Bay State Council of the Blind
Minutes of board call on November 12, 2017

2017 officers and board members:
- Brian Charlson President
- David Kingsbury First Vice President
- Frank Ventura Second Vice President
- Jerry Berrier Secretary
- Rick Morin Treasurer
- Rose Miller board member
- Mary Haroyan board member
- Carey Scouler board member

Ex Officio
- Steve Dresser Webmaster
- Bob Hachey BayLines editor
- DeAnn Elliott Legislative committee chair

All current and ex officio board members were present except for Carey Scouler who was excused.

Brian called the meeting to order at 7:31 PM.

After roll call and adoption of the agenda, the minutes of our October meeting were read and approved by a motion made by David and seconded by Frank.

Treasurer’s report
Prior to this meeting, Rick e-mailed a comprehensive treasurer’s report along with the following summary:

- Current Total Assets are: 137,859.86
- Our Year-to-Date Deficit is -7438.94 (-6774 of which are the hotel cancellation fees to be recouped in 2018)
• Stipends for the Legislative Seminar have not yet been paid and historically are paid in December for the meetings in February.

• Deficit for the year without the hotel cancellation fee is expected to be around $4500.

• Fall conference showed a profit thanks to donations and raffle. Registration fees did not cover all costs. David Kingsbury will report further detail about the conference.

• We received another donation from the United Way in the amount of 658.60.

• Our Annual Subscription to Survey Monkey auto-renewed at 204.00.

• Brian and I will be signing the required forms at Watertown Savings to be able to execute transactions against our CD account.

• The cost to withdraw amounts from the CD prior to the maturity date (October 2018) is 12 months of interest on the balance being withdrawn. We are only earning 2.62 per month on the total CD balance.

• We must retain a balance of 15,000 with Bank of America to avoid account charges. Under this umbrella is our checking, savings, and EDS Students Checking account. If we invest $100,000 and keep 15,000 in reserve, we would have roughly $25,000 operating capital based on current income/spending.

• The Finance Committee is drafting an Investment Policy for the Board’s approval at the next Board meeting. This will include our recommendation regarding the managed investments under consideration by the board.

• We are continuing to pay Verizon for telephone service.

• $200 was expended to recognize the developers of our new logo.

• New Central chapter submitted dues that will be applied through the end of 2018.

• Two new members joined this month and paid dues for 2018.

We discussed The White Cane Day contribution requested of us by Meg Robinson. She said our share would be $285.00 due to unforeseen cost increases which she failed to verify ahead of time.

Jerry made and Mary seconded a motion to pay the $285 amount, which is approximately $135 more than we paid last year.

Rick made, and Jerry and Mary accepted a friendly amendment that we pay the $285 cost this year but limit our payment for future years to $225.00. Rick will notify Meg Robertson of our decision. The motion carried unanimously.
Mary made and Rose seconded a motion to accept the treasurer’s report. The motion carried unanimously.

**President’s Report**
To save time on monthly board calls, Brian asked that all committee chairs provide a written report each month and that members review the reports prior to the next monthly meeting.

Brian has committed to providing the agenda no later than the Friday before each scheduled monthly meeting. The agenda will include a reminder that any committee chair on the agenda should provide a written report prior to the meeting.

**Legislative Report**
Prior to DeAnn’s report, the board went into executive session to discuss a sensitive issue related to use of our e-mail distribution lists. Brian recommended that when a committee chair posts something on BSCB-Announce, it should also be posted on BSCB-I. He also pointed out that committee chairs should not feel compelled to correspond one-on-one with others who post to the lists.

When posting an informational item, use FYI followed by the return key for clarity.

Bob volunteered to draft a set of rules for BSCB lists based on those being used by ACB. Brian asked that it be under the purview of the Publications committee and presented to this board for approval at our next meeting.

Opinions from individuals should be posted to the Chat list, not to the committee chair or BSCB-Announce.

Executive session ended.

