

**Statewide Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Executive Committee Meeting Minutes**  
**June 2, 2022**  
**1:00-3:00pm EST**

**Attendees:**

- Statewide Rehabilitation Council Members: Inez Canada, Naomi Goldberg, Joe Bellil, Olympia Stroud, Christine Tosti, Cheryl Scott, Steve LaMaster, Doug Mason, Ronaldo Fujii
- Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Staff: Sahara Defensor, Esq., Bill Noone, Charlene Coombs
- Public: Ben Elwy

Please Note: This meeting was held remotely.

**Meeting was called to order at 1:01 PM by the Chair.** Attendees introduced themselves verbally and in the chat.

The Chair called a moment of silence for the recent and continuing tragedies in BIPOC communities and noted the Department of Mental Health (DMH) has mental health resources available on their website: [Mental Health Resource Guides](#).

**Approval of Meeting Minutes:** Chair Canada asked whether there were any corrections for the May 2022 meeting minutes. Hearing none, Ms. Canada called for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Bellil motioned to approve the May 2022 minutes. Ms. Goldberg seconded. The May 2022 minutes were approved with no corrections.

**OLD BUSINESS**

- **Proposed SRC budget and vote; See, 2022 SRC Budget Request\_ Draft 03.03.2022\_June Exec Comm draft.xlsx**
  - The Chair opened the discussion on MRC's recommendations for the SRC budget, with the options to accept their recommendations and delete the tabled items or submit it to the governor and allow the governor to resolve the discrepancies
  - MRC approved line items for Administrative Assistant, ASL interpreters and CART, a Zoom subscription, and an SRC conference/space, among others
  - Per the explanations provided in the Email from MRC sent with the meeting materials, MRC recommended tabling the following line items for another fiscal year
    - *National Disability Rights Network Conference* because it doesn't have a specific sessions target toward the SRC
    - *DEIA and Leadership Training*, because MRC just funded consultants for SRC DEI Five-year Roadmap; MRC suggested it was too soon for additional DEI training

- **Disability membership stipend** (available for unemployed council members with disabilities who show up to SRC meetings); the stipend would be in addition to reimbursement of expenses, which any Council member can request.
  - The Chair also noted some legal barriers to the payment of a disability stipend under current State statute, which does not allow payment, but does allow reimbursement
    - federal regulations say “may be used to compensate or reimburse...” [34 CFR 361.17\(k\)](#);
    - MA statute says “members shall serve without compensation...” [Mass. Gen. Laws Ch.6, Sect. 76](#)
  - Ms. Tosti’s comment in the chat noted that Federal law trumps State law
  - The Chair agreed and noted that the language in the federal regulation is not definite and seems to imply States can choose whether to provide compensation to eligible SRC members
  - Also, MRC doesn’t currently have the mechanisms/process for paying out a stipend
- The Chair reminded everyone that MRC did not say no, but recommended tabling these three line items to consider in the next fiscal year budget
- Mr. Mason brought up difficulties in selecting a vendor for DEIA training for the MRC in a previous NRC DEIA Council meeting due to the need to have training in a multilingual setting and asked whether the *DEIA and Leadership Training* in the SRC budget is part of the same effort
  - The Chair clarified that this is a DEIA effort for the SRC separate from the effort from the MRC’s DEIA Council. The Chair noted that when the SRC Executive Committee discussed the DEI Five year Roadmap with the MRC Commissioner and leadership, the agency agreed to offer SRC members the opportunity to attend any trainings the MRC DEIA Council sponsored.
- Mr. Bellil asked whether there will be money to pay for in-person meeting costs, if the law requires going back to in-person meetings (refreshments, space costs, etc.)
  - The Chair suggested that those costs seemed to be included in the budget line “*SRC Team meeting for annual priorities*” but she would double check and will clarify that on the spreadsheet
- Ms. Stroud asked why the MRC and SRC have separate efforts to find a DEIA vendor, given that SRC is aligned with MRC and we would want to have access to this training together, and if there’s no such access that SRC’s DEIA efforts shouldn’t be put in the parking lot
  - The Chair answered that the SRC would likely have access to the MRC’s DEIA training opportunities and acknowledged the difficulty some members expressed with tabling SEIA as she agrees that it is an ongoing work. The Chair expressed the opinion that SRC does not have a strong

argument to the Governor for pressing forward any of tabled items in the budget

- Mr. Mason said that he would personally request that the SRC has access to any DEIA trainings to ensure that SRC members can participate through MRC DEIA Council

- The Chair acknowledged the concerns about DEIA trainings. In response to Ms. Tosti's comment in the chat regard MRC opening the trainings up to the public, specified that this conversation is specifically about the members of the SRC rather than about members of the public. The DEIA training is meant to allow state organization employees to better serve the public; MRC is under no obligation to pay for the public to receive DEIA training.

