

Bay State Council of the Blind

Board minutes for February 9, 2020

Bay State Council of the Blind 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
- 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

Brian convened the call at 7:35 PM. All officers and board members were present. Ex officio members DeAnn and Bob were in attendance. Steve was absent.

Carl Richardson, Sharon Strzalkowski and Jessica Barr were also on board.

The agenda was approved.

The board approved the updated version of our January 2020 minutes.

Treasurer's report; Rick

Rick emailed the following to Carl Richardson who is chairing the nominating committee:

"I, Rick Morin, accept the nomination to serve an 9th term as BSCB Treasurer. I will not seek or accept a nomination for a 10th term in 2022. This allows for ample time for 2022 candidates for treasurer to be prepared to assume this position. I am committed to documenting all processes and information related

to the role of treasurer in a manner as expeditiously as possible.”

Along with a profit and loss statement and balance sheet, Rick sent the following (Written report)

Please note the following:

- Negative Cash Flow of -1,821.53
 - o Includes \$960 of prepaid hotel guest rooms for Cindy Van Winkle and Kenneth Simien, speakers at the 2020 BSCB convention
 - o \$1350 of Legislative Seminar stipends
- A little less than half of members at large have paid dues.
- No dues received from chapters yet.
- There is \$59.18 booked a cash expense. This is for Uber trips taken in support of BSCB business – mostly for R-Tag business. I will reimburse BSCB for this
- I have not set up the meeting to discuss access to BSCB records nor have I yet generated a draft budget. These are on my to do list and will be addressed as soon as possible.

(End of written report)

Rick said the budget is essentially the same as last year’s. Responding to a question from Rose, he said there is money in the budget for Social Committee activities.

Brian accepted the treasurer’s report as distributed.

President’s report; Brian

Some language for the HBO agreement is still under consideration, and the final document should be available in a matter of weeks.

Brian praised Sharon and others for their work regarding our concerns over the impending move of the Worcester MCB office.

Spring Conference report; Frank

(Written report)

Nothing much new to report. The second save the date went out. All sessions have been planned. The registration will go out in the next 2 weeks, only waiting for final wording on meals from the caterer.

I will send the program to Perkins for BRL and LP.

(End of written report)

Concern was expressed over whether we will have enough participants on Sunday for a quorum. Brian pointed out that our business session happens on Saturday, including the election. However, an issue could come up on Sunday that requires a vote. Brian will double-check what constitutes a quorum for BSCB.

Brian said generally a majority of those registered for the convention must be in the room for a quorum. He will confirm though.

Publications Report; David

(Written report)

With regard to the website:

- The Events page has been updated with information on the upcoming Convention. It will be updated again when the full announcement, including registration links, come out.
- Drafts of the Donations and Dues/Membership pages have been sent out for review by the Pubs Committee, Rick, and Mary. We hope to post these sometime in the next several weeks.

The next edition of Bay Lines should come out in late February/early March, in advance of the Convention.

The February edition of Bay Lines Express marked the fourth anniversary of its publication.

(End of written report)

Rick said the donations page and membership page for the BSCB website look great.

David will also include an event registration page once all information is available for the spring convention.

Bob anticipates having BayLines ready prior to our convention.

Council Connection is not yet available as a podcast.

Philmore is working well.

Legislative report; DeAnn

(Written report)

The legislative committee met on January 29. Next meeting will be March 4, after legislative seminar and before spring conference. Since 2020 is an election year, we'll continue to work on voting issues and also promote disability issues as we get closer to the election. The committee was interested in looking more closely at Eventbrite, Epic, or Survey Monkey to see if accessibility can be improved.

DeAnn contacted the DPC about the proposed regulations for SSDI reporting. They offered to have BSCB cosign, but thought there was value in submitting own comment, as it increases the number of individual comments collected. DeAnn submitted a brief comment on behalf of the BSCB.