The Legislative Committee was pleased to host Rep. Kay Khan as a speaker at the fall BSCB conference and will write a note to thank her for speaking. Rep. Khan talked about how the legislative process works and ways that advocates can make a difference. Next year the committee will give the speaker a BSCB brochure/informational sheet as a way to further increase awareness of the BSCB and its issues.

Attorney Lainey Feingold expressed interest in working with the BSCB on the Common College Application. At its next meeting on Nov. 29, the committee will try to quantify what functionality is lost when a blind applicant uses the accessible PDF, which does not offer all the features of the regular application.

**Transportation report**
Rick updated us on activities relevant to the Ride pilot and Ride issues. He pointed out that rides taken on the ride pilot are not to be considered ADA trips. He said the Lyft and Uber apps have a section for filing service animal complaints and other types of complaints.

Their websites also offer options for submitting comments and complaints.

David described a letter he had recently sent to us that encourages the MBTA to extend the pilot for longer and to more Ride-eligible individuals. Rick recommends we hold off until the MBTA board takes its next action, then we may wish to send a modified letter.
Membership report

Mary has been listening to ACB membership calls and has gotten some good ideas.
She suggests a generic BSCB business card. Possibly in large print and braille on a 4 by 6 card.
Brian suggested we refer that idea to the publications committee.
Mary mentioned a set of questions relevant to membership that were recently proposed by an ACB director. Brian suggested she send them to all of us. We are to reply directly to Mary with our thoughtful responses.

Mary is considering a resource list for new BSCB members.

Fall Conference report

Prior to this call, David sent a concise report from the fall conference as follows:

(Beginning of report)

2017 BSCB Fall Conference Review

On November 9, a conference call was organized to review the experience of the 2017 fall conference which took place at the Carroll Center on November 4. Objectives were to identify lessons learned about what worked well, where improvements were needed, and suggestions for making improvements in the future. Issues are presented with discussion following.

Present on the call were organizing committee members Mary Haroyan, Rosemary Miller and David Kingsbury, as well as BSCB President Brian Charlson, Treasurer Rick Morin and webmaster Steve Dresser. One other organizing committee member, Bob Hachey, was unable to make the call. This note was prepared by fall conference coordinator David Kingsbury.

In general terms, the fall conference was a great success. There were about 70 participants, making it perhaps the best attended fall conference ever. Participant feedback on the quality of general session speakers and breakout sessions was overwhelmingly positive. The raffle raised over $500 and there were almost $300 in donations to the BSCB, allowing the conference to register a net positive financial result. During the planning period, communication through conference calls and email was very good and organizing committee members worked well together. Use of Eventbrite greatly facilitated planning and conference organization. Consequently, the discussion below about areas where improvements are needed is not intended to take away from the overall success of the conference.

Issue: Requesting membership ideas for conference sessions was a positive aspect of preparation that should be continued.

Discussion: About two months prior to the conference, the coordinator sent an email out to the membership soliciting ideas for workshop sessions. A number of good ideas were identified. Providing a richer sampling of possible session topics than probably would have been the case if ideas were limited
to those of just the organizing committee or Board members. It also may have given the membership a
greater sense of having been consulted. This should be done prior to all future conferences.

Issue: In seeking volunteers, organizers should not be overly dependent on a single source.

Discussion: It was decided early on to only ask for Carroll Center volunteers, most of whom come from
nearby schools. In the end, no volunteers stepped forward from these schools and it was necessary to
scurry around at the last minute. Ultimately, volunteer numbers were insufficient, and initial needs were
underestimated. We should tap multiple resources for seeking volunteers and the effort of identifying
them should start about six weeks prior to events. In addition to the Carroll Center, Perkins and local
Lions’ Clubs should be simultaneously tapped.

Issue: Volunteer numbers were insufficient.

Discussion: Early on, we estimated we needed about 3 volunteers in the morning and 3 in the afternoon.
Given that we had 70 participants, these numbers were not sufficient during peak times such as
registration, morning refreshments, lunch and cleanup. For a similar size conference in the future, it is
estimated that 6 to 8 volunteers should be recruited in the morning (prior to registration through lunch)
and 3 to 4 in the afternoon. Volunteers should be assigned specific roles that they stick to. Because
recruiting volunteers and managing them on conference day is very labor-intensive, one organizing
committee member should be designated volunteer coordinator, and this person should be somebody
other than the overall conference coordinator.

