ryan Haenze.

 18

 1 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.

 2 MS. SANDERS: Tom.

 3 MR. HEINL: Tom Heinl, yes.

 4 MS. SANDERS: Thea.

 5 MS. KRAMER: Yes.

 6 MS. SANDERS: Thea yes.

 7 Pat -- oh, Pat is not here.

 8 Jeff?

 9 MR. MILHELICH: Yes.

 10 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Corbb.

 11 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb, yes.

 12 MS. SANDERS: Justin.

 13 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury, yes.

 14 MS. SANDERS: And Ryan Strunk.

 15 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, yes.

 16 MS. SANDERS: Patrick.

 17 MR. VELLIA: Yes.

 18 MS. SANDERS: And I'm Judy and I vote

 19 yes.

 20 So we have approved all of you who

 21 have volunteered. And, you know, I want to give

 22 special credit to not only the Council members

 23 because you are required to be on one or two

 24 committees but, you know, one of the reasons these

 25 committees are as successful as they are is because

 19

 1 of the people from the blindness community who have

 2 come up to the line and volunteered to work on

 3 these committees and it is greatly appreciated

 4 because the Governor didn't appoint you to do it,

 5 but you do it anyway. So thank you everybody.

 6 Okay. Now, one of the other things

 7 that we know we have to talk about on my agenda is

 8 the upcoming conferences, the CSAVR conference,

 9 which is Council of State Administrators of

 10 Vocational Rehabilitation and then NCSAB which is

 11 National Councils of State Agencies for the Blind.

 12 And do you want to maybe, Natasha,

 13 review the dates of all these? And when she is

 14 going to tell us the dates then you can -- we want

 15 to know and we can give you a little bit of time to

 16 know if you as a councilmember want to go to any

 17 part of this. And your expenses will be paid.

 18 That means air fare, hotel and a food allowance and

 19 transportation to and from the airport is what is

 20 covered. So can you give us the dates?

 21 MS. JERDE: Of course. So this is

 22 Natasha. Location is Seattle, it will be at the

 23 Hyatt Regency. The NCSRC, the National Coalition

 24 for State Rehab Councils will be on Saturday,

 25 October 18 and Sunday, October 19. Those are all

 20

 1 day meetings, so if you were to go you would need

 2 to come in on Friday.

 3 CSAVR, the director's forum is on

 4 Saturday, October 18, and for directors only, but

 5 the leadership forum begins on Sunday, October 19

 6 and then the full conference kicks off on

 7 October 20. It will be on the 20th, the 21st and

 8 the first half of the 23rd.

 9 Q Did you leave out the 22nd?

 10 A Probably. Sunday the 20th and then the 21st, 22nd

 11 and the morning of the 23rd and then they are done

 12 around lunchtime. There is a one hour transition

 13 period and then NCSAB begins the afternoon of

 14 October 23 and that goes until October 25, that

 15 Friday, and we are usually done by noon.

 16 MS. SANDERS: Okay. So --

 17 MR. O'CONNOR: O'Connor.

 18 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Corbb.

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

 20 check. You said the NCSRC is the 18th and 19th,

 21 that's a Friday/Saturday but I heard you say it was

 22 a Saturday/Sunday. So I just want to confirm.

 23 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. We have

 24 the wrong dates on the agenda, it's the

 25 Saturday/Sunday, so the 19th and 20th is that

 21

 1 Saturday and Sunday and the 18th people would want

 2 to come in if they were going to the conference.

 3 MS. SANDERS: Okay. So is there

 4 anybody off the top of their head right now who

 5 knows they would like to go? And I don't know who

 6 is the expert on what we budgeted, do we know how

 7 many people we can send, assuming we can send more

 8 if we are only going to part of it and the most

 9 important part for us would be the NSCAB part or

 10 the end. But have allocated enough money for

 11 people to go to all of that if they want to.

 12 Is there anybody that knows they want

 13 to do it? And if you don't --

 14 MR. O'CONNOR: O'Connor would be

 15 interested in the NCSRC potentially, I need to

 16 confirm one more detail.

 17 MS. SANDERS: You do mean NCSAB?

 18 MR. O'CONNOR: NCSRC the first

 19 weekend.

 20 MS. SANDERS: Oh, the council one?

 21 MR. O'CONNOR: Correct.

 22 MS. SANDERS: Okay, all right.

 23 Anybody else know that they want to do something?

 24 Do we know when early registration

 25 ends?

 22

 1 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha.

 2 Typically mid-September. This conference is

 3 earlier than before, so yeah, I would say mid

 4 September. The save the date has gone out but

 5 there has been no other information yet.

 6 MS. SANDERS: Okay. So --

 7 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury.

 8 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Justin.

 9 MR. SALISBURY: Not to interrupt you,

 10 but just put my name on the list. I would

 11 definitely be interested in NCSRC, still waiting on

 12 a little more information about whether I would be

 13 available for the rest of it.

 14 MS. SANDERS: So you want that first

 15 weekend as well?

 16 MR. SALISBURY: Yes, please.

 17 MS. SANDERS: The Council thing.

 18 Okay. Now --

 19 MR. O'CONNOR: O'Connor.

 20 MS. SANDERS: Yeah, Corbb.

 21 MR. O'CONNOR: You asked about how we

 22 typically budgeted, Ryan Strunk is the chair of the

 23 Budget Task Force, he may have that number handy.

 24 Typically we have budgeted for two to three people

 25 for the entire week.

 23

 1 MS. SANDERS: So we have some --

 2 MR. STRUNK: That's correct, I am

 3 digging for that number now.

 4 MS. SANDERS: Okay, good. So we would

 5 have, if people are going just say for the first

 6 two days, then we might have more leeway for others

 7 who might want to go for later. So if I go I think

 8 I would want to do the end part of it, the NCSAB

 9 part.

 10 Now, what I am going to ask, if you

 11 are thinking about it but you don't know yet, if

 12 you decide you do want to go we would like to know

 13 maybe by right after Labor Day, that might be a

 14 good deadline for us to help make reservations for

 15 you and also, you know, know what we've got. I

 16 think that's what we will set as a deadline, right

 17 after Labor Day.

 18 MS. JERDE: Madam Chair --

 19 MR. HOBSON: This is Rob.

 20 MS. SANDERS: Natasha.

 21 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. We are

 22 looking at a better way for paying councilmembers

 23 to go to the conference and trying to move away

 24 from the reimbursement model and seeing if we can

 25 do a lot more upfront like booking the hotel room

 24

 1 and the flights ourselves so you don't have to

 2 incur that cost. We are researching it and we are

 3 hoping to have an answer soon.

 4 MS. SANDERS: Okay. So if that makes

 5 a difference for you, take that into consideration.

 6 Rob.

 7 MR. HOBSON: I would like to go, I

 8 just don't know what parts I would be able to

 9 attend, so I have to check on that. I know we

 10 talked about this a couple of months ago, but I

 11 dropped the ball on it, I should know more in a

 12 week or two. There are just some logistics I have

 13 to figure out.

 14 MS. SANDERS: Sure.

 15 MR. HOBSON: So add me to the list.

 16 MS. SANDERS: I will.

 17 MR. VELLIA: This is Patrick.

 18 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Patrick.

 19 MR. VELLIA: Patrick speaking. Just

 20 clarifying a question. For those who go, are they

 21 covered pay or do I give up my normal work for

 22 that?

 23 MS. SANDERS: I'm not sure I know your

 24 question. Do you get paid -- you get your expenses

 25 paid, you don't get an additional -- well, you

 25

 1 would get per diems.

 2 MR. VELLIA: Clarify my question. So

 3 normally I have a day job, but in order to go I

 4 would have to get -- I would have to give up hours

 5 from my normal job to go. So coming to this

 6 meeting we get paid $55, but going to the

 7 conference do we get paid?

 8 MS. SANDERS: Natasha correct me if I

 9 am wrong, I believe you do get per diem.

 10 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha, that is

 11 correct.

 12 MS. SANDERS: Yeah, so you would get

 13 the $55 for every day that you are attending a

 14 conference.

 15 MR. O'CONNOR: O'Connor, plus you get

 16 an additional 30ish, 40ish dollars for food as well

 17 on top of the 55.

 18 MS. SANDERS: I think the way the

 19 food -- have they changed it? It used to be you

 20 had to show them receipts.

 21 MS. JERDE: This is Tasha. You get a

 22 set per diem for meals in addition to the per diem,

 23 no receipts required, and it's like $50 a day they

 24 upped it. And I think Seattle is a high cost area

 25 so it would be $50 a day for meal reimbursement.

 26

 1 MS. SANDERS: And frankly, with the

 2 way hotels are if you don't want to have three

 3 meals a day you might make it, because hotel food

 4 is not cheap.

 5 Okay. Any other questions or comments

 6 about that?

 7 MR. VELLIA: This is Patrick.

 8 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Patrick.

 9 MR. VELLIA: Patrick speaking. Some

 10 conferences cover the meals in their registration

 11 packets, but not always these days.

 12 MS. SANDERS: I don't think they do

 13 very much of that, frankly, if I remember

 14 correctly. There are some meals, but I think --

 15 well, it's been awhile since I --

 16 MS. JERDE: This is Tasha. There is a

 17 reception dinner, not really even a dinner, snacky

 18 stuff Monday night for CSAVR and the same for

 19 Wednesday night. And sometimes there is a working

 20 lunch for NCSAB, but rarely are we fed.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Okay. So, you know, you

 22 just have to decide what you want to do.

 23 Okay. Now, if there's no more

 24 questions on that the thing that I would want to

 25 call attention to, those of you who just finished

 27

 1 your terms with the current committees that we

 2 have, not the new ones, we need each one of us who

 3 chaired a committee needs to submit a section, a

 4 small little section of what you did and what that

 5 committee did this year. And you need to submit it

 6 to Lisa Larges and then it's going to go into our

 7 Annual Report for SSB, for the Council.

 8 So she wants it by October 15, I

 9 believe is her deadline, and it only has to be a

 10 couple of paragraphs. She doesn't want the

 11 Constitution or anything like that. So just a

 12 short little thing.

 13 Then what else am I supposed to tell

 14 you that I am not telling you yet? I think that

 15 might be all that I know. And what I'm not telling

 16 you is probably everything you would like to know.

 17 Okay. So now we are going to learn

 18 about the new age. And I don't know if the Mohx

 19 Games people back there, if they have names or not,

 20 but you're on.

 21 MR. WALSH: All right, thanks

 22 everyone. My name is Gene and I'm here with one of

 23 our partners, Taylor Brown and we are Mohx Games,

 24 actually Mohx Technologies, but Mohx Games.

 25 A little history about us. We started

 28

 1 the company about four and a half years ago,

 2 focused on creating augmented reality and computer

 3 vision solutions, primarily focused on things like

 4 entertainment and gaming. And through the first

 5 couple of years advancing our computer vision

 6 systems, we worked with big companies like

 7 T-Mobile, Qualcomm and HTC advancing those things.

 8 But what we learned last year as our

 9 technology advances we could see that our computer

 10 vision and some of our artificial intelligence had

 11 this possibility to be able to help people with low

 12 vision or, you know, complete Blindness, actually

 13 better visualized the world around them.

