**State Of Connecticut**

**Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS)**

**Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB)**

**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to BESB**

**DRAFT MINUTES**

**June 26, 2024**

**Members Present:**

**Ms. Melissa Thompson, Ms. Laura Knapp, Ms. Jennifer Jenkins, Ms. Enaida Mendoza, Ms. Heide Sulewski, Director Carol Jenkins, Ms. Brandy Altergott, Ms. Shelley Ann McDermott, Ms. Deb Reed, Chair Mr. Phillip Magalnick, Mr. Jay Brown, Mr. Joe Carbone, Ms. Kendra Valente, Mr. John Carnemolla, Mr. John McNickle, Treasurer Mr. Scott Baecker**

**Others Present:**

**Mr. Tyrell Sampson, Ms. Jennifer Proto**

**Members Absent:**

**Mr. Frank Buonoma, Vice Chair Mr. William DeMaio, Ms. Nicole Rico-Serrano, Secretary Ms. Lucretia Jones**

**Welcome:**

**Call to order: The meeting was called to order at 10:03am by Chair Magalnick. Roll call was conducted by Director Carol Jenkins. A quorum was present.**

**Introduction of New Members and Guests:**

**Chair Magalnick asked for the new members to please introduce themselves. Mr. Joe Carbone, President, and CEO of The Workplace (a national workforce development institution), Ms. Laura Knapp, Parent Consultant for Connecticut Parent Advocacy Center, Ms. Shelley-Ann McDermott, part of the BEP program and BEP Committee, and Ms. Melissa Thompson, Statewide Independent Living Council, all introduced themselves. Chair Magalnick and several others were happy to meet the new members. Mr. Tyrell Sampson, Supervisor for BEP, and Ms. Jennifer Proto, Legislative Liaison, also introduced themselves.**

**Public Comment:**

**None**

**Old Business:**

**March Meeting Minutes**

**Chair Magalnick asked for a vote to approve the meeting minutes from the March meeting. Motion was made by Ms. Reed, seconded by Mr. Baecker, motion carried- no nays or abstentions.**

**Treasurers Report**

**Mr. Scott Baecker reported that the SRC budget has not changed since the last meeting, there remains $9,878.20. He stated this does not reflect the few conferences that were attended by Chair Magalnick, and that those will be reflected in the report at the September meeting. Chair Magalnick mentioned that a new treasurer will be needed starting in September and if anyone was interested to please let him know as a vote will be needed in September to replace Mr. Baecker as he ends his second term.**

**Membership and SRC Annual Report**

**Director Jenkins went over members’ term appointment dates briefly for everyone to be aware of and make sure there were no discrepancies from the information they received from the governor’s office.**

**Chair Magalnick discussed the new members representing mandated groups to engage with their experiences either working with the blind or if they have any programs, they initiated, that VR could take advantage of and vice versa. He will send an email out with some suggestions/topics that will help make SRC and VR more successful that they can report back on at the September meeting. Chair Magalnick also stated that a copy of the annual report was submitted back in December and that everyone should have received a copy of this report and nothing to discuss further.**

**Consumer Satisfaction**

**Director Jenkins is still waiting for a quote from Central Connecticut State University to conduct the consumer satisfaction survey. She has not received an update currently. Chair Magalnick asked if other organizations could be contacted, unfortunately CCSU is on State contract for this, and others cannot be contracted for this. Director Jenkins is working on a memorandum of agreement (MOA) to get pricing that covers multiple years rather than one year at a time.**

**Work Group Volunteers and Assignments**

**Chair Magalnick discussed that per the bylaws every member should volunteer for at least one work group and help chair one as well. The Consumer Satisfaction work group needs some assistance. He discussed possibly creating a work group to help publicize what VR does and community outreach with that. He mentioned the Advisory Boards October 15th event.**

**New Business:**

**Adoption of SRC Resource Plan**

**It was mentioned that the SRC has $10,000 in funds that they need to work on a plan as to how to allocate and spend these funds. A discussion was held on how the funds could be used for reimbursement of travel expenses for attending in person meetings at BESB if members would like to attend. Chair Magalnick asked if anyone was interested in working with him and Director Jenkins to create a written policy on what the funds can be used for (transport for meetings, SRC events, with limits set), Mr. John Carnemolla volunteered to help with this. A motion was made by Mr. John McNickle to let SRC members expense out transportation for meetings, seconded by Mr. Joe Carbone, motion carried unanimously.**