Issue: The registration process was too congested and chaotic.

Discussion: Processing 70 pre-registered participants in 45 minutes is not an easy task. Three different
functions were handled at the registration desk. These included handing out brailled registration cards to
prepaid participants, collecting cash and checks from pre-registrants who had not yet paid, and collecting
cash from raffle ticket purchasers. This process was loud and stressful for many attendees.

There should have been at least one sighted volunteer responsible for forming lines and moving people
along to the auditorium. In addition, those who had prepaid and only had to pick up their registration cards
could have been handled at a separate location, probably near the door of the auditorium. Because this
was the largest group (46of the 67 pre-registrants), this would have relieved pressure on the front desk.

Issue: Eventbrite is an excellent tool for conference preparation.

Discussion: Using Eventbrite permitted the organizers to cut down substantially on the number of
monetary transactions for paying registration on the day of the conference. Of the 67 pre-registrants, 46
prepaid. For about half the pre-registration period, there was an Eventbrite option to pay cash or check on
the day of the conference. Six participants used this until the option was removed from Eventbrite. This choice should not be allowed in the future for Eventbrite registrations because one of the main benefits of using Eventbrite is to cut down on same-day transactions. These people will still have the choice of phone-in pre-registration.

Eventbrite was also an excellent planning tool. In the run-up to the conference, it enabled organizers to have real-time information on registration numbers, optional donation amounts, breakout session numbers useful for allocating meeting rooms, and other things. When combined with Excel pivot tables, all this information could be easily updated and periodically communicated to organizing committee and Board members.

In addition to the same-day payment option discussed above, there was only one other comment about the online registration form. Regarding breakout sessions, an option for not attending should also be included in the future.

While using Eventbrite and Pay Pal costs money, fees are modest and it is well worth the outlay. Currently, only the BSCB Treasurer knows how to create Eventbrite event forms and enter custom questions. Other BSCB members should be trained in setting up events in Eventbrite. Training of other BSCB members in use of pivot tables is also recommended.

Issue: Audio recording setup was greatly facilitated by visiting the Carroll Center prior to the conference.

Discussion: Audio guy Steve Dresser visited the Carroll Center two days before the conference to check out auditorium facilities and set up equipment and wiring. Carroll Center I T coordinator Roger Goguen was very helpful to Steve. This made same day prep very smooth.

Steve was able to capture the entire morning general session, the Hannah Fairbairn breakout session, and the afternoon astro-physicist talk. However, acoustics were poor in the Multi-Purpose room and consequently, audio quality was poor for the diet and nutrition breakout session. In addition, the Brian Charlson cooking session had poor audio quality because he was moving around a great deal and his hands were not free to hold a microphone. For such sessions in the future, a clip-on mike should be used to increase the likelihood of acceptable quality recordings.

Finally, mike runners should be clearly assigned prior to the conference. For a room the size of the Carroll Centre auditorium, two mike runners, not just one, should be designated.

Issue: There was frequently too much noise in the auditorium.

Discussion: Cell phones going off and side discussions are too frequent at BSCB conferences. We need to get into the habit of laying out ground rules against this at the beginning of every conference. While
“turn off your cell phone” announcements are made at every other type of public event we attend, it is never done at BSCB events. We should do this from now on. If clear ground rules are laid out, it makes it easier to reprimand offenders later on, as the need arises.

Issue: Overall, the raffle was a great success. However, calling out numbers had to compete with the noise related to distributing lunches.

Discussion: There was too much competition with the raffle for the attention of conference participants. Given that only one hour was allocated for lunch, time was very tight. In addition, an impromptu talk from a Carroll Center-sponsored archery instructor was wedged into the lunch period. If time permits, lunches and beverages should all be handed out before the raffle starts. Efforts to jam other speakers into the lunch period should be resisted, given how hard it is to coordinate required functions, as well as due to the fact that this is the only time participants can socialize during the entire day.

