**Massachusetts Commission for the Blind**

**Rehabilitation Council Minutes**

**For September 2, 2020**

The quarterly Meeting of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind Rehabilitation Council was called to order by Chair DeAnn Elliott at 10:00 a.m.

**Attendees (by Zoom)**

DeAnn Elliott (Chair); Nora Nagle ; Mary Otiato; Deputy Commissioner John Oliveira; Richard Curtis; Naomi Goldberg; Joe Buizon; Patricia Hart; Inez Canada; Nancy Trzcinski; Commissioner David D’Arcangelo; Jerry Berrier; Karen McCormack (Secretary, left at 11:00); Jennifer Harnish; Nathan Skrocki; Priscilla Ngome; Leslie M. Leslie; Martha Daigle.

**Regrets:** Charles Curti, Corey Kadlik, Cheryl Scott.

**Member & Guest Introductions:**

The calendar invite to the Zoom meeting was deleted in error (by Karen M) brief discussion on how this occurred and a request not to delete and invite to your calendar as that may delete the invitation to all.

Chair DeAnn Elliott welcomed returning and new members of the RC. Attendees were invited, as part of their introduction, to share something about this time of quarantine during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

**Minutes Approval**

Minutes from the June 3rd, 2020 RC Meeting were accepted by consent.

**Membership Status & Discussion :**

The chair provided a summary of the requirements for a State Rehabilitation Council as defined by the Rehabilitation Act, and reviewed seats that will need to be filled. During the summer, the incoming RC chair worked with the outgoing chair and MCB staff to consolidate member lists and update contact information. The RC accepted with regret the resignation of the member representing a parent, training and information center, who has accepted a new position and will no longer need to be confirmed by the governor’s office. The chair expressed appreciation for Nancy Mader’s service and welcomed Leslie M. Leslie as our representative until a permanent representative is identified.

**Update on confirmation process:**

The MCB reached out over the summer to the representative from Health and Human Services about pending confirmations. The RC was at the top of the list prior to COVID. No new confirmations have been received. In the spring of 2021, after two members term out, there will be only two remaining confirmed members. The chair expressed willingness to personally intervene to hasten the process if it would be helpful.

**Nominations and vote for two new members:**

A document about following open meeting laws was distributed and briefly discussed, as the Commonwealth has made small adjustments for remote conferencing. Jennifer Harnish, the Director of Rehabilitation Services at the Carroll Center for the Blind, was nominated unanimously by a voice vote to fill the seat held by Bruce Howell as the community rehabilitation program service provider representative. Priscilla Ngome, VR counselor, was appointed by MCB to fill seat held by Darren Black, **whose term expired. The RC welcomes both new members!**

**Commissioner’s Update:**

Commissioner D’Arcangelo provided information about the ways that VR and SR services have been provided to MCB clients during the move to a remote service model. Town hall meetings have been successful and well-attended. The Commonwealth has not yet released the state budget, but MCB seems to be on solid financial footing.

**Deputy Commissioner’s Update:**

John Oliveira updated the RC on the summer internship program, which was a success. About 40 clients participated and gained work experience remotely. A virtual commencement was held to mark the end of the 2020 program. Congratulations to Joseph Buizon for creative ways to engage clients. White Cane Day will be held on October 16th on Zoom. Employment events are currently being planned in October to mark Disability Employment Awareness Month.

**MCB Policy Updates:**

Mary Otiato briefed the RC on surveys and reports that will be shared with the RC as they approach completion.

**Update on summer training programs/reopening at the Carroll Center:**

Jennifer Harnish updated the RC on VR training programs at the Carroll Center, which have been active throughout the summer, though residence halls were closed as a precaution due to COVID-19. A small In person youth day program was held in July and August. The adult rehab services programs began in person at end of August with limited student numbers and opening of the residence hall. Remote instruction continues primarily for technology training but also if needed for the specific student needs. Low vision services have also resumed in person.

**Update on  MCB Reallotment Projects:**

Nathan Skrocki, MCB Regional Director of the Springfield Office, briefed the RC on some of the 24 Reallotment projects that have complemented the outreach services that MCB staff have delivered during the pandemic.

**Other Business:**

Consumers have expressed concerns about the proposed relocation of the Worcester and New Bedford regional MCB offices. The Commissioner explained that the offices would remain in their current location on a month-to-month basis for the coming year . The location of the offices would be revisited, hopefully when the COVID situation has passed and more is known.

**Meeting times for December 2020 and 2021**

Tentatively planned:

* Wednesday, December 2, 2020
* Wednesday, March 3, 2021
* Wednesday, June 2, 2021 (Memorial Day May 31)
* Wednesday, September 1, 2021 (Labor Day September 6)

A scheduling conflict with a state committee will impact at least three RC members. The group was willing to consider alternative times to meet as more is known.

**Meeting Adjourned**

The RC Meeting was adjourned at12:00.

Respectfully Submitted by Karen McCormack, Secretary, and DeAnn Elliott, Chair

(Note: It was later determined that quorum was not met at this meeting. Dispensation of minutes will be rescheduled for the soonest date in which there is quorum.)