

## Bay State Council of the Blind

Board Call, December 10, 2017

### Bay State Council of the Blind

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

Brian called the meeting to order shortly after 7:30 PM. All board members and officers were present, although Bob and Steve arrived after the call was in session.

The agenda was approved.

Mary made and Rose seconded a motion to approve the minutes of our November meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

[Treasurer's report; Rick](#)

Financial Summary and Notes

list of 12 items

- Current 2017 Loss is -7,497.63 (includes -6774 hotel cancellation fee to reschedule spring conference which will be applied to hotel bill for the actual

spring convention)

- Legislative seminar stipends of \$2750 will be paid once BSCB Representatives are confirmed.
- Total Annual Loss will be -10,247
- Loss without hotel cancellation fee is -3,473.63.
- These losses were incurred despite receiving 4,986.16 from the United Way from unknown sources.
- Total Treasury balance is 135,051.17 (includes stipends to be paid and hotel cancellation fee to be recovered in 2018).
- Received \$225 in dues income since last report
- Received \$87 in member donations
- Disbursed \$285 for BSCB's share of White Cane Day.
- Verizon phone charges have increased about \$20 a month. Need to contact Verizon to see if there are less expensive options.
- Brian and Rick are scheduled to sign all required paperwork at Watertown Savings the week after Christmas.
- Investment Committee met and has formulated draft investment policy. Aggregate account balances at Bank of America cannot fall below \$15,000 to avoid

fees

list end

Mary made and David seconded a motion to approve the treasurer's report. The motion carried unanimously.

[President's report; Brian](#)

Signatories are being changed on our accounts to reflect the current officers. Brian as president and Rick as treasurer will have signing power. There were no objections.

Brian has asked 3 people to chair the nominating committee, and they have all declined for various reasons.

Bob said he would be willing to serve as chair, and Mary suggested Cheryl Cumings. Brian will be working hard to fill the position, as we are supposed to establish the nominating committee at least 90 days prior to our upcoming convention.

Brian asked Mary to confer with the other two board members and suggest a member at large for the nominating committee by the end of this week.

Brian said anyone seeking an office should not be on the nominating committee, and BSCB officers and voting board members are not eligible to serve.

All officer positions and Jim Denham's board position are up for election this year.

Brian is appointing Bob as Resolutions committee chair, and Chris Devin will chair the constitution and bylaws committee.

Brian will select a chair for the awards committee.

[Legislative Committee report; DeAnn](#)

Legislative Committee report for December 10

\*Committee met Nov. 29

\*Legislative Committee will do a presentation on town disability commissions for spring convention

\*Voter survey update; DeAnn turned in the survey report to the secretary of the Commonwealth but has gotten no response yet. Carl Richardson will follow up.

\*Common App update. Next step is to schedule a meeting with Lainey Feingold and try to identify exactly what functionality is lost with Common App PDFs

\*Net neutrality discussed (a statement attached)

Net Neutrality statement:

"Dear Members of the FCC:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on Chairman Pai's proposal to end net neutrality. As a blind disability advocate who uses adaptive technology daily to access the internet, I'm submitting this comment in support of maintaining current rules.

I support net neutrality for four reasons; the historic inability of the market to self-regulate in the area of digital accessibility, and the negative impact that tiered delivery would have on disability-related innovation, civil rights, and employment.

Market Self-Regulation

I'm alarmed to hear critics of net neutrality characterize concerns about the rollback of regulations as "digital dystopia." Digital dystopia is not a hypothetical place for me. I live there.

In the 27 years since the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the invisible hand of supply and demand has failed more than once. In 2010, the Department of

Justice acknowledged in its ANPRM on web accessibility that the reason I'm still unable to access half the websites on the internet with my screen-reading software is because market forces have not brought a sufficient number of websites into WCAG 2.0 AA compliance. In the area of audio description, I look forward to enjoying 87 hours of television per quarter, but I'm aware that the only reason I enjoy it at all is because the FCC has already intervened. Accessibility for the blind will never be a high priority for the private sector. Equal access requires federal oversight.

I have little confidence in the "light touch" theory of problem resolution. Disability advocates have worked tirelessly for the opportunity to participate fully in the tremendous benefits of an increasingly digital world. While it sounds reasonable to address problems when they arise, we know from experience that problems will arise, and that years or even decades of advocacy may be needed to move the wheels of federal bureaucracy to achieve even the most modest gains. If fixing it after the fact were that simple, it would have happened already.

