

Bay State Council of the Blind

Board call Minutes, August 9, 2020

Officers and directors

- Brian Charlson President
- David Kingsbury First Vice President
- Frank Ventura Second Vice President
- Jerry Berrier Secretary
- Rick Morin Treasurer
- Rose Miller board member
- Dianna Leonard board member
- Cheryl Cumings board member
- Mary Haroyan board member

Ex Officio

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

All officers and board members were present, except Rick and Bob, who were excused.

DeAnn was present, and Steve arrived at 7:53.

Also in attendance were Sharon Strzalkowski, Jessica Barr, and Ann Donna.

Brian called the meeting to order at 7:35 PM.

President's report; Brian

There will probably be no face to face ACB board meeting in November, and the legislative seminar is still to be decided.

The 2021 convention is to take place in Arizona.

Regarding reimbursement of the \$2500 deposit we paid to a caterer for our aborted 2020 BSCB convention, Brian received no response from phone calls, so Kim has written a letter to the MA Attorney General's office requesting help.

Publications report

Steve said the next issue of Council Connection is coming out soon.

Legislative report; DeAnn

(Written report)

The Sec. of State's office sent applications to registered voters to request an absentee ballot for the September 1 primary and the November 3 general election.

- The online application, a fillable PDF, isn't accessible, which we documented
- Cheryl talked to the Chair of the State Democratic Party about the inaccessibility of the application for an absentee ballot with screen reading software.
- The Disability Law Center is working with the Sec. of State's office to outline procedures for accessible voting by mail.
- A director in the Sec. of State's office told DeAnn that there was an additional step (beyond returning an application for an absentee ballot) that voters with disabilities had to take. It seems it's also necessary to request an accommodation. The accommodation will permit people who use assistive technology to complete and mark their ballots online, then print and return them by mail. The Director wasn't sure what the procedures would be. The state hasn't promoted this step and our task force was not aware of it. We're investigating with DLC and the elections division.
- Cheryl and DeAnn were interviewed by the Worcester Audio Journal about accessible voting
- Cheryl was a panelist on Sunday Edition, talking about accessible voting in MA.
- A letter thanking six legislators whose support was important for legislation this summer has been drafted and will be sent this week.

ACB virtual online convention included some very good sessions.

The ACB resolutions committee met remotely this year, after the convention, and recommended a dozen resolutions for the ACB board's consideration. Among them was a good resolution submitted by Frank Ventura about accessible note taking in public schools. The ACB board will vote on the resolutions in late August. The board will also form a task force to discuss ways to improve the resolutions process.

The 30th ADA anniversary on July 26 was a milestone to celebrate. It also included some communication within the cross-disability space that lacked accessibility features (alt text on event announcements, audio description, good headings on websites, accessible downloads, etc.) Some webinars didn't have panelists who were blind or could respond in detail to audience questions about web accessibility and other communication access issues. One focus of future advocacy might be to work with cross-disability community more closely to elevate communication access as a priority and improve accessibility of external communication.

In an ACB Zoom session, national suggested states investigate local responses to web accessibility. A message was sent to inquire about what might be involved.

The Common App was released August 1 for the 2020/2021 admissions cycle. It includes a COVID-19 question, as well as some new features and resources. A mobile app is expected this fall. David Kingsbury will check accessibility bug fixes that were implemented last year in response to BSCB action to confirm the application is still accessible to screen reader users.

Fill out census by August 11 when census workers will begin visiting people's homes!

(End of written report)

DeAnn wrote to Bridgett Simmons-Murphy in the secretary of state's office regarding the additional step mentioned above in the ballot process. DLC has also written to her.

We discussed the possibility of creating a website on which links to very inaccessible and very accessible web content would be displayed and commented on. ACB may already be working on something similar.

We may want to provide video and audio examples of blind folks attempting to use inaccessible web content.

David confirmed the updated Common College App appears to be accessible.

Membership report; Mary

(Written report)

The Membership Committee met on July 29; along with myself there was Sandy Burgess, Lillian Johnson and Cheryl Cumings.

The focus of the meeting was to begin to talk about how best BSCB can reach out to people with vision loss in minority communities to let them know about our organization. One great idea for a first step that was suggested was to bring together by phone, a group of current racially and ethnically diverse BSCB members and hear people's perspective on this topic. Information gathered from this meeting could hopefully then form a foundation for how to proceed.

Some areas that we would want to focus on would be: reasons why people choose membership in BSCB, benefits of being a member and where to recruit.

(End of written report)

Mary said one person has requested the \$25.00 first-timers reimbursement. Brian suggested she ask Rick to cut a check and send it to the person.