 14 So with that in mind last year we

 15 actually started focusing or technology towards

 16 creating systems that could help the Blind and low

 17 vision in a lot of different scenarios.

 18 So we have a system. Right now we are

 19 up here just because we want to work with all of

 20 you folks, we are not experts of all division

 21 impairments, we are tech creators. So we have

 22 created base systems and hopefully in October I'm

 23 going to have to bring some up here to Natasha and

 24 leave some stuff up here just to let people try

 25 some things out and get some feedback about, you

 29

 1 know, how you feel about the systems, what works,

 2 what doesn't work, what don't you need or features

 3 that you would need because the capabilities are

 4 almost endless with the technology.

 5 So there is two cores to the system

 6 and the basement is what we call acoustic vision.

 7 So wearing a special set of head glasses it sees

 8 the world and it actually maps your entire

 9 environment and knows where it is.

 10 So with that we can place different

 11 tones and sounds on objects. Let's say if you

 12 wanted to find something like a set of keys or you

 13 wanted to navigate to a bathroom it can place tones

 14 and allow you to follow tones that you hear in the

 15 3D spatial audio to get to different environments.

 16 And then, of courses, with the built

 17 in artificial intelligence you can just

 18 conversationally talk to the system and ask it

 19 things like what am I looking at? Can you see my

 20 car keys? Can you navigate me to the bathroom in

 21 this building and things like that. So that's the

 22 core of the system.

 23 Through working with centers like

 24 Vocational Rehab we work with UW Stout. We see

 25 that there is a bigger need, actually, for low

 30

 1 Vision people that aren't completely Blind,

 2 anything from macular degeneration to glaucoma and

 3 other different situations and we are tailoring the

 4 same solutions. It still sees the world, but we

 5 are letting them visualize, you know, things like

 6 in the peripherals, or the areas where there is

 7 some vision, so we can identify people, objects,

 8 danger points.

 9 And one of the biggest things, of

 10 course, is indoor navigation. So with either one

 11 of the systems you can ask it to, like I said, say

 12 walk to the bathroom or take me to Jeff's cubical

 13 or office and it's going to give you turn by turn

 14 navigation where you are walking towards a point

 15 and then you are going to turn at that point and

 16 continue on.

 17 So that's pretty much the base of it.

 18 Right now it's still in development, but like I

 19 said, hopefully in October we will have something

 20 to bring up here.

 21 We built a base system in virtual

 22 reality and we will be able -- Taylor will be able

 23 to walk through a little bit of that just with the

 24 equipment, we don't want to take too much of your

 25 time, but that system simulates what it's like to

 31

 1 have different visual impairments, anything from,

 2 like I said, macular degeneration to glaucoma to

 3 complete blindness and then see the features in our

 4 system and see how they feel.

 5 So the intention with that, it helps

 6 us develop faster, but it also allows, you know,

 7 staff here, Natasha or people at other places, to

 8 actually go through the system and easily tell us

 9 this is a great feature, this is not a great

 10 feature, this is completely worthless. And that

 11 saves us a ton of time developing this and

 12 developing what people actually need and want and

 13 that gets us to the market faster with a product

 14 that is actually useful to everybody.

 15 So I'm going to let Taylor -- if we

 16 can get -- Taylor is actually in the screen system

 17 there on the Zoom meeting, so he is going to jump

 18 into the headset and this is just going to show

 19 it's streaming from a Meta Quest 3 and he can just

 20 show how the simulations can show things. Like he

 21 will probably just jump into maybe the glaucoma one

 22 and it will show how you could walk into an office

 23 and say navigate me to my cubical.

 24 MR. BROWN: I am going to attempt the

 25 screen, audio is very important, hopefully this is

 32

 1 streaming audio with my computer system muted.

 2 MR. WALSH: We are hoping as

 3 technology people, you know how that goes.

 4 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. While

 5 that is coming up can I ask a question?

 6 MR. WALSH: Yes, please.

 7 MR. O'CONNOR: Maybe I missed it so I

 8 apologize, but you mentioned you were going to

 9 demonstrate the glaucoma setup and I'm curious if

 10 you could explain how or why somebody would need to

 11 use their level of vision loss or their eye

 12 condition in order to operate the system?

 13 MR. MANAHAN: Yeah, this system isn't

 14 actually for people with vision impairments, it's

 15 for people that maybe would be working with people

 16 to tailor fit the solution to their needs. So it

 17 simulates, you know, for them and it simulates for

 18 us as fully sighted people, you know, something

 19 like macular degeneration where the whole center of

 20 my vision might be clouded or completely obscured,

 21 it lets me put different things into the system and

 22 I can test it simulating what that would feel like

 23 where it would be really hard for us to do it

 24 without that.

 25 So the test system isn't really

 33

 1 intended to be used with people with visual

 2 impairments, the intention with that is once we

 3 develop those things we put those on the actual

 4 glasses that will be the final product and bring

 5 them up here. And on that we can go through the

 6 different features with, you know, tailor made to

 7 each person's level of visual impairment and go

 8 from there.

 9 But it's just a test, really, for the

 10 developers and for the people that are going to be,

 11 you know, helping people tailor the final solution

 12 to them. We envision kind of like if you go to an

 13 optometrist and are saying, you know, does this

 14 look good, does this look better, does this look

 15 bad, does this look good, does this here sound

 16 good? So that's the intention of that system and

 17 it's up on the page now.

 18 MR. VELLIA: This is Patrick.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Patrick.

 20 MR. VELLIA: Patrick speaking. Is

 21 your development currently still working with the

 22 Vision Pro?

 23 MR. WALSH: Vision Pro, not currently.

 24 We are working with -- what do we have for the

 25 Quest, Taylor, or the HTC, what is that?

 34

 1 Well pretty much all of these systems

 2 will work with any of the VR/AR headsets. So

 3 though it's not like specific to it, the Apple

 4 development, it is something that will go out

 5 there. But for the glasses which would be worn by

 6 a person with visual disabilities, those are

 7 actually XREAL glasses, we are partnering with

 8 XREAL to get those out because they are the most

 9 advanced, most lightweight glasses, I think.

 10 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk with a

 11 question.

 12 MR. WALSH: Yep.

 13 MR. STRUNK: I'm curious, you

 14 mentioned that it has danger detection and I'm

 15 curious what would be considered dangerous? And

 16 sort of a three-part, what would be considered

 17 dangerous? What would the recommended guidance be

 18 from the system for dangers? And do I have the

 19 ability to turn danger detection off?

 20 MR. WALSH: That's a really good

 21 question. So the way that we envision right now

 22 for most dangers would be something like an object

 23 moving towards you at a high rate of speed. If

 24 someone is walking towards you and the system

 25 detects that they are moving very quickly, not

 35

 1 getting out of the way, either way the system does

 2 let you know that a person is approaching you, but

 3 if they are getting into a certain range it will

 4 consider it a danger. The same with a vehicle and

 5 animal.

 6 Some of the other things that it would

 7 see that it would warn you about, I wouldn't say

 8 necessarily like it's a danger where it's going to

 9 be very loud at you, but it's going to tell you

 10 things like it detects a sign on the floor that

 11 says wet floor, it let's you know if there is a

 12 closed door in front of you in your path, you know,

 13 just anything that you might see. If there is

 14 something in your path that you might trip over,

 15 just stuff like that.

 16 But as far as like the big dangers, it

 17 would be anything that's like a fast moving object.

 18 MR. STRUNK: I'd recommend you guys

 19 handle that and that would probably be one that

 20 takes a lot of feedback. But if my, you know,

 21 9-year-old niece is running at me to give me a hug

 22 she might be dangerous because of the messes she

 23 causes but not necessarily because she is coming to

 24 run and give me a hug.

 25 So I just want us to be really mindful

 36

 1 that the system we create is informative and that

 2 it is customizable in that regard, you know, just

 3 as much as I may want to know that a particular

 4 thing that one might consider dangerous is there

 5 because I may want to interact with it. So it is

 6 good to know that the floor is wet, but I also may

 7 want to be the one to move that wet floor sign now

 8 that the floor is dry.

 9 MR. WALSH: Exactly. The intention of

 10 it is because it's conversational AI you should be

 11 able to take the features and sort of tell the

 12 system exactly how you want it to function. And

 13 the intention is with the initial setup with a

 14 counselor or staff, different organizations, that

 15 is going to be setup tailored to what works best

 16 for you, what sounds are working best if you need

 17 sounds, what visuals, if you can see visuals, and

 18 what sort of things you would need, so there's

 19 going to be a lot of testing.

 20 MR. STRUNK: Thank you.

 21 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury. So I have

 22 a couple of questions. First I just want to say

 23 I'm really glad that you are coming out like during

 24 the development process to talk to us, that gives

 25 us a chance to give feedback early.

 37

 1 One question is about the name LUNA,

 2 like it sounds like there has got to be some symbol

 3 in that, like because it means moon in Spanish and

 4 everything, so like I wonder if there is a symbol

 5 to that?

 6 And then also I'm curious about other

 7 entities, this is great you are coming to us, but

 8 just as other entities, have you considered talking

 9 to, for example, consumer organizations of Blind

 10 and visually impaired people like the National

 11 Federation of the Blind, the American Council of

 12 the Blind?

 13 As well as I have a Master's degree

 14 and have worked in a field where we teach Blind

 15 people how to get around, some people call it

 16 orientation mobility. Those university programs,

 17 sometimes people would bring products to us like at

 18 the research institutes and we could talk to them

 19 that way. Have you also looked at talking with

 20 those folks?

 21 MR. WALSH: Yeah, great question.

 22 Actually LUNA stands for Location Understanding

 23 Navigation and Assistance. So it's just an acronym

 24 for what the system is actually doing in the back

 25 end.

 38

 1 And to your point, really the

 2 intention is through this development step one,

 3 just because we started working with Vocational

 4 Rehab at Stout, which is very close to us, through

 5 that actually we met Natasha and it was just sort

 6 of a coincidence that things were going down a

 7 similar road. And we are at the point where it's

 8 beneficial to start getting into the process of

 9 getting the feedback before we actually start

 10 building stuff that, you know, we don't want to put

 11 in stuff that doesn't work.

 12 So the intention is to get it to a

 13 point, you know, here and through UW Stout where

 14 it's ready to take it to more organizations and get

 15 feedback and more refined. We would really like to

 16 get it out like second quarter of next year, but we

 17 are open to taking as long as it takes working with

 18 as many organizations, because ultimately a product

 19 like this is not something that is really marketed,

 20 it's more of a tool for, you know, counselors and

 21 stuff like that to help people that have certain

 22 disabilities. So of course we want to work with

 23 all of those organizations. Good question.

 24 MS. SANDERS: Okay. So we sort of

 25 sidetracked you, did you have more things you

 39

 1 wanted to say?

