**Statutory Advisory Board (SAB)**

**May 2, 2023**

**Minutes**

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

MCB Staff Attendees: John Oliveira, Michael Saccone, Nathan Skrocki, Thelma Williams, Lucy Evangelidis, and Alexander Pooler

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 April 4, 2023 meeting.

**Moved and accepted.**

Commissioner’s Update: Acting Commissioner John Oliveira

Acting Commissioner Oliveira does not have a lot of information regarding the appointment of a new Commissioner in August. The process is managed by the Secretary’s office. He is Acting Commissioner until that process is completed. Chairman Purcell asked if we expect the new Commissioner to be announced in August and the Acting Commissioner said he does not know when it will be announced.

Petkauskos asked what the normal process is for filling this position. The Acting Commissioner said candidates who are interested will be contacted, interviewed, vetted, and then appointed.

Kathy asked if there was a job opening/posting about this position. The Acting Commissioner said there is not currently one. He does not believe Commissioner’s jobs get posted as a regular job. He does not have any responsibility as far as that goes. David D’Arcangelo continues with MCB as an advisor.

Chairman Purcell shared that the position is open for recommendations, and then all those candidates will be evaluated. There are specific criteria for the position.

The Acting Commissioner began to give agency updates. The Governor’s budget came out and funded MCB at 27.1 million dollars, which is right around level funding. We are still doing all of our projects, nothing has changed. We have had agency meetings and continue to work with staff to boost morale, and new ideas are being developed. John Oliveira is filling the role of Acting Commissioner as well as continuing his duties as Deputy Commissioner. Our CFO left the agency on April 21st so John will be covering that position as well. There are five candidates being interviewed this week. The new Budget Director started on April 24th. He is our 4th Budget Director in 4.5 years. We continue to bring new staff on board. We had four people start on April 24th.

The Acting Commissioner discussed the survey that went out to MCB consumers by email, text, and mail. Results will be reviewed at the end of June. Chairman Purcell asked when the SAB would be able to see the results from the survey and was told the analysis is due by June 30th. That information will be shared following the end of the fiscal year. Chairman Purcell asked if the Acting Commissioner could explain what happens once MCB gets the budget information. He was told that the directors submit the budgets they need for the upcoming fiscal year in May, and we can’t move forward until the Governor signs it, which is usually around the first week in July. We use the information the directors submitted to

Page 2

SAB Minutes – May 2, 2023

distribute the funds. Chairman Purcell asked if the directors’ budgets are zero based and if there would be any value in the SAB’s input on the allocation of funds. The Acting Commissioner said the directors get their budget based on what they spent the previous year, and then what they believe the need will be next year based on consumer demand for all their programs. Acting Commissioner Oliveira said we rely on input from the directors because they know the needs for their specific region. Chairman Purcell encouraged him to use the SAB’s insight.

Kathy Petkauskos asked which roles were recently filled and what spots are currently looking to be filled. The Acting Commissioner said we filled the Budget Director, Mobility Instructor, Rehabilitation Teacher, and a supervisor role in region 1. Currently posted positions include a supervisor for region 3 and region 4, rehabilitation teacher for region 6, and a vocational rehabilitation worker in region 1.

SAB Recommendations for MCB: Chairman, Dr. Purcell

1. Review Strategic Plan;

The Acting Commissiner said MCB has used strategic plans in the past, but the last Commissioner decided not to use one. Objectives are given from the Secretary and MCB can add additional items. The Chair advises MCB to consider using a strategic plan.

1. Dashboard with Additional Details;
2. Time Between Speaking with a Case Manager and Receiving Services;

The SAB believes this is an important data point after speaking with consumers. The Acting Commissioner said supervisors can see when case notes are entere, and can see if we can pull that data to get an average.

1. Caseload;

 Kathy Petkauskos asked that MCB include caseloads on the dashboards moving forward.

1. Reallotment Funds;
2. Surveys;
3. Org chart;

John said we can send our updated org chart to the SAB.

1. Community Engagement;

The Acting Commissioner said we use Facebook to share events within the blind community. Social media has been the driving force. The Chair recommends having something directly on the MCB website.

1. Accessibility During SAB Meetings.

Nathan Skrocki: Director of Policy and Compliance, Dashboard Update

Nathan shared his screen to show the dashboard and read through every line. Registrations completed this year, so far, were 588. We are behind compared to last year. Registrations take about 1-3 days to process. Total number of open cases for social rehabilitation (SR) adults is 2,078, social rehabilitation children (SRC) is about 800, and deaf blind extended support (DBES) is around 1,000. There are 623 vocational rehabilitation (VR) open cases, 191 Pre-ETS (ages 14-21), and 16 youth in transition. There is a decrease in all of these due to cases closing. There are 23 closed children’s cases and 803 adults SR cases. Currently, there are 110 successful VR closures and 95 closed unsuccessfully. There are 1,337 referrals to support services such as orientation and mobility and assistive technology. This yea,r MCB has done 2,500 certificates of blindness (COBs), 374 IDs, 210 EDPs, and 35 handicap placards. The number of COBs does not include those being processed in the field.

Page 3

SAB Minutes – May 2, 2023

Kathy Petkauskos suggested a self-service model for submitting COBs. The Chair asked if you look at pre- pandemic numbers, is the average still about 1,000-1,200 for total registrants?

Nathan said that number is more reflective of the COVID years. A normal year would be closer to the 2,000 mark. It will take a couple years to get back to that average number. He mentioned that the dashboard can evolve as time goes on. Kathy Petkauskos requested that the SAB sees the dashboard monthly. Blair Wong asked that MCB include a timeframe of a consumer actually receiving services once a plan is put in place with their case worker. He also wants a breakdown of why a case is successful vs. unsuccessful. He also asked when the last time a survey went out asking consumers their satisfaction levels with the services, and if there is a regular survey sent out to consumers after receiving services.

Nathan said he is not sure when the last time a survey went out asking those questions. He said early results from the survey are very positive. Nathan said they are currently discussing starting a survey following services as Blair suggested. SAB requested they receive the survey questions.

Questions from the Public

Debbie M. asked what was meant when it was said we got level funding. The Acting Commissioner said level funding means it is roughly what we got last year for state dollars in the Baker administration. Debbie then asked when MCB starts trying to get more than level funding since we have recognized that we need more money. Debbie’s zoom then got disconnected.

The Chair recognized that we are going overtime and asked if the board members can stay for the remaining questions.

Amy Ruell thanked John and Nathan. She asked if the SAB would consider meeting at noon time to make it easier for people who are attending during their workdays.

Debbie re-entered the meeting. She was concerned with the number of cases that are open in comparison to the number of blind people in Massachusetts. She asked if the goal is to get that number to increase as well as the funding and staff available to serve. The Acting Commissioner said MCB does not have a waiting list so we are serving all the consumers that contact the agency. He also said the goal is to serve everyone who wants to receive services. The assumption is that there is a budget process where an agency can ask the secretary if there is any additional funding available if the need is there. There is plenty of money on the VR side through federal funding.

The Chair ended the discussion because he wanted to be mindful of the Committee’s time. He told people to hold their additional questions.

Motion to adjourn.