**Statuatory Advisory Board (SAB)**

**January 3, 2023**

**Minutes**

SAB Attendees: Howard Purcell, Chair, Brian MacDonald, Colleen Moran and Blair Wong

Excused: Kathy Petkauskos

MCB Staff Attendees: David D’Arcangelo, Commissioner, Loran Lang, Michael Saccone, Nathan Skrocki and Thelma Williams

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.

Call to accept Minutes from November 15, 2022 meeting.

Moved and accepted.

Commissioner’s Update

MCB is in a strong position. Thanks to Governor Baker, the Secretary and the Administration for their service over the last 8 years and their support of MCB. Thanks to Governor Elect Healy.

Financial Data

Chair, Howard Purcell asks the Commissioner to describe dashboard. The Chair agreed that the dash board provided quarterly data, but wanted any additional impactful updates at this meeting.

The Commissioner stated that the Budget is very stable and continue to have plenty of resources.

He further describes the dashboard to the Committee. Figures appear in the Comptroller’s Comprehensive Annual Report or the Books of the Commonwealth. The Commissioner explained that the State fiscal year is July 1-June 30. Federal Fiscal Year is 10/1-9/30. He also feels that providing State and Federal fiscal years is confusing and can provide, but does not really provide clear information. The Chair and other members want final year numbers and the GAA. The Chair and others ask that for each meeting, anything MCB has concerns about relative to spending does concern the agency. The Commissioner explained that Row 10-FY23 is the current. We are halfway through the FY23 Fiscal and he goes on to explain the budget process from House 1, Governor’s Budget through veto and override to end in the signing of the GAA. The Comptroller’s Website “See Through” gives you all of the numbers almost live time for the various agencies.

The Chair said that the dashboard is important and is available to the group. Chair asks if the Commissioner wants to go over the encumbrances. The Commissioners says that those are misleading

as there are 6 months to go. The Chair said that SAB has a fiscal responsibility. The Commissioner tells SAB they are in an advisory capacity and have no fiscal obligation; there is nothing in the law to suggest otherwise. SAB is not an oversite board. The Chair wants feedback from members, but stated that as an advisory board, he feels they have a responsibility to understand the finances to be better advisors.

The Commissioner said that MCB has fiduciary responsibility over the budget, but we do not turn people away. We have resources and provide services. We think consumers first; not money first. We have

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reverted money because of Covid. Vendors may not have been able to provide services during this period; just one example.

The Chair asked what should the SAB know about the budget and noted some concern that less than half the money has been spent. However, the Commissioner told the Board that this is misleading. The Commissioner explained, that for example: amounts programmed in to spend all of the money and to obligate as much of the money as we can. Circumstances can change re. clients accessing service.

Better thing to look at is the reversion amounts. Looking for consumers to spend the money on.

The Chair repeats that he would like the Commissioner to point out any red flags.

Blair Wong asked if there is a report on clients being served in categories? Is that growing in 2023? Is there a possibility of a short fall in one category to be shifted to another category? The Commissioner answered that this is union issue. Colleen Moran expresses that SAB is an Advisory Committee and not driving the business. It’s up to the Commissioner on which documents to provide for clarity.

The Commissioner discussed National Industry for the Blind class through enterprise program. We have consumers participating. The NIB platform is accessible. They are the first provider in the nation to do this. It was started with a dozen, to six, to three, to one graduating. Trying this again.

Continue with many of the same collaborations. Mapped out some stakeholder sessions for this year.

Reallotment of funds

The Commissioner talked about the Assistive Technology Survey. Exciting. Will do a presentation perhaps to stakeholders end of January or sometime in February.

Nate Skrocki Policy Director Describes Other Projects

* Explanations of Factors Associated with the outcomes of Social and Vocational Rehabilitation Programs;
* Uptake of the State Rehabilitation Services in Partnership with New England College of Optometry. Statistical information on what to expect things will look like in different types of diagnosis and etiologies that are becoming more prevalent. Take a look at that and adjust our education practices to target those that are becoming prevalent;
* Disability as Qualification for Employment-UMass Chan Medical School and Commonwealth Medicine-Looking at the different vocational opportunities that are available in the state. Emerging opportunities. Which are opportunities going away in time. Better plan for those folks in those fields;
* Impact of Covid. On VR Outcomes in partnership with the institute for Human Centered Design-Interesting feedback on challenges that people overcame during covid and the doors covid opened up including looking at telework and how that expanded. This is now an opportunity for people to work from home eliminating challenges like transportation, and some other things;
* VR welcome Kit in Partnership with Sleek Machine-Inform and introduce people to VR. Great project. Lead-MCB Staff member.

All consumer survey is PAC money being awarded right now. The Commissioner said that this is in process and will hold off on further detail. This one asks all other types of questions and very instructive for MCB.

There were no questions from the members.

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The Commissioner talked about Registration. We are in good position and can now register electronically. It is efficient, accurate and can process people much quicker. The Assessor’s Regulations were issued by MCB. The Assessor’s system is being made more secure so holding off on sharing under regulations. Dept. of Revenue, Local Services agreed to accept our MCB ID. card to certify legal blindness. As a result, they modified the guide that assessor’s use to include the MCB ID, which has a longer verification period. The Commissioner said that Registration Unit has two busy periods a year - fall and spring – and that is coming up.

Staffing

The Commissioner said they are fully staffed in Orientation & Mobility Unit

He Introduced Thelma Williams as MCB Chief of Staff and Fouad Boumjahed is the new HR Liaison.

The Commissioner’s new Executive Assistant is starting soon.

Public Q&A

Justin from Athol: Consumer. He operates in a lot of spaces and hears from VR Consumers. As the Commissioner describes, we are not receiving the services in the way that has been stated. The Commissioner needs to communicate his philosophy down. Policies governing VR do not match the Commissioners description. He wants the VR policies to be public. He said the Commissioner makes all of this sound really wonderful, but it is not matching the message from the caseworkers.

The Commissioner encourages this consumer to attend the Rehabilitation Council.

The Commissioner asked for a check of the regulations to see if links have broken on the website.

The Commissioner said that he meets with National Federation for the Blind and American Council for the Blind. Each VR consumer is different. Some of it is level at which consumer starts after assessment.

The Massachusetts Office on Disability will also advocate to see if this consumer is not getting the services, should be getting more services or are getting appropriate level of services. We want to provide the services that are available.

The Commissioner suggested that the consumer call him if he really believes he is not getting the services he is entitled.

The next meeting of the SAB is February 7, 2023 from 10:30-11:30 a.m. which occurs on the first Tuesday of each month,

Meeting adjourned.