- Mr. Fujii suggested that SRC members who attend conferences make write-ups about the highlights to identify useful ideas and report out at an SRC meeting. The Chair notes that this is the expectation for those who attend and members are notified of that before they sign up.

- Vote on the tabling of line items **7** (*National Disability Rights Network conference*); **8** (*DEIA and Leadership Training*); and **11** (*Disability Membership Stipends*), the rows highlighted in yellow on the budget until next fiscal year and moving the budget forward for vote at the SRC meeting in June and then to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for approval:

- Ms. Stroud moved to accept the three deletions and move the budget forward to the SRC for a vote of the full body and Mr. Bellil seconded. The Executive Committee passed the motion to submit the "Proposed Statewide Rehabilitation Council Annual Budget 7/1/22-6/30/23" to the Full SRC for adoption and upon adoption, submit to the RSA for final approval of the expenditure of funds.

- Mr. Fujii suggested thar rather than deleting the tabled items, assigning them a zero value for this fiscal year

- **State Plan Committee Report and vote on FY23 Recommendations**

- Mr. Bellil spoke about the finalized recommendations; his committee report was rolled into this summary.
- There are three new recommendations and three old recommendations.
- He provided a brief summary of the recommendations process before the vote on whether the recommendations are ready to send to the full SRC for vote.
- Ms. Scott asked for context about changes in the recommendations since last year, and Mr. Bellil responded with summaries of each recommendation. See, ***DRAFT- Massachusetts State Rehabilitation Council FY23 Recommendations May 11, 2022.docx***. Mr. Bellil reported that the three recommendations that are being carried over have been assigned new Recommendation numbers with the former Recommendation numbers in parentheses.
- Mr. LaMaster moved to send the slate of FY2023 recommendations to the full SRC for a vote and Ms. Goldberg seconded. The Executive Committee passed

the motion to send the slate of FY2023 recommendations to the full SRC for a vote.

- Mr. Bellil shared that the new state plan meeting date was rescheduled for August 17. The Committee will review MRC's responses to the FY2023 Recommendations.

- **Membership Policies for SRC**

- The Chair recapped the discussion from the May Executive committee meeting asking what people would like to see in this policy, what it should be named (rather than being called a conduct policy) and what sample language could be used from the link to policies that were sent with the materials. The Chair stated that drafting would begin later in the meeting, after Ms. Sahara Defensor, MRC Deputy General Counsel, introduces herself and discusses her role in the process.
- Ms. Defensor emphasized the importance of choosing language that is within the confines of state and federal regulations, as well as language that is broad enough to encompass a variety of situations but specific enough to clearly define individual roles.
- Mr. LaMaster brought up the idea of language indicating partnership that speaks to mutual respect, suggesting "Guidelines for Mutual Respect"
- The Chair clarified that these guidelines are intended only for member participation within the SRC, but noted that Mr. LaMaster's comments would work for the SRC as well.
- Mr. Bellil suggested "Guidelines for Mutual Respect and Expectations"
  - Some concern about term "mutual respect" as it could imply that "mutual respect" does not exist currently
- Ms. Defensor suggested naming it last and coming up with language first
- Mr. LaMaster suggested the inclusion of a clause about effort and coming prepared to meetings, and also noted that developing an understanding of the SRC's scope of the advisory role and authority, i.e., understanding role expectations
- The Chair suggested a clause about arriving on time, understanding that priorities often shift
- Mr. Fujii brought up that what isn't expected should be listed along with what is expected, e.g., being on camera isn't expected. The Chair added that being off camera doesn't need to be requested as an accommodation and suggested adding language about how to request reasonable accommodations.
- Ms. Goldberg suggested a clause about the importance of adhering to the agenda to avoid meetings being derailed
  - The Chair noted that the Open Mic section on each agenda contributes to that purpose
- Mr. Fujii said that meeting topics should only be added to the agenda by making the request to the Chair; he also highlighted the importance of stating obvious expectations.