Governor Baker's proposed state budget came out on Jan. 22 (H2.) MCB is funded at \$25.3M, which is \$660K higher than the Governor's budget last year (called House 1). This includes increases for administrative costs such as leases as well as software licenses for MCB consumers previously funded through EHS IT. It also affords funding for Chapter 257 rate increase that have been promulgated at this time. There are no language or policy changes.

Although it looks like there's a slight increase in MCB funding, it's about 2% less than the amount that appeared in last year's final budget and doesn't include the \$250,000 funding for tech training through the MCB for community services, nor does it include funding for the Radio Reading Service. Perkins Library was level-funded and will probably advocate for an increase. Bob Hachey, resolutions chair, will add these items to the list of resolutions to consider this spring.

Cheryl Cumings has completed a draft of the voting survey (attached) which the legislative committee has reviewed. Cheryl will discuss the feedback needed to finalize the report. Good work!

Sharon Strzalkowski and Advocates in the Central Mass. Chapter alerted the board about an upcoming move of the Worcester MCB office, and their concerns about accessibility. The legislative committee discussed it and used connections at the State House and MCB to gather information and support the drafting of a letter to Commissioner Gladstone and Sec. Sudders. Mary Haroyan sent it on February 7th, copied to the MCB Commissioner and Worcester legislators. Good work! Next steps?

During the first week in February, it seems the BSCB board was targeted in a phishing scam by someone posing as President Charlson. Several board members received messages from someone using his name and title, asking for gift cards to be sent to a veteran's organization. These have been sent to board members for more than a year. Although they're not artfully done and no one has followed through on the request, the messages coincide with times in which Brian is actually away at a conference and don't seem entirely random. Rose Miller mentioned that she has some information through the Attorney General's office for reporting it. Possible responses?

(end of written report)

DeAnn thanked Carl Richardson and Bruce Howell for providing background information regarding the state budget, which is summarized in her written report.

DeAnn said Cheryl has finished the draft of the voter survey.

Cheryl asked that we review it for consistency and readability and respond by February 14.

We discussed phishing e-mails some of us have received that purport to be from Brian Charlson. Rose said such things can be reported to the postal inspector or to ic3.gov.

Brian asked that we take a screenshot of any e-mail like this that has his name on it and forward it to him with a descriptive subject.

If we forward such a screen shot, we should also call Brian and let him know it's coming.

It was also suggested that once a bogus message has been received by one of our officers, that person should send out a message to our membership warning others of the phishing attempt.

Membership report; Mary

(written report)

The Membership committee met on Jan. 13. The primary topic of discussion was the planning of a phone call for BSCB members at large. This type of communication/gathering has been used by some other ACB affiliates. The committee thought that a date in mid to later April would be a good time. This would also allow us to introduce BSCB's new President on the call. Committee members will let me know of ideas they think of for possible discussion topics. We will use e-mail to reach out to at large members.

(End of written report)

Social committee report; Rose

Twelve people responded to the recent social activities survey. Interest centered around restaurants, The U.S.S. Constitution, and walking tours.

Some suggested "Who's got Talent and invite Tim Cumings to host it"

A ferry boat ride also got some positive comments.

Brian said there is funding in the budget to support some social activities.

We may want to consider paying a van driver for one or more events.

Grant writing; Sharon

(written report)

February 2, 2020

The grant committee, consisting of Myra Ross, TC.Breazeale, , Cheryl Cumings, Sharon Strzalkowski, Brian Charlson and Rick Morin would like to present ideas to the board for consideration. We understand the need for additional and consistent monies to add to the revenue we currently receive, and believe that there are many foundations and corporations that may be willing to support us when we approach them with the correct language and, most importantly, a clear idea of outcomes that we believe we can accomplish. Each grantor has different requirements, so our ideas presented here are general, and will be tweaked according to time lines and interests of the grantors. We may ask for the assistance of ACB's grant writer when we have a clearer idea of where we are going and can use the expertise in a more efficient way.