 2 MR. WALSH: No, no. I mean Taylor can

 3 go through like one really, really quick thing. He

 4 will just go through the glaucoma and kind of just

 5 show -- I know some people earlier did talk with us

 6 and they were able to see like the actual how the

 7 indoor navigation works, it sees the world, very

 8 easy to set up.

 9 But all of these things, we hope to

 10 come up here in a couple months and leave some

 11 glasses. Well, I can probably come in a couple

 12 weeks and leave like a set of Meta Quests so you

 13 can play with that, but the actual glasses where

 14 people could use those that have the vision

 15 impairment and start testing those out, we hope to

 16 have that one out in a couple of months and that

 17 will be better. But this is just sort of like a

 18 step one introducing ourselves and getting initial

 19 feedback.

 20 And then we are going to get a lot of

 21 the really good feedback when you start playing

 22 with it, and we look forward to that.

 23 You are good, Taylor, go in your

 24 little world.

 25 Taylor is in his little world there.

 40

 1 MR. O'CONNOR: Should there be audio

 2 coming through?

 3 MR. BROWN: There should be.

 4 MS. JERDE: There should be audio.

 5 MR. BROWN: And I don't know if it has

 6 to be turned on the host end or if that's

 7 something on my end.

 8 MR. ANDREWS: When you shared your

 9 screen did you click share audio?

 10 MR. WALSH: Yeah, there is some audio

 11 there.

 12 MR. BROWN: I see that I have it on.

 13 Are we getting any in?

 14 MR. WALSH: I'm not getting anything.

 15 It may just be a mystery that will have to be

 16 shared, we can share a video later.

 17 (Working on system.)

 18 MR. WALSH: We might just call this a

 19 failure on tech.

 20 MR. BROWN: You can see the visual at

 21 least, that is a simulation of kind of what someone

 22 would see. You can only see one eye, I can see

 23 both, but it's a very blurry visual of what an

 24 office would look like. But I can give it a

 25 command to navigate me to my cubical.

 41

 1 MS. SANDERS: So this is Judy. How do

 2 I know what all the sounds mean that I heard, you

 3 know?

 4 MR. BROWN: So that would be part of

 5 the training that you would have to go through. So

 6 we want to make it -- sorry about that. So in

 7 terms of I'm going to stop streaming here too.

 8 Sounds, we want it to be as

 9 customizable to the person as possible, because

 10 what we noticed when going through ourselves is a

 11 lot of sounds are very jarring to us and they might

 12 not be jarring to other people.

 13 So we would have a lot of presets,

 14 essentially, that you can kind of go through and

 15 custom tailor it to what you want to hear. And we

 16 also want to note that for dangerous things like

 17 doors, stairs, things like that, we do rely on

 18 words instead of actual sounds so you don't confuse

 19 them for something else, so.

 20 MS. SANDERS: That's good.

 21 MR. MANAHAN: There is distinguished

 22 tones between certain objects like people and walls

 23 and objects in your path, but things with higher

 24 importance, a higher priority, are going to be

 25 given words as well, just to make sure that there

 42

 1 is no confusion, to kind of make the user

 2 experience a lot more safe for everyone using it.

 3 MS. O'CONNOR: Briley.

 4 MS. SANDERS: Briley.

 5 MS. O'CONNOR: Question. So the

 6 visual simulation piece is for demo purposes,

 7 right?

 8 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

 9 MS. O'CONNOR: The question in this

 10 case is when you develop this this is designed to

 11 be used in conjunction with another mobility aid,

 12 right, like a cane or a guide dog?

 13 MR. BROWN: Yes. So this is not ever

 14 meant to replace a cane or a seeing eye dog, it is

 15 a supplement to those. It is meant to be used in

 16 tandem to give you information that those other

 17 devices that you are more familiar with normally

 18 could not give you.

 19 MR. ZHANG: This is Ben.

 20 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Ben.

 22 MR. ZHANG: Do you guys know or if you

 23 could divulge, do you know what kind of AI model

 24 you guys are using? Because I'm just concerned

 25 where the, I guess, visual data is being sent to

 43

 1 and what happens after it gets sent?

 2 MR. BROWN: So currently in our demo

 3 we are using TPT, but we recognize that that is

 4 something that we would not put in our final system

 5 and for reasons, actually, other than security.

 6 In the final system we want to put

 7 everything on board the device. The main reason

 8 for this is so you don't need an active internet

 9 connection to use vision-based features and also

 10 the conversational AI itself, everything would just

 11 be on board the device. And that would also

 12 fulfill that request that you just gave to have

 13 everything on board the device not going to any

 14 kind of external server being stored anywhere so

 15 nobody is actually able to see what you are seeing

 16 at any given point, that's all just internal and

 17 none of it is stored for anyone's use other than

 18 immediate use when you are actually walking through

 19 an environment.

 20 MS. SANDERS: Corbb, you get the last

 21 question.

 22 MR. O'CONNOR: So I would second

 23 Ryan's point about the word danger. I think there

 24 are a lot of things that are not dangerous out in

 25 the world that -- like I just heard you refer to a

 44

 1 door as danger. A door, I can assure you, has not

 2 ever been something that I found to be dangerous.

 3 You know, stairs, knowing that stairs are present

 4 could be a helpful data point, but if I'm using my

 5 cane or I'm using my dog, again not dangerous.

 6 And so I think that that coupled with

 7 Briley's question or comment about the simulation

 8 purposes, I think I would strongly encourage you to

 9 not use simulations at all, whether for demo

 10 purposes or for, you know, just really at all.

 11 I think what I have found to be far

 12 more effective at combating stereotypes and not

 13 creating additional fear and misconceptions about

 14 blindness is for Blind people ourselves to speak

 15 about the experience that we have for videos of the

 16 experience to be here is what the camera sees and

 17 here is what it is describing, or here is a Blind

 18 person, actual Blind person, not just somebody in

 19 this space, right, walking through and exploring

 20 and you get that both sides of the experience.

 21 When we get into simulations it

 22 creates this idea of somebody looking at that going

 23 gosh, your life as a Blind person must be awful

 24 because I'm putting my view as a sighted person

 25 inside this with no training or exposure or

 45

 1 experience. And I know that's not your intention,

 2 but we can point you certainly to lots of research

 3 that has been done on this and most importantly the

 4 lived experience of Blind people that has -- I

 5 found that to be a real concern.

 6 MS. SANDERS: Okay. I want to thank

 7 you for this, I hope you have found it helpful, I

 8 know we have. And we will look forward to seeing

 9 it over here and playing with it.

 10 MR. WALSH: Yes.

 11 MS. SANDERS: Thank you.

 12 MR. WALSH: Thank you.

 13 MS. SANDERS: All right. Now we are

 14 going to hear from Natasha.

 15 MS. JERDE: Thank you, this is

 16 Natasha. And I told Mohx Games, I said, this group

 17 is going to give you the most honest feedback and

 18 the most meaningful feedback, and so I appreciate

 19 all of your questions and thoughts.

 20 So I am happy to be here with you all

 21 tonight. I want to start with talking a little bit

 22 about what's happening nationally. Today the

 23 Senate Appropriations Committee marked up their

 24 fiscal year 25 Labor Health Human Services

 25 Education Appropriation Legislation. And a few

 46

 1 national organizations, including CSAVR, have been

 2 engaging in Hill visits to protect our statutorily

 3 mandated inflationary increase for the Voc Rehab

 4 Program.

 5 So what's at risk right now?

 6 $415 million for the VR grants was rescinded in the

 7 House bill. The annual inflationary increase for

 8 those grants starting in '24 and beyond was being,

 9 I don't know, taken away?

 10 A Removed, we are not getting the inflationary

 11 increase. This amounts to a $287 million loss for

 12 '24 and a $415 million loss for '25.

 13 And the authority for the Disability

 14 Innovation Fund was actually eliminated from the

 15 House bill, it actually was eliminated last year as

 16 well, but they did put it back in. The Disability

 17 Innovation Fund allows for money that's returned

 18 from states to be put back in the pool for

 19 organizations to use for disability related

 20 activities.

 21 If that authority gets taken away, all

 22 of that money gets put to other programs, nothing

 23 to do with Vocational Rehabilitation. So that's

 24 happening right new. I don't know what has

 25 happened at the end of today, but everything that's

 47

 1 happening is a clear result of the agencies across

 2 the country sending back millions and millions of

 3 dollars, 300 plus million dollars of Vocational

 4 Rehabilitation funds was returned and so Congress

 5 is sending a message to us loud and clear.

 6 And another message was that the most

 7 recent Disability Innovation Fund Grant that was

 8 opened up, it was opened up to many, many different

 9 organizations, not just Voc Rehab. And in a way

 10 that was the Feds challenging others to do it

 11 better than VR. So we are at a precipice.

 12 But there is some good news happening

 13 that hopefully will change the course in time. Our

 14 Federal partner, RSA, has started sharing stories

 15 from across the nation in hopes that the great work

 16 happening gets Congressional attention. We

 17 submitted two stories of our own.

 18 And second, applications are

 19 skyrocketing across the country, applications for

 20 the Voc Rehab Program. And states that have

 21 historically sent back funds are no longer doing

 22 so. I talked to Ohio, typically they send back 30

 23 million each year, and this year they are keeping

 24 it all, Rehab Services Administration.

 25 So as a Council you are able to reach

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 1 out to state and federal law makers when we as a

 2 state agency cannot. So I encourage you to

 3 consider what actions you may be able to take to

 4 influence our federal partners and Congress.

 5 Now, locally I want to talk a little

 6 bit about the Inclusive Worksite Training and

 7 Certification. A few years ago the task force for

 8 eliminating subminimum wage here in Minnesota was

 9 created.

 10 Recently that task force issued a

 11 recommendation for DEED, the Department of

 12 Employment and Economic Development, to create an

 13 inclusive worksite training and certification for

 14 Minnesota businesses about hiring people with

 15 disabilities, creating inclusive work places,

 16 providing accommodations and universal design best

 17 practices.

 18 This program is going to be

 19 implemented by Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

 20 They received funds from the Department of Human

 21 Services here in Minnesota to begin this work and

 22 they have coined the name of the program to be Hire

 23 Ability Minnesota. And there will be an overview

 24 provided at an upcoming workforce summit in Duluth.

 25 And this certification program, I think, will be

 49

 1 launched in the next year or two.

 2 And I mentioned the Disability

 3 Innovation Fund Grant. As I mentioned at our last

 4 council meeting, we did apply for this grant and

 5 we submitted our application on July 5. We did a

 6 three by three approach. We have three audiences,

 7 three objectives and three tiers of service we are

 8 proposing.

 9 We are calling our model Evolve

 10 Employment and it's focused on individuals who are

 11 Blind, low vision and Deafblind who acquire a loss

 12 of vision during their working years. This

 13 includes encumbent workers at risk for or

 14 experiencing job loss, new Americans and

 15 individuals who have been detached from the

 16 workforce for more than 27 weeks, so people who

 17 have been long-term unemployed.