- Mr. Bellil put in the chat a general expectation from the RSA website regarding of SRC members fulfilling the [SRC's federal responsibilities](#) by connecting with constituents found at <https://rsa.ed.gov/about/programs/vocational-rehabilitation-state-grants/SRC-independent-commission-resources>
  - Ms. Scott seconded this point and emphasized the importance of communication and public awareness
- Mr. Fujii suggested keeping the member policies as concise as possible and including more lengthy parts in an external document or links the Council can reference, like the bylaws
  - The Chair suggested creating a section of the SRC website that is exclusive to members where information and documents such as bylaws can be accessed, which otherwise tend to be buried quickly on state websites
- Limit the use of acronyms; Ms. Goldberg noted how the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council sends out a list of acronyms and other terms in its meeting materials and suggested adopting a similar practice
- Mr. Fujii asked about a systematic approach for the SRC operationalizing communication with constituents
  - The Chair responded that it has been helpful to attend MRC's quarterly forums and the Boston Center for Independent Living's (BCIL) events as well as events of other disability organizations
  - Ms. Goldberg noted that each member will be communicating with different populations of constituents but reiterated that a general strategy would be helpful
  - Ms. Scott suggested emails to be sent out to SRC members about upcoming opportunities to connect with constituents, which the Chair responded to by suggesting that it be an opt-in mailing list to avoid unwanted emails
  - The suggestion came up to use other media outlets for this purpose, like Facebook, for information that doesn't need to be secure
    - The Chair noted that that there may be restrictions on social media pages for State agencies and invite Ms. Defensor to comment. Ms. Defensor agreed that there was likely restrictions on use of social media and would research what those entail.
  - This discussion was tabled due to time and will continue at the July Executive Committee meeting

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **Committee Reports**

- **MRC DEIA Council: Mr. Doug Mason**
  - There was a meeting on May 18 where some topics were discussed, including that the Statewide Bilingual Group will be celebrating its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary on June 9<sup>th</sup> at an in-person event

- The Council's work will fully start at its June meeting, when they will analyze the most recent agency-wide DEIA data about employees and consumers and they will develop goals for MRC, at which point their meetings will become more productive
- **Consumer Satisfaction & Needs Assessment Committee: Ms. Olympia Stroud**
  - Ms. Stroud needed to leave, but wrote in the chat that there are no updates
- **Policy Committee: Ms. Naomi Goldberg**
  - There was a meeting this morning about creating materials for MRC consumers in easy-to-understand language
  - The first goal is to ensure understanding of MRC, and the second is understanding of VR
  - A message will be sent out to SRC members to get feedback about these orientation materials
- **The Business & Employment Opportunity (BEO) Committee: Ms. Cheryl Scott on behalf of Mr. Steve LaMaster**
  - Mr. LaMaster needed to leave, but gave his update to Ms. Scott to read
  - BEO is working to develop a plan to work with MRC from June to October to develop materials for the SRC's rebranding. The plan has been sent to MRC to give feedback on the timeline.
  - The Committee will meet on June 9th from 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. to discuss the rebranding and Mr. LaMaster invites everyone to join.
- **State Planning Committee: Mr. Joe Bellil**
  - The update for this committee was rolled into a prior agenda item, "State Plan Committee Report and vote on FY23 Recommendations," under Old Business.

#### **MRC Updates: Mr. Bill Noone**

- In the absence of Kate Biebel and Amanda Baczko, Chair Canada asked Mr. Noone to provide an MRC update.
  - Mr. Noone reported that MRC is working on the Consumer Conference, which will be an in-person gathering in Marlborough open to consumers of all MRC's divisions. Date to be announced
  - MRC is working on outreaching to gather input on the Consumer Experience Survey timeline and other elements.
  - Continuing efforts on the "One MRC" data system, which is currently in the user testing phase. System should be complete in July.
  - NextGen project development and staffing is ongoing. MRC will be presenting this project in the June Quarterly meeting and asking the SRC to help get the word out.

#### **Draft June 16 Quarterly meeting agenda**

- The Chair brought up the meeting agenda at the next quarterly MRC meeting and requested that Committees submit written committee reports with updates from March

Quarterly up to the June Quarterly meeting. This will allow an hour for MRC to give substantive updates on key agency projects, per the Commissioner's request in the SRC March Quarterly meeting.

- Mr. Bellil suggested making time for an Open Mic section, which isn't currently in the agenda, and the Chair said this could be done by reducing time for discussing the SRC's budget from 30 to 20 minutes, since it was discussed extensively today, and Mr. Bellil said he would only need ten minutes to go through the slate of FY2023 recommendations. The excess time went to "Open Mic."

**Open Mic:**

- A question came up in the chat asking for an explanation of the budget discussion that had happened in today's meeting, but this was postponed until the June 16 meeting due to a lack of time
  - The Chair explained the reading the chat while chairing the meeting is difficult and apologized about unread comments that were relevant to the discussion. Chair Canada noted that everyone has access to the chat and sees the comments. Comments relevant to the discussion that she be recorded in the minutes are the one that she tends to read aloud.
- The Chair mentioned that the BCIL is having a meet-and-greet on the Boston Commons, at the quarter of Charles and Beacon Street across from Starbucks, on June 10 from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m., which is a free event and helpful for connecting with the disability community

**Adjournment:** The Chair called for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Fujii made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Ms. Scott. **The meeting adjourned at 3:02 PM.**