Social committee report; Rose

(Written report)

on Saturday June 27, 2020 the Social Committee members Rose Jerry David and Nina were all on the line and we held our first Informal Zoom Social chat for our members. The stories were funny and some silly and shocking as well as fun to hear.

Members talk for about 2 hours, we had about 18 to 25 folks on the line. There was a request for us to do this again in the future.

If the social committee agrees, we may do this again after the fall conference

Thank you,

Rose Miller and the social committee

(End of written report)

Others on this call commented that the social event on Zoom went very well and is worth repeating.

Old Business

We discussed removing ambiguities from the BSCB constitution. Jerry, Rick, and Frank collaborated on this.

(Written report from Frank)

Preliminary report from the Constitutional Ambiguity Task Force:

August 9, 2020

The intent of our efforts is to more clearly define what is BSCB's annual business meeting and what means are permissible for voting. The position of the task force is that voting on BSCB elections and official business effecting the constitution or by-laws be conducted once per year at a meeting to be referred to as the Annual Business Meeting. All other BSCB meetings can be called during the year, at the sole discretion of the BSCB board. Thus, some of the articles and by-laws need to be changed. Although the focus of the task force is very limited, the many references in the constitution and by-laws to conventions and meetings needed to be amended due to inheritances and dependencies. Some of the proposed new language is below:

These changes were made based on the following version of the constitution:

<http://acbofma.org/constitution-of-the-bscb/>

Article IV: Membership

Any person is eligible to become a member of BSCB upon compliance with the membership provisions contained herein:

Members of BSCB shall include the members of its chapters and any persons admitted as members-at-large and all BSCB life members.

The majority of members of BSCB must be blind. Accordingly, members of BSCB shall declare whether or not they fall within the definition of legal blindness.

Each member of BSCB attending an Annual Business Meeting, with the exception of junior members, shall be entitled to one vote. There shall be no proxy voting.

To be eligible for junior membership, a person must be a high school student between sixteen (16) and eighteen (18) years of age. Junior members may not vote at the Annual Business Meeting of this organization but may vote as members of committees on which they serve. A junior member shall attain full membership at the first Annual Business Meeting following his/her eighteenth birthday, or at the beginning of the next calendar year, whichever comes first.

All members shall have rights, privileges, and responsibilities of membership as defined in this Constitution and Bylaws and shall be bound by the same.

Article VII: Officers and Directors

The officers of this organization shall be as follows: a president, a first vice president, a second vice president, a secretary, a treasurer, and the immediate past president. A majority of board members, including the president and vice presidents, must be blind. The term of office for all officers shall be two (2) years. Officers shall be elected in even-numbered years at the Annual Business Meeting of the organization. Should the immediate past president also be elected to another office or board position, that person may hold both positions, but shall have one vote.

In addition to the six (6) officers, this organization shall elect four (4) members to the Board of Directors. They shall have two-year terms and be elected in odd-numbered years at the Annual Business Meeting of the organization. A majority of directors must be blind.

The officers and directors of this organization shall constitute the Board of Directors. Board members shall assume their duties immediately following the Annual Business Meeting at which they were elected.

No board member of this organization except for the treasurer shall be elected to more than three (3) consecutive terms to the same office. Partial terms do not count against these three (3) terms.

Members of the Board of Directors shall serve without compensation but may be reimbursed for expenses reasonably incurred in the performance of their duties. No member of BSCB who is employed by the organization may serve on the Board of Directors.

All officers and directors shall be elected by a majority vote at the Annual Business Meeting of the organization.

If the president is unable to complete his/her term of office, the first vice president shall assume the office of president, and an election shall be held by the board to fill the position of first vice president. This person will serve until the next Annual Business Meeting. It shall be the responsibility of the Board of Directors to fill any other vacancies which may occur on the board between conventions.

The treasurer of this organization must be bonded.

Article VIII: Meetings

The organization must hold one meeting per year for the purpose of conducting BSCB elections, consider any proposed resolutions, and to conduct any business which may affect the content of the constitution and/or by-laws. This meeting will be referred to as the Annual Business Meeting. All other meetings not conducting the aforementioned business may be held at the discretion of the board of directors. A majority of all members attending the Annual Business Meeting or ten (10) percent of the total membership, whichever is greater, shall constitute a quorum to do business. The Annual Business Meeting may be held by any combination of in-person, by telephone, or via other electronic conferencing methods. The board may elect to limit access to any of the aforementioned attendance methods based upon circumstance, necessity or availability of technology or facility. Members participating in the Annual Business Meeting via telephone, electronic or other approved means shall be considered present for the purpose of determining a quorum.