 18 And we have three objectivities. The

 19 first is to offer a three tiered portfolio of

 20 services that include a universal targeted and

 21 intensive approaches. The second objective is to

 22 create a coordinated team approach to support

 23 individuals in retaining and obtaining employment.

 24 And objective three is to enhance community partner

 25 and interagency collaboration through specialized

 50

 1 training and capacity and skill building.

 2 And so we won't hear until early

 3 winter whether our grant was accepted or not.

 4 There have been a number, I think about 100 plus

 5 expressions of interest across the country for this

 6 grant.

 7 So onto some State Services for the

 8 Blind internal updates starting with our

 9 administrative program, our administrative

 10 services.

 11 Community Partnerships. So a few

 12 updates on contracts. We've had two master

 13 contract amendments completed or nearly done. We

 14 have another in the process and four others on the

 15 back burner. We also have two brand new contracts

 16 nearing the end of the development and we are

 17 also -- and the joint powers agreement with the

 18 Iowa Department for the Blind Structured Discovery

 19 Program has been completed.

 20 So while BLIND, Inc is in transitional

 21 status or on a temporary hiatus, we have been able

 22 to secure some agreements with other programs

 23 outside of the state that offer structured

 24 discovery.

 25 We are also working on the annual

 51

 1 agreement renewal with the Associated Press. We

 2 have also been looking at person's that are

 3 planning training or beginning to do the RFP,

 4 Request for Proposals, for an agency to conduct a

 5 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, which we

 6 have talked about in the past.

 7 We will begin monitoring in August.

 8 Our community partner monitoring will start with

 9 one community provider and then a sole proprietor

 10 in September. So we are updating the policy, the

 11 checklist, and these first two monitoring visits

 12 are going to be more technical assistance versus

 13 compliance focused. And the two Lisas --

 14 MR. O'CONNOR: I was --

 15 Oops, what's that?

 16 MR. O'CONNOR: Sorry, I wasn't sure

 17 that was the end of the section, I was wondering if

 18 I could ask you a question.

 19 MS. JERDE: It can be an end of

 20 section, go ahead, Corbb.

 21 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. My apologies.

 22 I was curious you talked about the

 23 person-centered training and one thing that I had

 24 only recently become aware of, but as a note for

 25 the team, is that there has been in the last year

 52

 1 or two resurgence of the idea of disability culture

 2 and a move away from person-centered language

 3 that's really focused on folks -- well, I would say

 4 they would say, disabled individuals, reclaiming

 5 their cultural identities.

 6 And so I think as you create that

 7 training I would think that there may be an

 8 opportunity to bring in some folks who have been

 9 studying that and really kind of get the ultimate

 10 goal is for individuals to mix and match to really

 11 be most accommodating so that, you know, every now

 12 and then I say people who are Blind and, you know,

 13 then later on in the same document I might say

 14 Blind individuals. Just something to be thinking

 15 about.

 16 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. Thank

 17 you for that. And I know Jon is on the call.

 18 Tara, our training coordinator, is the one who

 19 began the Request for Proposals process for that

 20 and I think that would be really good for her to

 21 know.

 22 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury. Is there

 23 room to ask another question?

 24 MS. SANDERS: Go ahead.

 25 MR. SALISBURY: Okay. So first with a

 53

 1 comment. I want to say that I really appreciate

 2 how the Disability Innovation Fund proposal has

 3 evolved. I think it's been -- I think it's in a

 4 good spot, it sounds really good. I like a lot of

 5 what you said.

 6 The Iowa contract about it being a

 7 structured discovery program, I know some of the

 8 people who work at the Iowa program and I think

 9 they are great, the ones that I know, but last I

 10 knew the program at the Iowa Center, while it may

 11 certainly live up to a lot of the spirit of

 12 structured discovery, last I knew it wasn't

 13 officially accredited by the National Blindness

 14 Professional Certification Board and I wonder if

 15 you know if there's any movement toward that

 16 accreditation?

 17 Because it's entirely possible that

 18 everything they are doing they would, like if they

 19 were like visited for accreditation, they would

 20 pass, I just don't actually know. Do you know

 21 anything about their accreditation for structured

 22 discovery?

 23 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. I am

 24 eyeing Jennifer, our contracts guru.

 25 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer. As I

 54

 1 worked on it's a Joint Powers Agreement because in

 2 Iowa the center is run by the state, it's run as a

 3 department within the state so that's why it is

 4 called a Joint Powers Agreement. When I was

 5 working on that I did research into this structured

 6 discovery center, and was looking up -- and it was

 7 listed as a structured discovery center as

 8 accredited, I believe. And I'm double checking it

 9 right now, but that's what I had found, so.

 10 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy, I wonder

 11 if it says accredited by whom?

 12 MS. BEILKE: If you want to give me a

 13 few minutes I can look that up and verify that for

 14 you.

 15 MS. SANDERS: And I mean I don't know

 16 whether we need to know right now, if it's handy,

 17 because it would be easy to say about anything that

 18 it's accredited.

 19 MR. SALISBURY: This is Justin. If I

 20 may just offer one clarifying thing to my comment,

 21 I don't in any way suggest that I wouldn't

 22 recommend it to anybody, you know, if people want

 23 to go there, by all means. And there are some

 24 people I really admire who work there, but I just

 25 like to know about accreditation.

 55

 1 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer. Okay,

 2 thank you for asking, because now I will eat my

 3 words. I have looked it up, according to the

 4 NBPCB, which is listing the certified structure

 5 discovery training centers, Iowa is not listed.

 6 MS. SANDERS: Okay. What are those

 7 initials that that was according to?

 8 MS. BEILKE: The initials stand for,

 9 let me find that. The National Blindness

 10 Professional Certification Board.

 11 MS. SANDERS: I missed that.

 12 MS. BEILKE: Yes. And so the --

 13 MS. SANDERS: The acronyms are so

 14 wonderful.

 15 MS. BEILKE: Would you like me to tell

 16 you the centers that are listed or does that make a

 17 difference?

 18 MR. SALISBURY: This is Justin. I

 19 suspect I would know the other centers, but

 20 really --

 21 MS. SANDERS: You might, but I bet the

 22 rest of us don't.

 23 MR. SALISBURY: Sure, so that could be

 24 useful.

 25 I guess in terms of the contract it

 56

 1 may even be that us communicating with them as we

 2 are building the contract, you know, that somehow

 3 might inspire them to check the box of getting

 4 accreditation. I don't know. But please go ahead.

 5 MS. BEILKE: Yes. And for Iowa, I

 6 believe what, I'm looking now to see, I believe

 7 maybe what it was that I saw was that they used

 8 the -- they used the philosophy of structured

 9 discovery, but it is not, you are correct, it is

 10 not certified, but they use the philosophy.

 11 And in this case, in the case that we

 12 had a customer who needed training and wished to go

 13 because that was the closest available in

 14 geographic location, so you are correct.

 15 MR. HART: Rocky Hart.

 16 MS. SANDERS: Rocky.

 17 MR. HART: Let me get to a mike here.

 18 MR. ANDREWS: There's one here, Rocky.

 19 MS. JERDE: It's on the table, we have

 20 tabletops now.

 21 MR. HART: Got it, thank you.

 22 I'm wondering if you can provide --

 23 MS. SANDERS: Back up.

 24 MR. HART: Sorry. Is this good?

 25 MS. SANDERS: Yeah.

 57

 1 MR. HART: I wonder if you could

 2 provide a little bit more clarification for us on

 3 you mentioned that some of the states are sending

 4 back funds, although not all of them are from their

 5 rehabilitation program and there have been some

 6 messages sent by Congress regarding that.

 7 What does that mean in terms of the

 8 National Rehabilitation Program and where it

 9 currently stands? Is SSB and other rehab agencies

 10 going to be affected by money being sent back or

 11 where does that stand currently?

 12 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. That is

 13 an excellent question. Yes, it's going to impact

 14 us because that's less money that we have available

 15 to provide services. We are supposed to be getting

 16 an inflationary increase, we have not for a few

 17 years which means costs go up, but we don't get

 18 more money which means we are carefully watching

 19 the number of applications that are coming in, the

 20 cost of different administrative things and we are

 21 in great shape right now, but I am not a fool so I

 22 am keeping an eye on that and preparing in case we

 23 yet again don't get an increase. And if they do

 24 cut the program we need to be prepared for that as

 25 well.

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 1 The bigger issue is one that has been

 2 a long time coming which is: Is the VR program

 3 valuable? Is it actually producing outcomes? Is

 4 it actually doing what it is supposed to do and if

 5 not, who out there can do it better?

 6 And that, I think, is where we are at

 7 right now. And states who send back money they

 8 need to figure out what they are doing and how they

 9 are not going to do that anymore.

 10 Some of it has to do with their state

 11 isn't kicking in their required contribution, we

 12 have a state match. Texas, for instance,

 13 repeatedly sends back 50 plus million dollars every

 14 year because their state does not match their full

 15 amount.

 16 We are fortunate we are not going to

 17 be sending back a penny and continue to not send

 18 back a penny, but other states are not so

 19 fortunate.

 20 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Let's let Natasha

 21 continue.

 22 MS. JERDE: I will try to skip over

 23 the boring stuff, Judy.

 24 MR. STRUNK: There is nothing to skip

 25 them.

 59

 1 MS. JERDE: Okay, just bear with me

 2 everyone. All right. Can I just say I love all

 3 these questions and discussion.

 4 Onto outreach. So we have the two

 5 Lisas, we call them the two Lisas, they are

 6 fabulous. They are continuing to be busy spreading

 7 the word of services throughout the state. Here

 8 are some things that they are working on.

 9 They have been collaborating on a

 10 Communication Center marketing ad for statewide

 11 radio broadcast. Joe Papke, our supervisor for

 12 Radio Talking Book, recorded a 30 second schpiel

 13 and it will go out around 90 different stations.

 14 They have been meeting with eye clinic

 15 doctors, techs and staff across the state because

 16 there is that statutory requirement that if they

 17 diagnose someone with some loss of vision in some

 18 way they are mandated by state to refer them to our

 19 program and they don't, they don't. So that's what

 20 the leases are for.

 21 We are working on outreach to

 22 immigrant and underserved and other underserved

 23 communities with our new ELL, English Language

 24 Learning specialist, Abbi Mayland, she will be back

 25 from Adjustment to Blindness training next week.

 60

 1 We are continuing our Communication

 2 Center outreach focusing on audio book access for a

 3 variety of physical and print related disabilities.

 4 We are currently strategizing a plan for Radio

 5 Talking Book outreach. We have been gathering

 6 stories of impact to share our customers'

 7 successes.

 8 We have been representing at vendor

 9 booths at health fairs and conferences, senior

 10 centers. We have been submitting proposals to

 11 speak at a variety of conferences and our website

 12 continues to be refreshed. Please continue

 13 providing feedback on how that website can be

 14 better. I know several of you already have, please

 15 keep that coming.

 16 We hope that you are getting our

 17 monthly editions of the SSB Messenger Newsletter

 18 and I also believe the Council receives our

 19 biweekly bits. And if you ever want to contribute

 20 to those, share a story, share updates or

 21 announcements, please let either of the Lisas know.