As well as being brailed, raffle tickets should have numbers printed on the other side so that those who don’t read Braille can find out their numbers more easily.

Two sets of Braille numbers were brailed and put in two separate Ziploc bags. Tickets in one bag were sold for $5 each, or $10 for three. Numbers were then drawn from the other Ziploc bag for awarding prizes. This was a very simple system. Tickets were sold quickly with no confusion.

Other ways to organize the raffle were discussed. While these may be explored, one strength of this raffle was that it was extremely quick to sell the tickets. All tickets were sold prior to the raffle. Round number prices ($5 and $10) minimized the time-consuming process of making change. Over $500 was raised. Any alternative system should not complicate or slow the sales process.

Issue: Cleanup after lunch was problematic and ways are needed to ensure this is done properly.

Discussion: For various reasons, a mess was left in the Carroll Center auditorium and this should not be repeated in the future. First, an adequate number of large trash bags were not secured prior to the conference. We should be sure to have these in hand no later than the day before the conference. Second, as mentioned above, numbers of volunteers were not sufficient and the lunch time slot was very tight. It was not possible to fully clean up prior to the first breakout session in the auditorium. Clean up continued during this session and was disruptive.

Several measures could remedy this. More volunteers should be recruited for the very busy lunch period. The lunch hour could be extended for another 15 or 30 minutes. More volunteers should be available in the late afternoon to be sure that the meeting space is returned to a proper state.

Issue: Space in the Carroll Center auditorium was tight.
Discussion: With 70 participants and seating around tables, the room was used to full capacity. Additional people could not have been accommodated. If we use the Carroll Centre in the future, we may need to set a maximum cut-off point.

One possibility might be to identify another venue. However, changing location needs to be carefully considered for at least two reasons. First, the cost of any other facility will almost certainly be higher than the $300 contribution we gave to the Carroll Center. And second, it is more difficult to plan and carry out an event in a facility where few if any BSCB members know their way around or do not have a longstanding relationship with staff of that facility. For this reason, it is much easier to organize events at venues like the Carroll Center or Perkins.

(End of report)

Brian praised those involved for a very successful event.

Spring Convention Report
Frank said both the banquet and keynote speakers are confirmed. The keynote speaker is ACB treasurer David Trot. The banquet speaker is Rhonda Trot. She has managed many ACCB tours.

Most of the programming is set, and that committee is meeting the day after this call. Jerry will contact the Lions right away for volunteers.

Finance Committee report
Brian said he, Rick and Jerry will present a set of proposed investment policies and a recommendation on whether and when we should sign on with 3D Asset Management to the board prior to our next board call.

Publications Committee report
David said Diane Croft and Gretchen Thompson were happy with the Legal Seafood certificates we provided in gratitude for the work they did on the logo.

Gretchen is now working on our letterhead.

Jacquie Tolisano has expressed interest in working on our website, so we need to create a scope of work to present to her. Steve said he will be talking to her this week.

Bob is delaying the deadline for BayLines to December 30.

Bob said the T-Mobile phone service we were considering is strictly for residential and would not be available to us as a nonprofit.

David suggested we stay with the phone service we have until a better option becomes available.

Brian asked the committee to draft a report for the board that includes the number of recipients on each of our e-mail lists, and how many are receiving each version of BayLines.

Brian asked the committee to update the mailing lists prior to sending each edition of BayLines.

Brian is waiting to hear back from Cory Kadlik on whether he’s willing to manage our social media posts. He realizes Cory will need to become a member if he is interested.
New Business

Rose mentioned a gift card donated by a friend; Brian has received it and will put it into the resources for our spring convention. Rose will be receiving an additional gift from another friend. Brian thanked Rose for all of her hard work with the fall conference.

Brian said we may be trying Zoom Cloud Meeting for our next board call.

Our next call is scheduled for December 10 at 7:30 PM.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.

respectfully,

Jerry Berrier, Secretary