MCB Statutory Advisory Board Minutes

September 9, 2022

Present SAB:

Joe Abely, Chair

Kim Charlson

Amy Ruell

Susan Foley

Dr. Howard Purcell

Present MCB:

David D’Arcangelo, Commissioner

Regina DiMarzo, Executive Assistant

John Oliveira, Deputy Commissioner

Nathan Skrocki, Director of Policy and Compliance

Loran Lang, General Counsel

Samantha Linden, Director of Training

Members of the public attended.

Chair-Announced Meeting held remotely and Meeting recorded.

Chair announced that his 5 year term is ended with this meeting. Words of thanks for the opportunity to serve the Commonwealth , the Agency, and the public as a member of the SAB.

Amy Ruell announced her departure from the SAB as she is moving out of state. She will continue to attend as she is able in the capacity of an advocate as a member of the general public. Thanked the former commissioner for appointing her, the members of the board consumers and members of the public.

Members Dr. Purcell, Kim Charlson and Susan Foley thanked the Chair and Amy Ruell for their service. Members Susan Foley and Kim Charlson said later in the meeting that they thought their terms were also over, but would continue to serve until either they were appointed again or replacement appointments were made

Commissioner thanked Chair and Amy Ruell for their service. Agency is in touch with EHS about these terms and has had no direction at this time. Discussion about holdovers and whether

The practice applies to the SAB. Will look into this further.

Commissioner announced:

* HR Liaison leaving the agency for a promotion to EHS. Heart felt congratulations from members and the Commissioner.
* Executive Assistant leaving the Agency and the Commonwealth for
* Private sector. Congratulations given.

12:10-Chair asked Susan Foley to take the acceptance of the minutes for August while he steps away.

Susan Foley asked members whether they had a chance to read the minutes. Kim Charlson said that she had not had an opportunity, echoed by other members.

12:11-Chair returned. Agreed that SAB would not accept the Aug. minutes until the Oct. meeting.

Commissioner Update:

FY22:.

* Reversions in the 4110-2000 account (“Turning 22”) and in the Vocational Rehabilitation Account. Reversion due to some extent to the effects on Covid. Data from the figures for Central Register show that MCB is on track to exceed registrations for last year. Commissioner predicts that there will be higher cases in Social Rehabilitation and Vocational Rehabilitation. Commissioner also expects there will be a rise in Def/Blind Extended Supports services possibly a small increase in consumers as they age in.
* Commissioner said the there was a $129,000 reversion in the Assistive Technology earmark for FY22. 5 vendors contracted under Assistive Technology earmark. Reversion result of services not being available or very restricted for a portion of the year because of Covid.

FY23 Budget:

* Commissioner-Strong financial position. Believe that more people will be seeking service as covid abates. More consumers seeking enhanced service.
* Chair asking about encumbrances so far this year. Commissioner responded that spending has been occurring. Financial process takes time to load money into the system. Contracts are out for the $1,000,000 earmark. Further, seeking guidance on earmark language. Internal payment process, private vendors, avoiding additional bureaucracy internally…
* For specific earmarks to Carroll Center and MABVI-MCB meeting with non-profits. Chair asked if referral process same as always. Chair said funding source may be different. Commissioner said yes. There were additional behind the scenes considerations such as level of reporting. Commissioner said that referral for these services are in process.

Update on RSA Reallotment

* Current-All projects to be complete by Sept. 30

There are 5:

* + Sleek Machine- Different video presentations for different types of VR consumers
  + NECO-Disability as a qualification…
  + Institute for Human Center Design-Effects of Covid…
  + UMass-Delta between legal Blindness…
  + Polis Center- Podcast Series -Done in June. To be released in October and periodically?

Awaiting final reports on some. All expected to end on time

* Reallotment request for this year-waiting to hear about-Believe we submitted for close to $700,000
  + Update on consumer survey -
    - May be able to do All Consumer Survey.
    - Include interested groups in developing

Program Updates:

* Dashboard on Registrations, Process, and Outcomes –
  + Data shows 2200 -2300 registrations for the year. Higher than 2019
  + YTD 1,461 as of Sept. 2022. We have already exceeded the EOY number for 2020 and 2021.
  + Projections are based on increased registrations in past years fall-winter.
  + Calls pre-registration. MCB has always received calls of this kind. The number of calls have decreased. Offices open up and exams easier to get
  + Providers using electronic submission. Number of reports faxed is much smaller.
  + Susan Foley praising Central Register
  + Certificates of Blindness-Still get repeat calls to remail. Not sure if post office is the problem. Also, may purchase blue or yellow envelopes to bring attention to mailing. Kim Charlson suggests that certificate format change from one “original” and 2 “copies” creates confusion. More information to the public that the one certificate can be copied and used for other purposes for the year.
  + Calls for Certificates not slowing down.
  + Assessor’s do accept PDF of the Certificate
  + E-mail address [BlindnessRegistry@mass.gov](mailto:BlindnessRegistry@mass.gov) -Send requests there
  + Assessor’s interim MCB ID card. Expect an influx of IDs. Getting printers
  + Members recommend Communication Plan for Certificate and for ID
  + VR and SR cases stable-More cases expected.

Staffing Questions

12:54Commissioner steps away

12:57-Commissioner returns

* Right at the Cap. In a good place
* Back fills for HR and Executive Assistant
* VR Counseling staff-if cases increase. Agency reviews, If we determine hire is necessary, have to go to ANF and EHS to make a case
* MCB has filled the positions had some trouble filling earlier in the year.
* As retirements have occurred they will be back filled.

Questions from public

* Leo-Additional registrants expected, how will MCB staff serve these individuals. MCB has lost positions and MCB has received more money
  + Commissioner did not know what the person asking question meant by lost positions.
  + Individuals retiring, but those positions will be back filled. Also, MCB has been hiring
  + Earmarked money cannot be spent on additional personnel. Services only. Legislature has not approved additional money for MCB personnel.
* Leo asked about the reversion of $129,000 from the $850,000 from last year.
* Commissioner said that the vendors and MCB were in close contact about the expenditures in the earmark. Covid had an effect on the delivery of those services. Vendor may have had some difficulty delivering or consumer may have had reasons to delay services. Also very competitive for hiring employees.
* Dina-Clarification-Legislators threw out request for staffing. Staffing funds do not go through an earmark Dina points out to Commissioner that it is critical that the staff are aware of the referrals and can go forward because they are waiting for the go ahead on the earmarked funds.
* Debbie-when do advocates ask for money for additional staff

Sounds like MCB needs more ground staff. Commissioner points out that he cannot lobby with the legislature.

Debbie-Discussion about the process for appointment to the SAB. Smooth transition seems to be lacking. As a consumer would like to see a full house.

Commissioner will follow-up with EHS.

Kim Charlson Moves that Susan Foley be the Interim Chair. Unanimous vote.

Next meeting: Friday, September 9, 2022, at Noon

Adjourned. 1:32