 22 These next few months are going to be

 23 busy, we have the State Fair coming, there is a

 24 workforce summit in Duluth, the National Disability

 25 Employment Awareness month begins in October, the

 61

 1 theme is disappointing, it's good jobs, so we are

 2 going to change it to great jobs, I don't know why

 3 the theme is just good jobs, that's the national

 4 theme. White Cane Day and then we have the

 5 national conferences, it's going to be a busy next

 6 few months.

 7 So onto facilities which I was going

 8 to skip but maybe it's not too boring. All of our

 9 security updates have been completed and we get to

 10 kick off our cafeteria remodel on Monday, so we

 11 timed it to start right after this council meeting.

 12 So when you return in October you will be eating in

 13 style at our new kitchen. We will have a rehab

 14 teaching space with some private areas for Kia,

 15 Char and other community partners to utilize.

 16 After that's done we are moving to our

 17 Workforce Development and Senior Services side of

 18 the building, knocking down cubeville, turning it

 19 into more hoteling spaces and communal gathering

 20 spaces. And we are getting Senior Services much

 21 more storage.

 22 And I had mentioned earlier a small

 23 team of voc rehab services staff will be moving in

 24 to the administrative side of the building in

 25 November, we look forward to welcoming them. And

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 1 the Council gave an incredible suggestion to have

 2 them participate in some introductory training,

 3 etiquette training, not full blown Adjustment to

 4 Blindness Training, but at least some sort of

 5 introduction. And so I hope we can tap into the

 6 Council, perhaps, for some of that.

 7 And moving onto fiscal. We are close

 8 to wrapping up the most recent state fiscal year

 9 and we just finished our budget for 2025. We still

 10 have a few months left of the federal fiscal year,

 11 but we are actually in great shape.

 12 For the VR program we exceeded our

 13 15 percent pre-employment transition services

 14 reserve for 2023. It's a two year, we have two

 15 years and we are already close to meeting our

 16 15 percent requirement for 2024.

 17 We also met our state match

 18 requirements, so we are not going to be sending one

 19 dime back and we came in about 15 percent under

 20 budget, which does leave some breathing room

 21 because I don't know what's going to happen this

 22 coming year.

 23 Last year we were able to invest over

 24 a million dollars of our program income from Social

 25 Security into Senior Services and we hope to

 63

 1 continue doing so year over year. And we do have

 2 enough funds, as I said, to sustain our current

 3 setup into this next year, however, we will not be

 4 adding any new staff that are not already accounted

 5 for. We will fill vacancies, but we are done with

 6 our hiring spree.

 7 I will do a quick pause.

 8 MR. SALISBURY: This is Justin. So I

 9 am really intrigued by this Hire Ability Minnesota,

 10 is that connected through a national network to

 11 some of the other hire abilities that are in other

 12 states?

 13 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. Yes, in

 14 a way, it's modeled after what other states have

 15 been doing. If I had my way I don't like the name,

 16 I said it sounded like an agency, not a branding,

 17 but there is like Hire Ability Vermont and there is

 18 a few others, so yeah, it's mirrored after other

 19 programs.

 20 MS. O'CONNOR: Briley.

 21 MS. SANDERS: Briley.

 22 MS. O'CONNOR: If this was announced

 23 previously and I missed it, let me know. I know

 24 there was some talk last year about hiring a

 25 specific counselor or services navigator for ELL

 64

 1 customers, is that a thing that happened and I

 2 missed that meeting or is that still -- we are

 3 still looking for somebody or is that position not

 4 forthcoming?

 5 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. I

 6 slightly said it, but you stole my thunder. No,

 7 I'm kidding.

 8 We welcomed Abbi Mayland early/mid

 9 June, it was after the Council meeting she

 10 officially started. She is at her Adjustment to

 11 Blindness Training and she will be back next week.

 12 And I really would love her to join in on the

 13 committee, the Diversity Equity and Inclusion

 14 Committee when she is back.

 15 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury. One other

 16 question. So kind of procedurally about the

 17 cafeteria. I know we talked a little bit last time

 18 about the idea of it being called the cafeteria and

 19 there is not food being served in there. I don't

 20 know if we talked at all about the kind of history,

 21 and this would be something that would be older

 22 than any of the employees here, of how -- the idea

 23 of having something called a cafeteria in a Blind

 24 Rehab Agency goes way back into the days when

 25 everything was about sheltered workshops and the

 65

 1 idea was that basically Blind people were not being

 2 taught to feed ourselves or to travel so that if we

 3 weren't being fed in the cafeteria we didn't eat,

 4 like that was just all we had.

 5 And it's just kind of one of those

 6 like legacy things that has just kind of stayed

 7 until it's actually been erased and, again, I know

 8 it's older than any, at least it is older than the

 9 term of employment of anybody here at SSB that

 10 that's been called that, but I wonder what would

 11 the process be like for us to consider a rename on

 12 the word cafeteria over there?

 13 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk.

 14 MS. SANDERS: Ryan.

 15 MR. STRUNK: I guess what I would

 16 start with, perhaps, Natasha, is the fact that you

 17 have quite a number of Blind employees on staff who

 18 I imagine were involved with this project as well,

 19 many of whom probably know the history of this and

 20 some of whom are federationists or councilmembers

 21 with descent philosophy who know that history. And

 22 I wonder the degree to which something like that

 23 arose organically and has been proven as a problem

 24 for the staff of SSB.

 25 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. The only

 66

 1 person I can truly turn to to answer that question

 2 is Dave Andrews who has been with the agency for a

 3 very long time and would know much more than I.

 4 MR. ANDREWS: I would say I think it's

 5 an informal name and it's been used since before I

 6 came. You may have a valid point or we may be

 7 overthinking it, I don't know, but I don't think --

 8 I'm not sure it came out of a negative place, if

 9 that makes sense.

 10 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. I don't

 11 know about any of that, I just wonder when I hear

 12 cafeteria I think of it as a place where people

 13 work and they have a place to get their lunch.

 14 MR. ANDREWS: We also call it the

 15 lunchroom and whatever, I think it's more of an

 16 informal name.

 17 MS. SANDERS: Yeah, but I mean the

 18 reason I wonder, though, is it's really not going

 19 to be that though, is it?

 20 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. Which I

 21 think what Justin is saying there is some influence

 22 on changing the name. I would love for there to be

 23 some sort of, I don't know, naming contest. I

 24 can't promise prices, but we do need a different

 25 name and, frankly, I don't know, I don't know where

 67

 1 the name even started, but let's change it.

 2 So Bri is on this call, she is the

 3 Deputy Director of Operations. Bri, we are going,

 4 I think, to have a naming contest and the Council

 5 can be a part of it.

 6 MS. HOLEMAN: This is Bri. That

 7 sounds good, we will put it on our facilities, our

 8 project plan.

 9 MS. JERDE: All right. This is Tasha,

 10 now onto Program Services, starting with Business

 11 Enterprise Program. So BEP has hired a part-time

 12 bookkeeper, her name is Jane Kelly. Jane comes to

 13 the BEP with a degree in accounting and several

 14 years working in accounting and admin positions.

 15 She will primarily be handling most of the

 16 accounting activity required in BEP and providing

 17 backup support to Kara Martin. She started

 18 yesterday.

 19 Our BEP technician, Keith Severson,

 20 has accepted a promotional position as the

 21 technical service coordinator. We created this new

 22 position so that any and all technical service

 23 provided by BEP could be assigned to both

 24 technicians. And he will transition into his new

 25 role on August 14.

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 1 The BEP is working with MinnCOR

 2 Industries on a new interagency agreement. This

 3 agreement outlines vending service requirements at

 4 the prisons where our operators are providing

 5 vending. That current agreement expires in

 6 September.

 7 We also have finalized agreements with

 8 St. Paul College and St. Cloud State University.

 9 Commissions were successfully eliminated from these

 10 agreements, which is a huge win for the program and

 11 the operators at these locations. This agreement

 12 will serve as the template when negotiating new

 13 agreements with all Minnesota state locations.

 14 This saves the operators thousands of dollars each

 15 year.

 16 The BEP is working with SSB staff to

 17 develop a comprehensive BEP assessment.

 18 Individuals interested in the program as a career

 19 will go through this assessment to ensure a

 20 thorough understanding of what is required to be a

 21 successful operator and to identify specific

 22 training opportunities that would best benefit the

 23 individual of reaching their goal.

 24 The BEP finalized its annual fringe

 25 benefit policy and this new policy provides

 69

 1 operators with an annual reimbursement of $3,400

 2 which can be used for medical expenses or

 3 retirement investments.

 4 The BEP is also working with the

 5 elected committee on a potential $4,000 vacation

 6 payout for each operator. We are working with RSA

 7 to determine how best to provide initial stocks and

 8 supplies to our operators.

 9 The feds released some technical

 10 assistance which raised more questions than answers

 11 about the process that we currently utilize

 12 consistent with our mission to ensure all

 13 activities comply with the guidelines we have. We

 14 have been researching this issue further and trying

 15 to figure out if we need to revise what we are

 16 doing. And the BEP is researching a potential

 17 vending and food service opportunity at Camp Ripley

 18 in Little Falls.

 19 So onto Senior Services. 3,467

 20 individuals have been served to date with just shy

 21 of two months to go until the end of the federal

 22 fiscal year. This does not include the 58 people

 23 who are under the age of 55 that we have also

 24 served.

 25 We are working on a marketing strategy

 70

 1 for northeast Minnesota as referrals in that region

 2 have not been where they should be. The unit will

 3 be meeting for a day long training day at the

 4 Minnesota Braille & Talking Book Library in

 5 September.

 6 Unfortunately our Mayo partnership is

 7 in limbo. Two of the low vision doctors left this

 8 year and the one remaining, Dr. Softing, is

 9 retiring in September. There is some talk that

 10 Mayo may be abandoning their low vision optometry

 11 practice.

 12 I will pause there before I go to

 13 Workforce Development.

 14 MS. SANDERS: I think you are okay.

 15 MS. JERDE: Okay. So some Workforce

 16 Development Unit supervisors are currently

 17 undergoing what's called a Hay review. Basically

 18 the whole state, actually, is looking at

 19 classification and compensation of managers,

 20 supervisors and they have already looked at

 21 counseling staff. As a result, our counselors and

 22 some of our other professional level VR staff did

 23 get a pay increase.

 24 We are working with the innovation lab

 25 on our referral and intake process. We've done it

 71

 1 the same way since 2015 and since our Evolve VR

 2 work has started, this is an area that we wanted to

 3 really look at to make sure we are actually having

 4 a good intake process that gets people through the

 5 door as quickly and painlessly as possible and into

 6 services.

 7 Some data. So we ended 2023, I will

 8 give you a snapshot of where we landed and where we

 9 are at for 2024. We had 270 applications,

 10 typically we have been hovering around 220, so we

 11 are starting to see that spike in applications that

 12 other states are seeing.