Article XI: AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended at the Annual Business Meeting of this organization by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting according to procedures contained herein, provided that:

Any proposed amendment must be submitted in writing to the secretary not less than sixty (60) days prior to the opening date of the Annual Business Meeting. A synopsis of each amendment will be prepared by the Constitution and Bylaws Committee chair and shall be submitted to the membership in the Annual Business Meeting announcement mailing. Any member wishing to receive the full text of an amendment may notify the secretary to request a copy.

In the event a proposed amendment does not meet the aforementioned procedure, it may be considered if a two-thirds majority of the members vote to consider the issue at the Annual Business Meeting.

Proposed amendments shall be read at the Annual Business Meeting two (2) times before final action is taken.

The bylaws may be amended at the Annual Business Meeting of this organization by a majority vote, provided that such amendments are submitted in writing to the secretary no later than the opening of the Annual Business Meeting, and read to the members before the time of final action.

Bylaw 1: Dues

6. For the purpose of the Annual Business Meeting, the treasurer will function as the credentials chair. The treasurer will be responsible to issue a voting badge to any member who is in good standing. The form of this badge may be a physical token, electronic notification, or even verbal acknowledgment. All voting members are responsible for notifying the treasurer if they have not received a voting badge.

Bylaw 2: Standing Committees

All standing committees and subcommittees shall be appointed by the president. The standing committees of BSCB shall be as follows: Constitution and Bylaws, Membership, Resolutions, Nominating, Legislative, Publications, Conference and Convention, Transportation, Finance, and Resource Development. The president shall appoint all standing committees within sixty (60) days following the Annual Business Meeting.

1. The president shall appoint a statewide membership chairperson. Each chapter shall select a representative to serve on the membership committee.
2. The president shall appoint ninety (90) days prior to each Annual Business Meeting, a chairperson and at least three (3) additional members as a resolutions committee. This committee shall receive and prepare resolutions to be considered by the membership. All resolutions must be reported to the Annual Business Meeting, with or without a committee recommendation. Resolutions shall be submitted to the Resolutions Committee not less than fifteen (15) days before the date of the Annual Business Meeting. Proposed resolutions shall be read to the assembled Annual Business Meeting two (2) times before final action is taken. A resolution which does not meet the above submission criteria may still be considered by the Annual Business Meeting if two-thirds of the members present and voting at the first reading vote to do so.
3. The president shall appoint a chairperson of the nominating committee, no later than ninety (90) days before the date of the Annual Business Meeting. Each chapter shall select a representative to serve on the committee no later than sixty (60) days prior to the Annual Business Meeting. No later than sixty (60) days prior to the Annual Business Meeting, a member-at-large shall be appointed to the nominating committee. In even-numbered years, the member-at-large shall be appointed by the directors; in odd-numbered years, the member-at-large shall be appointed by the officers. The chair of the committee shall not vote unless there is a tie. No member of the nominating committee may appear on the nominating committee slate. All meetings of the nominating committee shall be closed to non-committee members.
4. The president shall appoint a legislative representative, who shall act as the chairperson of the legislative committee. The president shall also appoint at least three (3) additional members to serve on the committee. The legislative representative shall be a non-voting member of the Board of Directors unless currently serving on the board.
5. The President shall appoint the editor of the newsletter with board confirmation, and the editor shall be a non-voting member of the Board of Directors unless currently serving on the board.
6. The President shall appoint the BSCB webmaster with board confirmation, and the webmaster shall be a non-voting member of the Board of Directors unless currently serving on the board.
8. The president shall be a non-voting member of all committees except the nominating committee.

End of written report)

We discussed changing the terms odd and even years to alternate years.

Cheryl said there are indeed viable options for voting. She described in detail the online voting method used recently by the Democratic Party group she belongs to. She said each voter is authenticated, and a vote can be taken online or by phone. It was pointed out that the authentication process must be done online even if the person will be voting by phone, which may be difficult for some of our members.

Cheryl will ask the staff for details on how the process can be set up.

She said training was provided to party members on how to use the system.

We discussed that whatever voting option we choose must be approved by the board and then the constitution and bylaws committee, and then it must be ratified by the membership at our next face to face business meeting.

Mary made, Rose seconded, and the board unanimously approved a motion to accept the report and forward it to the constitution and bylaws committee.

Brian expressed thanks to Rick for useful research he did.

Our next meeting is scheduled for 7:30 PM on September 13.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:10 PM.

Respectfully,

Jerry Berrier, Secretary