**Blindness Awareness Month Event**

**This event is spearheaded by Stephen Thal and the Advisory Board, Chair Magalnick is assisting where needed, along with Director Jenkins. It was approved that the event gets some PR from the Department of Aging and Disability services public relations person. CHRIS Radio will also promote this on their station. Chair Magalnick asked if anyone was interested in helping with this, Ms. Melissa Thompson and Ms. Shelley Ann McDermott volunteered to help. Chair Magalnick suggested getting a plaque for around $75.00 made for Stephen Thal to commemorate all the work he has done since he is retiring. Ms. Deb Reed asked if Mr. Thal read Braille, he does, so it was suggested that a plaque be made with a special part in Braille. Ms. Reed made a motion for this plaque and was seconded by Ms. Melissa Thompson passed unanimously. Chair Magalnick also asked if plaques should be purchased for members in their second term, this was deemed not necessary by Ms. Deb Reed and Mr. John Carnamolla.**

**SRC Retreat**

**Discussed by Chair Magalnick, no decision was made at this time for retreat date or activities. Ms. Shelly Ann McDermott volunteered to form a work group with Chair Magalnick to come up with ideas/logistics on this.**

**SRC Members at VR Activities/Events**

**It was discussed about having SRC members possibly go to VR events. Director Jenkins brought up that it would depend on the event as VR is only given 1 seat at certain functions. She will discuss with Mary, VR Supervisor, what possible events SRC members could go to for the future and share those next time.**

**Success Stories at Meetings**

**Chair Magalnick brought up the topic of continuing success stories at SRC meetings. He discussed how they can be confusing at times to the overall productivity of the meetings. He suggested maybe having them approved by the VR Supervisor prior to the meeting. This will be re-address at the September meeting.**

**Directors Report and VR Report**

**These were not discussed at this meeting due to time constraints. The reports were both emailed prior to the meeting, and everyone was asked to refer to that email.**

**Legislative Report**

**Ms. Jennifer Proto reported on how the legislation looks at the funds remaining in several budgets, mostly from federal pandemic relief funds, and redirected more than $370 million to support ongoing core programs like healthcare and social services. ADS was given an additional $1 million in funds. $200,000.00 of these funds were directed to establish a new Bureau within ADS for Deaf, DeafBlind, and hearing-impaired individuals. It would require hiring a director beginning October 1st that would report directly to Commissioner Porter. This person would need to be familiar with working with the population it serves and be able to communicate via sign language or other interpretation methods to help people who are deaf, deafblind, or hearing impaired. The Act also requires other state agencies to appoint an employee to collaborate with this new Bureau and serve as a point of contact for any concerns. The Advisory Board made some minor changes to the name and the board’s membership by removing the ADS Commissioner so that the new Bureau director can serve as the board’s administrator starting October 1st.**

**Med Connect also had some minor changes to the program for people with disabilities working. The income limit was increased from $75,000.00 to $85,000.00. The asset limit was increased for individuals and married couples to $20,000.00 and $30,000.00 respectively.**

**Public Act 24-39 contains various provisions to help seniors remain in their homes safely. It required the Department of Social Services to maintain a home care provider registry for people to receive services. It also requires home care workers to wear an ID badge with name and picture on it during client appointments. Public Act 24-19 makes various changes to laws on home health care and home health worker safety. Public Act 24-113 requires group practices of at least nine physicians or APRN’s or combination of them to consider certain federal technical accessibility standards when they purchase medical diagnostic equipment. It also requires them to train staff accordingly regarding policies and procedures for patients with accessibility needs and to address any gaps found.**

**BEP Report**

**Mr. Tyrell Sampson welcomed everyone and acknowledged that a few members of BEP are new members to the SRC. He discussed that the BEP program was established in 1936 federally to give opportunities to individuals that are legally blind first access/rights to operate any food service or gift shop opportunities on state, federal or municipal property. BEP operates in conjunction with other statewide committee programs. BEP was given the opportunity to open a concession/fueling station at the South Benson Marina. They have an operator willing to take this on and has shown great success. Technology has been invested heavily in this such as a Just Baked Vending Machine, which offers hot items for patrons. The seasonal beach locations are all up and running. BEP is looking to update some items in the Legislative Office Building Gift Shop to reflect the new state logo initiative. BEP is hoping to establish 2 new opportunities in the program, they haven’t been fully established so that is all the information he will share at this time. Mr. Sampson is working with a statewide committee of blind vendors to update state regulations. The committee has approved this first draft, and they are working with Director Jenkins to get this moved up the chain of command for approval.**

**Report from Chair**

**Chair Magalnick discussed the NCSRC conference he went to in April. It was a good experience, and everyone spoke openly and honestly about issues they faced and suggested ways to help each other. Chair Magalnick will send out an email to discuss the new work groups that were mentioned earlier and set up a call for the summer. He thanked Director Jenkins, Ms. Lisa Drew for all the work they have done helping make it possible for him to go to the last NCSRC conference. He is excited for the future of the program.**

**Adjournment**

**Chair Magalnick asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Deb Reed made the motion, seconded by Ms. Heide Sulewski, passed unanimously. The meeting adjourned at 12:02pm.**