 13 We are currently at ten applications

 14 starting July 1. In 2023 we served 931 people, in

 15 2024 we are currently at 784 open cases. We have 7

 16 people pending applications. Last program year we

 17 had 59 successful closures and since July 1 we are

 18 already at 5. Our unsuccessful closures we ended

 19 at 97 last year and we've closed 8 cases

 20 unsuccessfully since July 1. And then the average

 21 caseload size per counselor is 52 currently.

 22 Some general updates. So after

 23 working with the State of Minnesota for over 40

 24 years our VR tech, Debbie Sengbusch, also known as

 25 Debbie Mahulka, will retire on October 5. So a

 72

 1 huge congratulations to Debbie who has been a

 2 steady and caring member of our team.

 3 We are also thrilled to announce that

 4 on August 28 Zujeith Lewis, she goes by Luna, will

 5 be our Mankato VR tech. And from the Employment

 6 and Training Team Abigail or Abbi Mayland is our

 7 new ELL specialist. She will be finishing up her

 8 training this week. She actually comes from the

 9 adult basic education side, so the Title II side,

 10 and spent a lot of her time teaching in Japan.

 11 And we have a really cool story to

 12 share. So it's around our pharmacy technician

 13 training program. So VRS, Voc Rehab Services, and

 14 State Services for the Blind, we partnered with CVS

 15 and Thryv Consulting the end of last year to

 16 develop a pharmacy technician training program for

 17 the State of Minnesota.

 18 So CVS actually came to us and said

 19 that there was a huge need for pharmacy

 20 technicians. CVS pulled Thryv in, since they've

 21 worked with other agencies in the past, and then

 22 Thryv worked with the Minnesota Board of Pharmacy

 23 to make sure all requirements were met for the

 24 training program.

 25 Our employment team screened the

 73

 1 individuals for the three day a week, six week

 2 program and the first class started in May. There

 3 were nine individuals who participated, six from

 4 Voc Rehab and three from SSB and all nine finished.

 5 And so far four people have been offered

 6 employment, two of which are SSB customers with the

 7 third SSB customer who actually got an interview

 8 and we are still awaiting the results.

 9 Positions start, they can be part of

 10 full time and they start around 16 an hour, but are

 11 often around the 20 plus dollar an hour range. And

 12 now we are trying to expand this training program

 13 for Walgreens, Coborn's, Wal-Mart and other

 14 pharmacies. So if more people are interested in

 15 pharmacy technician work, we will be able to offer

 16 more classes in the future.

 17 A short update from the Employer

 18 Reasonable Accommodation Fund Program. This is our

 19 two-year pilot program. We welcome Morgan Barrett,

 20 she is our new account technician who started

 21 yesterday.

 22 And this quarter ERAF experienced an

 23 unprecedented surge in applications and

 24 reimbursements marking a significant milestone in

 25 our efforts to support businesses in implementing

 74

 1 reasonable accommodations.

 2 The total reimbursements has amounted

 3 to a little over $325,000 across 37 applications.

 4 This remarkable growth highlights how the word

 5 about ERAF is spreading. For instance, in the

 6 second quarter we had about 14,000 in

 7 reimbursements and every single quarter it has

 8 exponentially grown.

 9 The notes from the Pre-employment

 10 Transition Services team, there is a lot happening

 11 there. Students are busy with activities this

 12 summer, our peer ambassadors held their first

 13 in-person picnic on July 19 and ten students came

 14 to the event.

 15 And we are excited about our upcoming

 16 camping event trip with Wilderness Inquiry and

 17 Duluth Center for Vital Living which will be August

 18 13 through 15 in the Boundary Waters.

 19 Our latest podcast with Blind

 20 Abilities features four students discussing their

 21 summer internships.

 22 Our Pre-ETS staff will gather on

 23 August 6 in St. Cloud for our annual retreat. We

 24 will hear from a cultural liaison from PACER Center

 25 to learn about additional ways to engage Somali

 75

 1 students and families, participate in a world cafe

 2 activity, hear from young people about their

 3 journeys and take time to connect with each other

 4 in person.

 5 We have posted the position for the

 6 Pre-ETS VR tech replacing Debbie Sengbusch and our

 7 outreach staff has sent the job announcement out to

 8 our lists, that position closes on August 5.

 9 And finally SSB will be hosting a

 10 career expo in October to connect students with

 11 working adults. Please look for announcements for

 12 volunteers to help with this event, we love having

 13 the Council involved in the expos in the past.

 14 So we are looking for adults who are

 15 Blind, low vision, DeafBlind to talk with students

 16 about their work. And while we've done this in the

 17 past, it has truly been successful because of our

 18 Council and our advocacy organizations who are

 19 willing to share their experiences.

 20 Shane DeSantis is coordinating this

 21 event, so please reach out to him if you are

 22 interested in helping.

 23 I will pause.

 24 MR. SALISBURY: Justin. Sometimes

 25 organizations maybe even like SSB with these

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 1 Pre-ETS programs, having people with cool jobs come

 2 and talk to the kids, but also sometimes consumer

 3 organizations like NFB or ACB, sometimes like to

 4 invite people with cool jobs to come and talk about

 5 them.

 6 And healthcare has been a difficult

 7 nut for us to crack with Blind people getting jobs,

 8 so this pharmacy technician thing, it's cool in

 9 itself but it's also cool because it's starting to

 10 crack into that healthcare field.

 11 So if people wanted to try to reach

 12 out to those folks and maybe, like, invite them to

 13 come and speak, how might those people that want to

 14 get in touch with them do that?

 15 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. I will

 16 connect with our employment team. And I don't know

 17 if this is something you would want to separate

 18 from the Council or if you would like to invite

 19 them to the Council, but I can try to make it

 20 happen.

 21 MR. SALISBURY: This is Justin. My

 22 idea isn't even that evolved, I just think that

 23 there's got to be somebody that wants to get in

 24 touch with them.

 25 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. I will

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 1 connect with our employment team.

 2 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Go ahead.

 3 MS. JERDE: All right. Onto the

 4 Communication Center Updates, not much longer I

 5 promise. Audio Services is excited to introduce

 6 two new members, we have our new librarian Molly

 7 McGilp, she started in February and she has come

 8 from the Hennepin County Library system.

 9 And our new audio control coordinator

 10 is Kris Tomes. Kris started with us in July and

 11 has already jump-started our e-text program. She

 12 comes to us with solid experience in the world of

 13 book publishing and e-publishing and most recently

 14 with Lerner Publishing in Minneapolis. Kris is a

 15 graduate of Bemidji State so BSU alums be sure to

 16 reach out.

 17 Molly and Kris are located at the

 18 Communication Center and are always happy to take

 19 your call.

 20 Onto Braille. So kindergarten through

 21 grade 12, where we are at we are serving 24

 22 students which I've looked at past trends and here

 23 is where my concern is: The number of students

 24 receiving Braille seems to be drastically

 25 decreasing. I looked back a few years and the

 78

 1 number of students we were providing Braille for

 2 was in the 120, 130. The last two years we have

 3 been around 42. 42 for '23 and '24. And so I am

 4 concerned what that means and maybe I am reading

 5 into it, but I just wanted to raise that.

 6 We have provided 103 Braille titles

 7 which amounts to almost 81,000 Braille pages.

 8 Onto Engineering and Radio Talking

 9 Book. We have a new electronics technician senior,

 10 Isaac, who is here in the back corner. He is

 11 running the equipment for this meeting and he comes

 12 with years of experience. He is also a veteran.

 13 The work of moving the Braille unit to new

 14 management software continues to move forward. We

 15 hope to go live in the fall or early winter of this

 16 year and I just have to shout out to Dave and team

 17 for just moving this project forward, it has been a

 18 slog.

 19 And we are putting things in order to

 20 move our Audio Services and Radio Talking Book

 21 eventually into the same software later this year.

 22 And we have a new intermittent or we

 23 will have a new intermittent broadcaster soon

 24 because Hope Boos has had to resign due to moving.

 25 And I'm done.

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 1 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you.

 2 MS. O'CONNOR: Briley.

 3 MS. SANDERS: Briley.

 4 MS. O'CONNOR: Just a thought about

 5 your observation about children receiving Braille

 6 instruction. I think part of the reason for that

 7 is one thing I've noticed is the big retirement

 8 surge of TBIs and people that are being hired don't

 9 know Braille.

 10 And so teachers are disincentivized to

 11 teach a thing they don't know. And so, you know,

 12 anything -- the more Blind people we can get in the

 13 field, I mean, Rehab and Blindness in general is

 14 seeing fewer Blind people in it, and some of that

 15 is for good reasons like, you know, we can get

 16 other jobs now which is great, but also just

 17 whatever we can do to help recruit for that. But I

 18 think that trend is important to note so I

 19 appreciate you bringing it up.

 20 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. Thank

 21 you for that very astute observation, I didn't even

 22 think of that and I think you are right.

 23 MS. SANDERS: Okay. I don't have a

 24 watch on. but I will bet we are a little bit

 25 behind.

 80

 1 MR. SALISBURY: 7:23.

 2 MS. SANDERS: We certainly are, but we

 3 do need a break, our interpreters must be ready to

 4 have their arms fall off or something. And so

 5 let's take a ten minute break if we could and then

 6 we will move along.

 7 (Break taken from 7:23 to 7:33 p.m.)

 8 MS. SANDERS: All right. Thank you

 9 everybody, we are about to save a little bit of

 10 time because, Ryan, do you want to tell us your

 11 plan for the Budget Task Force?

 12 MR. STRUNK: Yes, ma'am. I will just

 13 say unfortunately this is one that slipped off my

 14 plate. I have reached out to Chris Johnson to get

 15 the updated budget. I did, however, to Corbb's

 16 point look back at previous budgets to determine

 17 how much we intended to set aside for people to

 18 travel and the number is two.

 19 So we have budgeted traditionally for

 20 two people to travel, however, I think one of the

 21 fringe benefits of my forgetfulness, if there can

 22 be said to be one, is that we know that we

 23 potentially have three people that are interested

 24 in participating now and I should be able to

 25 provide you with the possibility of that sooner

 81

 1 than later, as soon as I get those numbers back

 2 from Chris and we can pull the group together I

 3 will be able to provide more information there.

 4 So mea culpa, I apologize, but I will

 5 have those numbers for you, in fact, we will work

 6 to do it before the next meeting so that if any

 7 decisions need to be made they can be with the

 8 latest facts and figures available.

 9 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Actually it will

 10 have to be made before the next meeting because we

 11 will be doing the traveling in October, you know,

 12 if we have to plan for who can go.

 13 MR. STRUNK: Yes.

 14 MS. SANDERS: So thank you very much.

 15 And the one thing that I'm wondering, when we say

 16 we said two people could go, that I assume means

 17 two people for the whole week?

 18 MR. STRUNK: That is correct.

 19 MS. SANDERS: And so since there are a

 20 couple of people who want just the first two days,

 21 does that leave it a little more open if one more

 22 person or two people could go, say, for the NCSAB

 23 the end of the week and then we will just skip the

 24 middle of the week, but we can work that out.