## Innovation

Many blind people rely on mobile apps that address the daily challenges unique to those of us with low vision. Using the camera on my smart phone, I can "read" a product label to differentiate between a can of beans and a can of pineapple when cooking. I have an app that tells me the denomination of the dollar bill that was given to me as change, and another that uses GPS technology to describe where I can find the bus stop. I even have an app that directs me to the guide dog relief area for every major airport in the U.S. Definitely a niche market! Few startup companies will get rich producing these products, even under the best of circumstances. Many leaders in technology believe that a rollback of regulations is likely to disadvantage small entrepreneurs by creating an unequal playing field for competition. I fear the result would be fewer new accessibility apps at a time when technology is opening a world of possibility for people with disabilities.

## Civil Rights

I serve as the legislative chair of a statewide blindness consumer advocacy organization. I routinely post information for the education of our members, and occasionally urge readers to take action by calling their legislators on key issues.

As a small nonprofit, we would not be able to afford premium delivery of content in a tiered system. If our website downloads more slowly than the websites of corporate

interests, it would inhibit our ability to move quickly, and impair our capacity to organize and advocate.

## Employment

According to a 2017 report from the National Council on Disability, the poverty rate among people with disabilities is twice the national average, and nearly 70 percent are unemployed. Within the blindness community, many of those who are working are employed by nonprofit organizations such as schools, social service agencies, and other places that would not enjoy premium delivery of content. Slower download speeds of the websites we visit most often would disproportionately impact us, and could diminish our efficiency, internet participation, and competitiveness in the workforce.

One argument that is sometimes made in favor of ending net neutrality is that it will support the growth of infrastructure and deliver service to underserved communities. Even if this is true, it would not address the internet barriers that blind people face. Our issues are systemic and unrelated to geographic location.

To use myself as an example, I live in Cambridge, Massachusetts, halfway between Harvard University and MIT. My neighborhood, which includes the offices of the W3C, is in one of the most well-connected corridors in the world. I use the latest software and hardware, and was fortunate to receive state-of-the-art rehabilitation training.

Unfortunately, there is no place where I can move, no gadget I can buy, no software I can learn, and no service I can add that will address the systemic digital inequalities we experience. If ending net neutrality adds 1000 more blind people to the internet, it will be 1000 new users with the same internet issues I experience.

## Conclusion

The Americans with Disabilities Act guarantees the right to equal participation, but the federal government has not, to date, made good on the promise in the realm of full digital communication access. Our use of the internet is already sufficiently complicated that an additional barrier could only add to the inequality of the participation of people with disabilities. As a woman with a disability, the current net neutrality rules are working quite well for me. I strongly urge you to keep them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

DeAnn Elliott

Cambridge, Massachusetts”

Jerry made and Mary seconded a motion to adopt the stand taken by DeAnn in the report above. The motion carried unanimously.

\*Action needed: spring legislative seminar. Feb. 24 to 26. We need to identify participants and begin to book appointments with legislators, which will be hard to get on short notice.

[Transportation report; Rick](#)

Brian suggested that Rick ask Nona Haroyan to join the committee to represent central Mass, and Rick will also seek a candidate from western Mass.

[Publications report; David](#)

list of 1 items

1. Board approval requested for guidelines for Use of New Logos

list end

See Friday email from David

Lays out when to use the logos, who can use them, how to use them in Word documents and email messages

All files will be available in Dropbox to authorized users

list of 2 items

2. Board approval requested for Chat list rules

3. See Friday email from Bob

list end

Slightly revised by Publications Committee to include the following:

Board to be informed if somebody is suspended

Suspendee can appeal to Pubs Committee

File attachments not permitted

list of 1 items

4. Website update

list end

Jackie Tolisano has expressed interest in overhauling it

Steve to call her before the holidays

list of 1 items

5. New BSCB member Cory Kadlik to assist with social media

list end

list of 1 items

6. Other things

list end

Should we design new T shirts using new logo?

Should we start work on a new brochure for prospective donors?

(End of written report)

David will add the Boston chapter to the brochure.

Mary made, Frank seconded and the board unanimously approved a motion to accept the usage policy regarding our new logos. Thanks to David and others for drafting the policy.

[Spring Conference report; Frank](#)

list of 5 items

- We are on schedule to finalize the conference program by January 1
- Rick Morin and David Kingsbury have been assisting me in creating the registration form. We intend to keep registration rates at last year's levels unless the BOD takes any action to the contrary.
- Some costs for the BOD to consider are: Banquet meal \$64 per person, coffee breaks \$11 per person, box lunch \$34 per person. And pizza for hospitality suite \$23 per person.
- The planning committee met and decided that all affiliate meetings are also part of the overall conference and the appropriate conference registration must be made by each attendee.
- The hospitality suite will be held Friday night. The exact program is still undergoing development.

list end

Jerry made and Mary seconded a motion that there be a general policy stating that anyone attending an affiliate meeting at the spring convention must pay for a one-day registration fee which is currently \$30.00. That would authorize them to attend Friday evening meetings and also Saturday sessions.

