**Statutory Advisory Board (SAB)**

**August 6, 2024**

**Minutes**

SAB Attendees: Blair Wong, Brian MacDonald, Kathy Petkauskos, Nancy Rumbolt-Trzcinski and Kerlyne Pacombe

MCB Staff Attendees: John Oliveira, Justine Muir, Nathan Skrocki, Lucy Evangelidis, Loran Lang

Meeting Held via Zoom; Recordings made available to public on MCB YouTube channel

Public invited to participate through Q&A made at end of the meeting.

Minutes

Blair motions to accept the minutes from the July meeting. Minutes unanimously accepted.

Commissioner Update: John Oliveira

Welcomes Deputy Commissioner Justine Muir to the meeting.

Internship Closing Ceremony is occurring on 8/14. Event is scheduled at the State House where awards will be presented to employers and consumers. Program ended with 45 interns- numbers still not back to pre-pandemic numbers. MCB will work towards increasing numbers.

Planning for MCB Employer Education Seminar is complete- seminar will be held in September. Reverse job fair where consumers present to employers, employers get information in advance so they can watch presentations, then move forward with scheduling interviews with selected individuals. Occurring in October.

White Cane Day also occurring in October at the State House- lots of advance work happening. Waiting for Ally Bull to return from leave and finish up planning.

Governor signed the budget. MCB did well- earmarks were passed and in process of loading the budget. Once budget is loaded, move into developing spending plan showing where money will be directed. Will be discussing earmarks at future meetings; earmarks are loaded but cannot use money until spending plan is completed. Happening within next few weeks. Still don’t have CFO position filled, so commissioner is more involved in spending plan than usual. Will attend CFO meeting occurring this afternoon and has received guidance around developing plan.

Continuing to wrap up fiscal year. Books will be closed to FY24 and working on final stages of submitting payment vouchers- moving payments out as quickly as possible. Shorthanded in fiscal unit- things may move slower than consumers may think. Process is almost complete- once prior year’s budgets are closed, process will be back to a normal pace.

Final two CFO candidates withdrew/declined. Back to CFO search process. Completed interviews for Budget Director-offers will be going out soon.

Earmarks will be discussed in more detail at a different time as they are of interest to consumers. Services will be available in near future- will begin process in September/October. Typical fiscal processes need to occur such as moving the money to the right positions- contracts need to be developed and some must be RFR.

Kathy asks Justine about her professional background. Justine started her career as a TVI for Carroll Center while finishing UMass Boston TVI program. Transitioned to TVI at Malden Public schools for 9 years and later held various Special Ed administration positions in Malden. Worked in Littleton Public Schools as Director of Pupil Services for 2 years, and then same role in Westminster, before joining MCB.

Kathy asks how many interns participated in the Internship Program pre-COVID. John answers that there were typically 65-70 interns attending final ceremony. This year, the program began with close to 60 interns, but there were some interns that dropped to either explore other opportunities or for personal reasons.

Kathy asks if there are enough internships for the Internship Program. John says there have always been enough opportunities, but the number of interested interns has decreased post-COVID

Kathy asks if the candidate presentations during the Reverse Jobs Fair are pre-recorded or live? John says that they are live.

Kathy asks if White Cane Day can be live-streamed or recorded for the programming to reach more people. John says the programming has been played on the Radio Reading Services in the past but will come back in September with more definite answers.

Blair asks how long the CFO search process will take and if there is anything of concern or challenge regarding the financial aspects of the Board given the lack of a CFO. John says there’s nothing of concern because he receives a lot of support from the Health and Human Service Finance members and the Comptroller’s Office.

Blair asks if there’s an opportunity for board members to attend the reverse job fair. John says the fair is over Zoom and the link will be sent out to the SAB.

Kerlyne asks if the internship program is Boston-based or Statewide. John answers that the program is statewide and there are interns in every region.

Kerlyne asks if there’s a teaching or seminar component to the Internship Program. John says there’s opening and closing ceremonies where they hear from other interns and keynote speakers. Interns are also required to attend a soft skills training session that happens either in-person or online. Additionally, interns are in contact with their counselors throughout their internship to receive feedback.

Kerlyne asks about the Employer Education Seminar in the fall. John explains that employers participating in the Reverse Job Fair learn about the different aspects of technology that blind staff might use while working. Additionally, they learn about vision loss and having employees with disabilities.

Dashboard Update: Nathan Skrocki

1,056 total registrations for the year. No real changes in registrations. 5 in process this morning, oldest was received last night and everything is caught up.

Open SR cases saw movement in closing some cases. Decline in both DBES and regular SR cases. Down 25 cases in DBES and 28 less in SR cases. 2,204 DBES and 1,092 SR.

VR 1003, 770 VR Adult, 223 PRE-ETS cases open. Not a lot of movement.

Close to 1500 closed SR cases for year.

80 children’s cases closed to date.

VR closed cases for the fiscal year: 32 successful closures and 9 unsuccessful closures

Last fiscal year 156 successful closures, uptick from last several years (holding steady around 145), 92 unsuccessful closures

Auxiliary cases: 5,331 COBs, 710 IDs, 312 EDP applications and 101 disabled placards. COBs increase expected as people prepare for tax abatements.

Beginning a comprehensive statewide needs assessment= requirement through WEOA that happens every 3 years

Contracted Synergy, led by former MCB commissioner, Janet LaBreck. Synergy will help execute the needs assessment survey. Planning to set up meeting with SAB to discuss and get input. Synergy will go over process and scope. Survey targets VR in underserved areas, determining what groups fall into this category with information coming from past all consumer survey and RSA guidance. Executing before end of September. Communicating with public about project will have wrapped up by September 30th .

Dashboard project update: Continuing to move forward. Have previewed samples of how it’s displayed and accessibility. Passing registration info over and creating new reports to feed table that would allow it to automatically process. Final touches should be happening soon. Begin accessibility testing and shooting for an unofficial launch date of September 1st, official launch date of September 30th.

Questions from the SAB or Public

Sharon Strzalkowski asks if data from needs assessment survey will be passed to counselors in the underserved regions. John answers that the data will be passed to the directors in the region who will then pass it to the appropriate staff members.

Brian asks for opinions on not having a meeting in September. Board agrees to not meet in September due to member conflicts.

Meeting adjourned.