 25 MR. STRUNK: That's a possibility.

 82

 1 MS. SANDERS: Thank you very much.

 2 All right. So that means -- see, look

 3 at all the time we just made up.

 4 Now we can have our committee reports

 5 and so this is going to be the last -- our outgoing

 6 committees can give their reports for the last time

 7 if they have one to give, if they don't, that's

 8 okay too.

 9 Remember that the new committees start

 10 September 1 and that your reports are due by

 11 October 14. So let's go through the committees

 12 here and the Councils, the State Rehabilitation

 13 Council, that's not ours but the general rehab one.

 14 I'm not sure if there's anybody there. Has anybody

 15 been going to those? I don't think so.

 16 (No response.)

 17 MS. SANDERS: If you do let me know.

 18 I have been attending the Statewide

 19 Independent Living Council meetings and I don't

 20 have a lot to say about it except to say they are

 21 signing up to work at the Fair and they -- and

 22 other county fairs too they are doing. And then

 23 they are also --

 24 Is someone seeking the floor?

 25 (No response.)

 83

 1 MS. SANDERS: No, okay. That's the

 2 main thing that they are doing, they are working

 3 and so we will move on from that one.

 4 MR. ANDREWS: Dave Andrews.

 5 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Dave.

 6 MR. ANDREWS: This is more of an

 7 announcement, but it sort of relates to independent

 8 living and I'm sure many people here know that

 9 Margot Imdieke Cross passed away recently. She

 10 worked for the state and she was an expert in

 11 physical accessibility matters and I know I worked

 12 with her before and other people here I am sure

 13 have too and she really knew her stuff and was a

 14 nice woman.

 15 MS. SANDERS: Yes, yes, she was and we

 16 will miss her.

 17 Okay. Is there a report for the

 18 Communication Center Committee?

 19 (No response.)

 20 MS. SANDERS: We had a written one,

 21 but Steve, are you on the phone, Jacobson?

 22 MR. O'CONNOR: He was not able to be

 23 here tonight I think he told me.

 24 MS. SANDERS: He was on the line

 25 before.

 84

 1 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: He dropped off.

 2 MS. SANDERS: He dropped off, okay. He

 3 is in the corner?

 4 MS. JERDE: It's just like his

 5 background, but there is no Steve.

 6 MS. SANDERS: All right. So we can't

 7 talk to him and say oh, you can come out.

 8 MR. ANDREWS: Dave Andrews.

 9 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Dave.

 10 MR. ANDREWS: I'm the liaison so in

 11 lieu of Steve, there was a written report that you

 12 got from our last meeting and we have not scheduled

 13 our next meeting yet because we knew the committee

 14 members were changing.

 15 MS. SANDERS: Right.

 16 MR. ANDREWS: There really isn't

 17 anything else to say.

 18 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you.

 19 Jennifer Dunnam, Customer

 20 Satisfaction, and this will be your last one.

 21 MS. DUNNAM: I am learning how to use

 22 the microphone. Is it working?

 23 MS. SANDERS: There you go.

 24 MS. DUNNAM: So a very quick little

 25 update. We did meet, our major stuff doesn't kind

 85

 1 of kick in until the next meeting and the meeting

 2 after that, but we did meet because we, as was

 3 discussed at the last Council meeting, Lisa Rogers

 4 is going to be the new main liaison for the

 5 committee. So we met as a committee, along with

 6 Jennifer Beilke, Lisa Rogers and Karen Aldrich just

 7 to kind of get everybody on the same page about

 8 what the committee does, what it's for and where

 9 things are.

 10 It was established that no new

 11 questions will be on the Customer Satisfaction

 12 Survey this year, if that was going to happen that

 13 would have been done months and months ago and

 14 that's fine, we just wanted to make sure of that.

 15 So it was mainly just kind of an

 16 orientation for us to get to know each other and

 17 understand the committee. But one thing that did

 18 arise and it was not something that the committee

 19 itself brought up, but it was brought up that there

 20 was an effort to put the letter that comes ahead of

 21 the survey for one of the surveys in the five

 22 languages, the most commonly spoken languages in

 23 Minnesota that are not English. And it was

 24 wondered whether the Customer Satisfaction Survey

 25 should have the same thing.

 86

 1 I think, if those who were there,

 2 correct me if I am wrong, but as I understand where

 3 we came down on it was that if it seemed like it

 4 would be beneficial to do that, more beneficial,

 5 then effort wise it would be fine as long as we

 6 didn't -- because the survey itself is not going to

 7 be in English we do not want to set up an

 8 expectation that could not be met. So if it's

 9 gonna be done in languages other than English, if

 10 that pre letter would be done, then it should be

 11 stated that the survey will not be in English.

 12 And it was talked about, one potential

 13 benefit of doing that pre letter in languages other

 14 than English would just be to draw attention to it.

 15 But it was clear that the survey was not going to

 16 be in English. So anyway, we will have more in the

 17 future. So thank you.

 18 MS. SANDERS: Okay. And thank you for

 19 your many years of doing this.

 20 All right. The Deafblind Committee,

 21 it's revamping and just about full for the next

 22 committee and Patrick is the chair of it. I don't

 23 know if you have anything you want to say, Patrick,

 24 about last year, but this is your chance if you do.

 25 MR. VELLIA: Yes. We confirmed

 87

 1 everyone that's on it, but remember John just got

 2 promoted to executive director for Helen Keller

 3 National Center so he wants to hold the spot until

 4 he can hire a new regional rep, but that will take

 5 a few months so what do you want me to do with that

 6 spot?

 7 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. I don't

 8 recommend that we hold a spot, but I mean if it

 9 turns out -- I don't want to fill it just to fill

 10 it either. If there is somebody that we come up

 11 with and that you --

 12 MR. VELLIA: I was going to invite

 13 Minnesota Employment Services -- Minnesota

 14 Employment Center to take over to represent -- I

 15 was going to invite MEC to take HKMC's place on the

 16 committee.

 17 MS. SANDERS: What we might want to do

 18 is if there is somebody from that particular

 19 committee that you want to recommend, then we can

 20 probably do that. But rather than hold it as a

 21 slot, because eventually if somebody from Helen

 22 Keller is on that, we may want that person on

 23 there.

 24 So instead of holding the slot for the

 25 position, if you know someone that you would like

 88

 1 that would be my recommendation.

 2 MR. VELLIA: I don't think I should

 3 hold that position until someone fills it from

 4 HKMC.

 5 MS. SANDERS: Exactly. Okay, thank

 6 you.

 7 MR. VELLIA: Next meeting is August 13

 8 so reports due when, September 14?

 9 MS. SANDERS: October 14 is when you

 10 have to have your paragraph, that's for the Annual

 11 Report for what you have accomplished this past

 12 year.

 13 MS. DUNNAM: Jennifer Dunnam.

 14 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Jennifer.

 15 MS. DUNNAM: I meant to mention in my

 16 previous thing just the expectation as the

 17 outgoing -- as Judy has so, you know, teased, I

 18 won't be the chair of the committee this year, but

 19 I do intend to work on the outgoing chair

 20 responsibility of putting that report together and

 21 for this committee, just so everybody is clear,

 22 October 15 would not be a possible deadline for

 23 this committee. So certainly happy to work with

 24 Lisa about what is reasonable.

 25 MS. SANDERS: Okay, sure. She

 89

 1 probably wouldn't mind having it earlier I know.

 2 MS. DUNNAM: No, Madam Chair, I'm

 3 saying this out loud for the whole Council just so

 4 everybody knows, the pieces of the report for this

 5 committee, they are data points that are not

 6 available yet and will not be available by

 7 October 15.

 8 MS. SANDERS: Oh, okay.

 9 MS. DUNNAM: This committee report is

 10 different and it's a big part of the Annual Report,

 11 so we will work to get it done as soon as possible.

 12 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb --

 13 MS. SANDERS: Okay, all right.

 14 Whatever Lisa will accept.

 15 Yes, Corbb.

 16 MR. O'CONNOR: Just back to Patrick's

 17 point, I think I just want to clarify for folks two

 18 things. One is that our committees are not

 19 organizationally appointed, they are person

 20 appointed, so we would need a specific individual.

 21 And I would suggest that any outreach

 22 about whom should fill that spot, I just want to

 23 make sure that it starts with and goes through Judy

 24 as opposed to the committee doing any outreach

 25 about adding additional committee members.

 90

 1 Certainly I think it makes a lot of sense for

 2 committees to figure out when they should have

 3 guest speakers or invite others to participate, as

 4 we've said they are open, but I just want to

 5 clarify that.

 6 MS. SANDERS: Yeah. You know, the

 7 only committee for which that might be an exception

 8 is the Communication Center. For instance, we

 9 usually have a spot for the librarian and that's

 10 because the responsibilities of the Communication

 11 Center overlap and are directly connected to the

 12 things, you know, like the resource center and the

 13 library, they are the only two, I think, that I

 14 know of that actually do that.

 15 MR. ANDREWS: It's all set forth in

 16 the charter too.

 17 MS. SANDERS: Yeah. But I mean I

 18 think it's the only committee that is. There are

 19 some requirements for the Deafblind Committee, but

 20 they are for people, not for agencies. So that's

 21 how that works.

 22 Okay. Do we have an Employment

 23 Committee report? We probably don't because who --

 24 oh, that was Sam and she is not here.

 25 MS. JERDE: Steve is back.

 91

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

 2 he does Employment, so.

 3 MR. VELLIA: Patrick speaking. I want

 4 to clarify. Since I'm on the Deafblind Committee

 5 we've had representatives from different

 6 organizations, it's one person, yes, but each

 7 person represents a different organization like

 8 Ann Mayes is the DeafBlind project, Kim Johnson

 9 from TBSM, Wendy DeVore from CBI, John Filek from

 10 HKNC. That's how it was structured since, so

 11 that's five, I was told we need one person from

 12 each organization that served.

 13 MS. SANDERS: And that's fine to do,

 14 but there is nothing mandated in the bylaws or our

 15 charge that says that we hold a place for that

 16 agency. If we know people who represent that cross

 17 section that's very helpful. So there's nothing

 18 wrong with that, but it's not a given that, you

 19 know, there may be another year when we for some

 20 reason want a different population or something.

 21 I think that's what Corbb is referring

 22 to, you know, that we don't have to hold positions

 23 for an agency. We want the representatives of

 24 those people to fill those spots so we get the

 25 right cross section of people.

 92

 1 Now Steve Jacobson, you are back but

 2 Dave Andrews sort of gave your report. So if you

 3 want to add anything, I don't know how you would

 4 know what to add because you don't know what he

 5 said.

 6 MR. JACOBSON: I didn't think we were

 7 going to be getting to committee reports so

 8 quickly, so I don't know. We don't have another

 9 meeting scheduled yet, we were waiting for the

 10 appointment of the new committee and Dave probably

 11 told you we took a deep dive into Newsline and

 12 Radio Talking Book app.

 13 MS. SANDERS: No, he didn't tell us

 14 that, okay. Let's hear it for Newsline and apps,

 15 okay.

