**Statutory Advisory Board (SAB)**

**November 7, 2023**

**Minutes**

SAB Attendees: Blair Wong, Brian MacDonald, and Kathy Petkauskos

MCB Staff Attendees: John Oliveira, Nathan Skrocki, Lucy Evangelidis, Mike Saccone, Loran Lang, and Sheila Tunney

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 October meeting. Minutes accepted.

Commissioner Update: John Oliveira

Earmarks update. MCB is about ready to release some funds to our vendors. 50% will be sent now and the other half in March.

RFR has been put out and $200,000 has been awarded for training people at home who cannot get to MABVI or the Carroll Center.

Three new union positions have been posted and are in the process of interviewing.

Media campaign is wrapping up this month.

Meetings have occurred to discuss the new dashboard reallotment project. Nate is the project manager and is working on putting together the RFR with our contract’s unit.

Still in the process of cleaning up some small fiscal items. The federal FY22 supportive employment money was not matched properly so we are returning $35,000. We are in the process of liquidating the FY22 grant and living on FY23 funds. The 1.4-million-dollar deficit is being applied to FY24.

Brian asks what the status of the big survey is? Mike said we are still waiting for EHS to let us know when we can release the results.

John spoke with the undersecretary about the SAB candidates. She said she would look into it. This process is done in the Governor’s office.

The White Cane Day event went very well. Over 200 people attended.

Strategic Mapping continues for the agency. November 30th is the end date. We will hopefully share a final version with you shortly.

Kathy asks if an RFR has already been issued and a vendor selected for the new dashboard project? John says not yet. The RFR is still being written.

Kathy also has an idea for White Cane Day. She asks if there’s a way to cascade the information from the event our further. Mike says this year we built a promotional tool kit that included a dedicated web page, graphics available in 7 languages, and flyers. This information was distributed to approximately 1,000 stakeholder groups, cities, and towns. We can continue to develop that further.

Blair shares his experience at the White Cane Day Event and how powerful it was.

Dashboard Update: Nathan Skrocki

1,513 registrations this year. Not a lot of change in children’s cases and social rehabilitation (SR) cases from last month. 8 additional children’s cases bringing the total to 847. Total SR cases is 2,063 which is 2 less than last month. DBS cases total 1,120 which is 11 more than last month.

There was even less variance in our open vocational rehabilitation (VR) cases. 734 open VR adult cases which is 9 more than last month. 199 Pre-ETS cases which is 1 less than last month. No change in transition youth.

95 closed children SR cases and 1,915 closed SR adult cases (calendar year). 47 successful VR closures and 33 non-successful closures (federal fiscal year).

2,915 consumers using support services. Close to 7,000 certificates of blindness, 940 ID cards, 384 EDPs, and 52 handicap placards.

Not a lot of changes from last month. We are progressing as expected.

Blair asks about the results from the reverse job fair. John received a preliminary report from employment services and so far, there have been no job offers, but several employers have brought individuals in for interviews. The process remains ongoing.

Blair asks if there is an active posting for deputy commissioner. John says the priorities are currently to get the fiscal house in order and then begin the search for a deputy. He will continue to cover any duties in the interim.

Questions from the Public

Debbie M spoke about her experience at White Cane Day and how she wants to spread the word about events in the blindness community. She also spoke about the financial negligence that went on in the past few years at the agency. She asked if there are any repercussions so that this does not happen again. Brian says he understands her concerns but that is a long conversation we cannot get into now. John says we received a maintenance of effort from RSA, and we are very diligent moving forward to straighten things out.

Nona Haroyan asks if the MCB ID card can be used to reactivate the ability to vote? Nate said that should be fine, the only thing it cannot be used for is travel. Nona also asks if clients of MCB have suggestions for potential services who they should contact. John says they can submit them online at mass.gov/mcb and our communications director will look at them.

Meeting adjourned.