Affiliates will be invited to provide input during the Saturday sessions.

The motion carried unanimously.

[Membership report; Mary](#)

1. On Dec. 2 the Central MA Chapter had its first official meeting with its new officers. There were 22 members and a potential new member in attendance.

A speaker from the city of Worcester Office on Disabilities did a presentation, Possible upcoming activities were discussed, and a next meeting date planned

for March.

2. Frank and Rose continue to work on securing a meeting space for the Boston chapter. Rose has spoken with the Director of the YMCA in Roxbury and obtained agreement for use in their space.

Frank said they have an agreement and hope to meet in January.

3. The Membership Committee met on Nov. 30. Along with getting chapter updates, we discussed potential places where the new BSCB brochure could be on

hand as a resource. Some examples, were the Attorney General's Office and City Halls.

4. I have received two responses to the membership focused questions I sent out to the Board after our last meeting.

Brian said we will consider providing a transportation option for members who live outside the Boston area for our spring convention. This will be part of budgetary discussions.

[Finance committee report; jerry](#)

We discussed the following generously drafted by Rick.

Investment policy

The Board of the Bay State Council of the Blind, Inc. acknowledges and accepts its responsibility to its members to manage the assets of the organization responsibly and with minimal risk.

The Board endeavors on an annual basis to conduct the business of BSCB in a cash neutral manner meaning that in any given calendar year, BSCB's expenses should not exceed its income.

This policy defines how BSCB will invest a sizable portion of its cash assets and under what conditions monies will be added or withdrawn from the investment account.

The BSCB Board will retain the services of 3D Asset Management to invest the monies in the BSCB investment account in a manner where the risk is low.

The annual return over a 5-year period for these minimal risk investments is expected to be between 2.5 to 4 percent per annum. The Board recognizes that this return is over a 5-year horizon and that the yield in any given year may vary from this investment goal.

BSCB's initial investment placed with 3 D Asset Management is \$100,000. The BSCB Treasurer will provide quarterly reports of how the investments are performing. The BSCB Board will have no role in choosing the funds to be invested in nor how the portfolio is balanced in terms of mix of fund types. BSCB relies solely on 3 D Asset Management to perform these functions.

Should the BSCB Board wish to withdraw amounts from the investment account that would render the investment with 3 D Asset Management below \$100,000, this would require BSCB to liquidate the entire investment fund with 3 D Asset Management. Under no circumstance shall the BSCB Board consider such action if BSCB has \$25,000 in liquid assets beyond the investment account. Any decision to liquidate the investment fund would require  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority of the Board of Directors.

The BSCB treasurer will report BSCB's net operating loss or gain for each calendar year by the end of January in the following year. The BSCB treasurer will also report the yearend balance in our investment account held with 3D Asset Management.

Should BSCB experience a new operating gain in the calendar year, the amount of the gain will be deposited to the BSCB investment account held by 3 D Asset Management.

In cases where there is a year-end net operating loss, the BSCB Board may elect to do the following with a simple majority: withdraw gains from the investment account over the \$100,000 initial investment providing that such amount will not exceed 4% of the investment fund and will not exceed the amount of the net operating loss.

When developing its annual operating budget, BSCB will not budget any gains from the investment account as an income source.

Amounts in excess of \$10,000 in a single donation will be deposited into the investment fund.

BSCB reserves the right to terminate its relationship with 3 D Asset Management. In such case the investment account would be transferred to another management company and the terms of this policy will continue to apply.

(end of draft)

Rick will add a statement permitting overrides.

Mary made, David seconded, and the board unanimously approved a motion to accept this investment policy.

Mary made, Rose seconded, and the board unanimously approved a motion to invest with 3D Asset Management Company.

Old Business

[Legislative Seminar](#)

Stipend will be \$650 per person.

The seminar is February 24-27

Brian and DeAnn will attend.

Carey was offered a slot; if she cannot make it, it will be offered to Daisy Russell; Carey will let Brian know within the next three days whether she can attend.

Mary haroyan will also attend.

Brian encouraged those who attend to sit in on the president's meeting as a valuable learning experience.

Jerry made, David seconded, and the board approved unanimously a motion to offer Kim Charlson a stipend of \$350.00, as she receives no funding for the convention from ACB.

Our next meeting is scheduled for 7:30 PM on January 14.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:40 PM.

Respectfully,

Jerry Berrier, secretary