# State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

# Bi-Monthly Meeting Minutes

Thursday, October 5, 2023

## I. Call to order

Chairperson Corbb O’Connor called the regular meeting of the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind to order at 5:40 PM on Thursday, October 5, 2023, in person with some members attending via Zoom.

## II. Roll call

Corbb O’Connor conducted a roll call, and the following people were present:

**SRCB Members:** Corbb O’Connor, Chairperson; Judy Sanders, Vice Chair; Frank Eller; Samantha Flax; Ryan Haenze; Tom Heinl; Rob Hobson, Catalina Martinez, Michael O’Day; Judy Sanders; Ryan Strunk; and Kyle Van Acker.

**SSB Staff:** Natasha Jerde, SSB Director; Susan Kusz, SRC-B Staff Liaison; Jon Benson, SSB Deputy Director; Brianna Holeman, SSB Deputy Director; Dave Andrews; Jennifer Beilke; Joe Niffen; and Alana Strickler.

**Members of the Audience:** Jennifer Dunnam, Steve Jacobson, Rocky Hart, Briley O’Connor, Sharon Monthei, Jamie Richey, Jeremy Richey, Steve Jacobson, John Filek, Laurie McBride, Jan Bailey, and Sue Fager.

## III. Approval of minutes from last meeting

A motion to approve the minutes from the August 3, 2023, meeting was made by Frank Eller and seconded by Ryan Strunk. The motion passed unanimously.

## IV. Open issues

A brief public hearing regarding SSB’s Cafeteria remodel was held. This remodel will incorporate a space for customers to learn independent living skills. A kitchenette for cooking and an area with laundry machines are also part of the plan. All who spoke during the hearing supported the construction project.

A presentation on DeafBlind youth and adults was given by John Filek and Laurie McBride from Helen Keller National Center was given to the council. This presentation was suggested by the Professional Development Task Force.

An announcement regarding the Annual Report was made. Committee members and chairs were reminded of their required submission for the report with a promise of candy to the first three committees to submit.

An announcement about the Combined State Plan deadline was made.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and Goal & Priorities reports were given.

V. New business

* 1. Chair’s report
     + A report about council appointments and terms was given by Susan Kusz.
     + A motion to appoint Ryan Haenze (Chair), Ryan Strunk, Rocky Hart, Judy Sanders and Jennifer Dunnam to the Workplan Task Force was made by Rob Hobson and seconded by Frank Eller. The motion passed unanimously.
  2. Director’s Report- *full report included in transcript.*
     + A program Coordinator was hired for the Employer Reasonable Accommodations Fund, and the program began on September 1. The next step is to hire an account technician. The website for this program is now up and running [www.MN.gov/deed/eraf](http://www.MN.gov/deed/eraf)
     + National Disability Employment Awareness Month is this month.
     + SSB has three, new community partner contracts that have been executed. The next community forum is scheduled for October 10th from 10 a.m. to noon.
     + The Communication Center has done a lot of outreach with our Literacy for All which works on creating materials in other languages.
     + Assistant Secretary Glenna Galo from the U.S. Department of Education Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services visited SSB.
     + SSB has had an increase of 34% in the number of people served. SSB has seen a 12% decrease in applicants, 7% more eligible individuals and 6% more IPE’s.

**VI. Committee Reports**

1. State Rehabilitation Council: no report was received.
2. State Independent Living Council: a report was received by the Council.
3. Communication Center Committee: a report was received by the Council.
4. Customer Satisfaction Goals and Priorities Committee: no report was received.
5. Deafblind Committee: no report was received.
6. Employment Committee: no report was received.
7. Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee: a report was received by the council.
8. Senior Services Committee: a report was received by the council.
9. Transition Committee Report: a report was received by the council.
10. Vendor Outcomes & Measures Committee: a report was received by the council.
11. Professional Development Task Force: A survey will be sent to council members about potential topics for professional development.

## VII. Public Comment

1. The National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota will be having a state convention November 3rd through 5th in Rochester, MN.
2. At BLIND< Inc. the executive director has pursued other opportunities. The board of directors seeks applicants for the role, and interim executive director Jamie Richey will serve until a new leader is hired.

## VIII. Adjournment

Chairperson Corbb O’Connor adjourned the meeting at 8:06 p.m.

1. A motion to adjourn the meeting was made by Judy Sanders and seconded by Samantha Flax. The motion passed unanimously.

Minutes submitted by: Susan Kusz.

Minutes approved by: Corbb O’Connor.