 16 Sam is not here. Is anybody on the

 17 Employment Committee that wants to say something?

 18 (No response.)

 19 MS. SANDERS: All right then. And

 20 that may also apply to the Diversity, Equity and

 21 Inclusion Committee. Is there anybody that wants

 22 to say anything about that one from this past time?

 23 MS. O'CONNOR: No update.

 24 MS. SANDERS: Okay. The Senior

 25 Services Committee doesn't really have one either

 93

 1 because we were taking a vacation, so that's what

 2 we did.

 3 Is there anybody from the Transition

 4 Committee that wants to say anything?

 5 MR. HART: Rocky Hart, I can speak.

 6 MS. SANDERS: Okay, Rocky.

 7 MR. HART: So the last meeting that we

 8 held was on May 13 and at that meeting we discussed

 9 the Tools for School event that was held at State

 10 Services or here in Minneapolis on April 12 for

 11 college bound students and that turned out to be a

 12 great event. We discussed feedback, we got quite a

 13 bit of it.

 14 At this point most of our focus is on

 15 the Career Expo that's happening in October. And

 16 as Natasha reported, Shane DeSantis, the transition

 17 coordinator, is looking for Blind adults and other

 18 professionals for transition students to be able to

 19 network during the expo.

 20 So our next meeting is scheduled for

 21 August 12. We have been meeting the second Monday

 22 of the month. So that is my report at this time.

 23 Thank you.

 24 MS. SANDERS: Okay, thank you very

 25 much.

 94

 1 Now I realize I know this is -- we

 2 have the wrong committee name for the last

 3 committee and that's how come it's last because

 4 it's called Vendor Outcomes and Measures, but it's

 5 now Community Partner Outcomes and Measures and I

 6 don't think it has a report; does that seem right,

 7 Briley? I don't think we --

 8 MS. O'CONNOR: We have not met yet

 9 with the new members.

 10 MS. SANDERS: All right. Does anybody

 11 have any other reports like that? If not, we are

 12 going to go to public comment, but does anybody

 13 have anything with reports?

 14 (No response.)

 15 MS. SANDERS: Okay. I want to

 16 acknowledge, Sue, you have come into the meeting

 17 and we haven't had a roll call since you did so we

 18 didn't get -- I don't know if you want to say hello

 19 or something.

 20 MS. FAGER: Hello.

 21 MS. SANDERS: There we go, all right,

 22 we are glad you are here.

 23 MS. FAGER: Thank you.

 24 MS. SANDERS: Did anybody else come in

 25 that we did not know did?

 95

 1 (No response.)

 2 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Public comment,

 3 anybody have any?

 4 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb.

 5 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

 6 MR. O'CONNOR: So I will start, I am

 7 going to throw Ben into the spotlight after me if

 8 he so wishes to talk about the student event that's

 9 coming up in September in Greater Minnesota, but I

 10 would just say that the remainder of the National

 11 Federation of the Blind of Minnesota's convention

 12 is November 1 to 3 in St. Paul. And we have room

 13 rates at the Doubletree St. Paul East that are $99

 14 a night. That information is going soon on our

 15 website and would be happy to have any of you join

 16 us.

 17 We will also have a public hearing for

 18 State Services for the Blind the evening of

 19 November 1.

 20 Ben, I wonder if you might want to

 21 seek the floor and speak about the event that you

 22 are planning?

 23 MS. BEILKE: Ben is no longer here.

 24 MS. SANDERS: Ben is no longer here,

 25 okay.

 96

 1 Is there anyone else who --

 2 MR. O'CONNOR: The students are

 3 planning an outreach event in the Mankato area, I

 4 believe it's September 14. So anyone who has a

 5 connection up in that area to help us to find

 6 students, we would love to get in touch with them.

 7 MS. SANDERS: All right.

 8 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you Madam Chair.

 9 MS. SANDERS: Thank you.

 10 Was there someone else that had

 11 something?

 12 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha.

 13 MS. SANDERS: Natasha.

 14 MS. JERDE: And I think Briley, you

 15 can go before me if you want.

 16 MS. O'CONNOR: You go, you were first.

 17 MS. JERDE: I just wanted to share so

 18 Jon Benson texted me a little information on the

 19 cafeteria. So he said when SSB first moved to

 20 2200, this office, there was a small food service

 21 counter run by BEP operator Debbie Bach which was

 22 also intended to be open to the public too. And he

 23 said maybe that was why the space was called the

 24 cafeteria versus a break room. It went to strictly

 25 vending because there was not enough business.

 97

 1 Soon lost to the dust of time, that's also why

 2 there's a door that opens from that vestibule. So

 3 a little history, thank you Jon.

 4 Also public hearing sounds very scary,

 5 I've been calling it a town hall to make myself

 6 feel better.

 7 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, ma'am, noted.

 8 MS. SANDERS: I like it, it's less

 9 officious.

 10 MR. ANDREWS: Is it going to be on

 11 CNN?

 12 MR. O'CONNOR: It may be a lively

 13 debate.

 14 MS. SANDERS: We are losing control.

 15 Briley.

 16 MS. O'CONNOR: I know, reel them in.

 17 So I wanted to just briefly, I know

 18 I've been here many years participating in these

 19 meetings, but I was hired in July, starting in July

 20 as the interim director at BLIND, Incorporated and

 21 so I wanted to let everybody know that we are on

 22 the path to resuming partial service in the near

 23 future and working on a long-term plan to relaunch

 24 our full program. So we'll be keeping everybody

 25 posted about that.

 98

 1 But I really appreciate being in a

 2 state where we have such a wonderful relationship

 3 with State Services. It's been an adventure

 4 getting onboarded into this job and I could not be

 5 doing it as successfully as I have been able to

 6 without the help and support from several SSB staff

 7 people, including Jennifer Beilke and Susan Kusz

 8 and Debbie Hobson and Rob Hobson, many other people

 9 who are very supportive of BLIND, Incorporated and

 10 our mission.

 11 And I'm so happy we are somewhere

 12 where we have that kind of fruitful relationship

 13 with State Services. So I wanted to thank people

 14 specifically for that and let people know that we

 15 are on the road to recovery here. Thank you.

 16 MS. SANDERS: Very good. Was there

 17 someone else?

 18 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Justin.

 20 MR. SALISBURY: Yes. So announcing

 21 another really cool conference coming up. In

 22 November, actually attached to Veteran's Day

 23 weekend, November 11 through 13, in Baltimore,

 24 Maryland there is going to be a conference called

 25 Dare to be Remarkable. And this conference has

 99

 1 happened, I think, three or four times in the past,

 2 I know I have been to it once before.

 3 And it is a three day national

 4 training conference for education and

 5 rehabilitation professionals who work with Blind

 6 and low vision and transition-age students and

 7 adults. And this is largely provided with an

 8 emphasis on the structured discovery model of

 9 adjustment to blindness training. I think it's

 10 also something that people should keep on their

 11 radar.

 12 MS. SANDERS: Okay. So when you say

 13 that, what kind of people? I mean, is it a

 14 professional conference for people who are going to

 15 be working in the field of blindness or is it a I

 16 just want to go have fun?

 17 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury. Yeah, so I

 18 think that's a great question. This is really

 19 marketed with things to offer for really anyone who

 20 would have a reason to be at this meeting right

 21 now.

 22 If you have really anything to do with

 23 education or rehabilitation for the Blind, whether

 24 you are a policy maker, administrator, teacher,

 25 counselor or really anyone whose interested in

 100

 1 participating in the process, there is something

 2 for you there.

 3 If you go to the conference web page,

 4 basically you can Google in quotes Dare to be

 5 Remarkable and you will get this conference. And

 6 you will see in there, in the call for submissions,

 7 which is still open by the way, anyone here who

 8 might be interested in presenting there are

 9 opportunities. There is going to be basically

 10 categories for these submissions for all of these

 11 different groups of people who might be there.

 12 MS. SANDERS: Okay. So you can look

 13 that up and if you think it applies to you and you

 14 want an adventure, go for it and then come back and

 15 tell us what we missed.

 16 All right. Any other last minute

 17 things that somebody wants to throw in?

 18 (No response.)

 19 MS. SANDERS: I knew we could make up

 20 time. We did it.

 21 Last call.

 22 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk.

 23 MS. SANDERS: Yes, Ryan.

 24 MR. STRUNK: Just one thing I note

 25 because earlier during Natasha's report she took

 101

 1 this away as an action item. I'm struck by Jon

 2 Benson's story about the cafeteria and why the

 3 lunchroom/cafeteria is still sometimes called the

 4 cafeteria is actually a story of Blind empowerment

 5 and a Blind person who independently ran a

 6 cafeteria, a food service cafeteria that was open

 7 to the public and actually got us in front of

 8 people in a positive way.

 9 And so if you still intend to have

 10 that contest to see about a name change, you know,

 11 I certainly support how you want to run things, but

 12 I will just offer that as two cents as far as

 13 something to keep in mind how these things actually

 14 can have a sterling history attached to them. And

 15 I thought that was a pretty cool piece of

 16 information from Jon.

 17 MS. SANDERS: I think so too. And I'm

 18 thinking back, I had forgotten that Debbie was

 19 there and I think I remember other people following

 20 in her footsteps, when she probably started

 21 teaching, to run that thing. I just don't remember

 22 who they are or were. But it was in the '80s when

 23 I would have discovered it.

 24 All right. I believe if there's no

 25 further business we can have a motion to adjourn.

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 1 MR. HOBSON: Rob Hobson, move to

 2 adjourn.

 3 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb seconds.

 4 MS. SANDERS: All right. Rob moves

 5 and Corbb seconds a motion to adjourn. We have to

 6 call the roll.

 7 Connie Berg.

 8 MS. BERG: Yes.

 9 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Diane.

 10 MS. DOHNALIK: Diane, yes.

 11 MS. SANDERS: Frank.

 12 MR. ELLER: Frank, yes.

 13 MS. SANDERS: Sue.

 14 MS. FAGER: Sue, yes.

 15 MS. SANDERS: Ryan.

 16 MR. HAENZE: Ryan, yes.

 17 MS. SANDERS: Tom.

 18 MR. HEINL: Yes.

 19 MS. SANDERS: Thea.

 20 MS. KRAMER: Yes.

 21 MS. SANDERS: And Jeff.

 22 MR. MILHELICH: Yes.

 23 MS. SANDERS: Corbb.

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

 25 MS. SANDERS: Justin.

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 1 MR. SALISBURY: Salisbury, yes.

 2 MS. SANDERS: Ryan Strunk.

 3 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, yes.

 4 MS. SANDERS: Patrick.

 5 MR. VELLIA: Yes.

 6 MS. SANDERS: And Judy votes yes. We

 7 are adjourned.

 8 (Meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.)

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 104

 1 STATE OF MINNESOTA)

 2 ) ss.

 3 COUNTY OF HENNEPIN)

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 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 103 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: August 9, 2024

 16

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

 KIMBERLY K. EVAVOLD

 18 Court Reporter

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