We are seeking funds to increase participation in the fall and spring conferences: This could include getting money for out-of-town transportation, as well as scholarships for people just to pay for the events themselves. The premise would be that we are increasing membership and community development, with a numerical outcome of, say, 10 new participants in the first year.

Another theme is membership self-advocacy. we would seek money to pay for speakers, materials and the like. The grantor would probably want a tracking mechanism for how self-advocacy training has changed members' lives, and we would need to track this in some way. Self-advocacy skills encompass so much of daily life for us as blind people, and do not at all interfere with the advocacy that BSCB does in a legislative capacity.

We could look for funds for infrastructure such as maintaining our web site and social media presence, producing new brochures as needed, and general marketing products.

Several committee members already are familiar with contacts in foundations that are supportive of blindness initiatives, so our next steps would be to decide on definite goals and then read through the grant qualifications and submit the material. We may want to put together a template of our BSCB activities that could be pasted into any document.

Another point of discussion was to seek corporate sponsors for our initiatives, as many other blindness organizations have done with great success.

We welcome your feedback and ideas. Please know that all this takes time and that success the first time around is not guaranteed. The more we practice the skill of grant-writing, the easier and more fun it will become!

(end of written report)

Brian thanked Sharon for a very good committee report.

Sharon praised Frank for his comments and said she agrees with him on many points.

However, she would like to learn more about potential corporate sponsorship. Mary echoed Sharon's interest in pursuing corporate sponsorships if they can provide funding with no strings attached.

Cheryl offered to share pertinent information from resources gleaned by Our Space Our Place.

Next steps will include researching to determine what grants we may fit into.

Brian said our first need is to fund things we are already doing.

The board expressed support for seeking funding for car-pool services to transport members to BSCB events such as the spring and fall conferences, as well as BLIND day.

Brian hopes we can have pick-up locations in various parts of the state.

Rose moved that we authorize the grants committee to solicit funding for car-pool services to pick up at various points and transport members to and from our conferences and advocacy activities, as well as some social events. David seconded it, and the board approved it.

Nominating committee report; Carl Richardson

Per a recommendation by the nominating committee, we discussed divulging the slate of nominees to the membership prior to the spring convention.

After relinquishing the chair to David, Brian made, Jerry seconded, and the board unanimously approved a motion as follows:

While the nominating committee is not obligated to follow the recommendation of the board, we support divulging the slate of nominees as soon as possible, once the slate has been approved by the nominating committee.

The meeting chair then reverted to Brian.

Carl announced the slate as follows:

President, David Kingsbury

First vice president, Frank Ventura

Second vice president, Cheryl Cumings

Secretary, Mary Haroyan

Treasurer, Rick Morin.

Jerry has termed out as secretary, and Brian has chosen not to run for president again.

This slate could potentially leave two board positions open.

Carl said there were 7 people on the nominating committee call, and all selections were unanimous.

The committee was comprised of Carl, Brian Binnell representing the central Mass chapter, Jeanette Kutash for the Boston chapter, Daisy Russell for the student's affiliate, Vicki Vogt for the Charles River chapter, Bruce Howell served as member at large, and Chris Devin from South Shore.

Carl will post the slate on BSCB-announce.

Other Business

David asked that the fund raising committee be included on the list of monthly committee reports.

Frank asked that we forward to him any feedback we receive regarding how future conferences should be configured.

Carl announced a couple of upcoming GDUM meetings.

Mary asked that web accessibility issues be included on our next meeting agenda. DeAnn said Survey Monkey and Epic have gotten a lot of recent attention.

David will forward a recent article to us that says the NFB filed suit against Epic and lost.

Sharon referenced a recent NPR Planet Money program and said she wants to write to them and recommend they do a program on employment gaps among people with disabilities.

Brian praised committee chairs for vastly improved monthly reports, and he encouraged them to include any action items they wish the board to take.

Our next call is scheduled for march 8 at 7:30 PM.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:53 PM.

Respectfully,

Jerry Berrier, secretary