**Statutory Advisory Board (SAB)**

**September 5, 2023**

**Minutes**

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

MCB Staff Attendees: John Oliveira, Nathan Skrocki, Lucy Evangelidis, Mike Saccone, 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 August meeting. Minutes accepted.

Commissioner Update: John Oliveira

John answers questions asked during the previous meeting.

Most of our services are provided in the consumer’s home or where they are most comfortable. Having an office in the area does not make much difference. There are state and municipal buildings in Worcester and New Bedford that we could use to meet at if needed.

There is a calendar on the MCB home page for community partners to add events to. They can let us know and we will add them to the community calendar.

Brian brings up another question regarding a place where organizations or support groups could register with MCB as a resource for clients. John says that information comes through our Communications Director who passes it on to staff and is discussed at different committee meetings to learn about more resources for consumers. He will discuss registration with the executive team. Overall, he feels MCB has a strong grasp on the community resources. Please let him know of any groups we might be missing.

Kathy asks if the resource list can be posted on the MCB website. John says it can be posted with a link that takes you to the vendor’s website. List is being updated for accuracy.

Kathy wants to know about the regional advisory councils and if there’s any connection to the SAB. She also asks about these agenda questions and where they came from. Brian says Blair got these questions from the community and last minute threw them on the agenda. Kathy says it would be good to define the process and improve transparency in this group. Whether that be through an email or a place on the web page where people can submit their questions ahead of time. Brian agrees there should be a permanent place for people to direct their questions. John says in the past people have not been allowed to ask questions in advance as they can be answered in the meetings. If this option were created, it would require someone to monitor, vet, and research the questions. If the SAB is prepared to do that it can get set up. Someone on the board will be responsible. Brian says the SAB can talk offline regarding this.

John talks about the blind access card being integrated with the MCB ID. This was researched and cannot be done due to security reasons.

MCB’s new CFO is on board, Sheila Tunney.

Earmarks were passed and signed into our budget. We received 1.1 million dollars to provide funding to the Carroll Center ($500,000) and MABVI (Massachusetts Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired, $300,000) for training and services. There will be one RFR released for additional training options at home. The additionally $100,000 will be allocated for our technology unit.

We also received an additional $250,000 that was proposed by the union to add additional positions.

Employer awareness seminar is coming up for potential employers to learn about MCB services. Followed up by an online reverse job fair where consumers can pitch themselves to employers.

White Cane Day celebration will be in person at the State House.

Media campaign will continue through September and wrap up in October.

MCB applied for reallotment funds to develop a dashboard.

MCB is working with RSA to correct some fiscal issues left by the previous administration. We had to return $129,000 to satisfy the federal grant obligation and around $3,000 to satisfy the supported employment plan. That issue is resolved. We are still working on a couple other issues relating to FY21 and FY22, but are making good progress. Finance is working to create strategies to monitor and manage the movement of funds to prevent these issues from occurring again.

MCB received additional funding from RSA for the older independent blind program ($7,800). This will mostly be used for purchasing additional technology.

Dashboard Update: Nathan Skrocki

Not a lot of changes this month.

1,210 registrations for the year. 837 Social Rehabilitation (SR) Children’s cases. 2024 Social Rehabilitation Adult cases. 1102 SR Deaf Blind Extended Unit cases. 726 vocational rehabilitation (VR) open cases for adults. No change in our pre-ETS population (199) or transition youth (16).

79 closed cases for SR Children for the year. 1547 closed cases for SR adults. 25 successful VR closures after the first two months and 18 non successful closures. 2500 referrals to support services. 5596 certificates of blindness, 723 IDS, 388 EDP applications, 70 handicap placards.

Questions from the SAB

Kathy asks what the amount of reallotment funds that MCB applied for. John says we applied for $125,000, 15% going to PreETS, and the remaining balance will go out for an RFR.

Kathy asks if any employers replied to the media campaign. John says a lot of people are seeing it, but we have not received any new employers.

Blair asks Nathan for an update on his question asked last month regarding the time it takes for clients to actually receive services once a plan is put in place. Nathan says there is not a way to effectively get that data with our current case management system.

Blair asks John to comment on his status as Commissioner, filling the role of Deputy Commissioner, and the vacant spots on the SAB. John says the Undersecretary is trying to move the SAB candidates forward. His title has not changed. It is still Acting Commissioner.

Questions from the Public

Russell Andrews asks if he can use his new MCB ID card at the airport. Mike says that he spoke with TSA, and they confirmed that the MCB ID card is not valid for airport identification purposes.

Debbie M asks if there has been further consideration to change the time of this meeting to lunch. Brian says this is still under advisement and will be discussed before the next meeting.

Meeting adjourned.