

Bay State Council of the Blind
June 14, 2020

President Brian Charlson called the meeting to order at 7:45.

All Board members except for Rick Morin were present. Also in attendance were EX Officio members, Steve Dresser, DeAnn Elliott and Bob Hachey. Chapter representatives Sharon Strzalkowski, Carl Richardson and Jessica Barr were also on the call.

Both the current meeting agenda and minutes from the May 11 Board call were approved.

Treasurer's Report; Brian, (there is no written report)

Brian began the discussion on the financial picture by first explaining why Rick was not on the call. Rick is very integral to the technical planning of the ACB virtual convention and is inundated with all of the preparation for it. Brian believes that once the convention is behind us, Rick will be able to devote more time to BSCB.

Brian let the Board know that all bills and reports are current. Rick still needs to bill both GDUM and the Charles River chapter for their 2020 dues.

The former Presidents Walk Team is now the Patriots Team and Kim and Brian are once again walking and collecting pledges. The proceeds will be divided evenly between BSCB and ACB. The team has raised \$15,000, with \$10,000 coming from an anonymous donor.

Brian said that Rick did not hear back after reaching out to Crest Family catering regarding the \$2200 deposit still owed to BSCB from the canceled Annual convention. After a discussion where the importance of the Board's fiduciary responsibility was stressed, it was decided after Frank's suggestion, that Brian reach out to our contact at the Masonic Lodge asking him to intercede with the Caterer on our behalf. It was decided this would be the best next step before engaging with the MA Attorney General's Office.

David also expressed his hope that once the ACB convention was done that Rick would have the time to reach out to Nick Corbett and begin working with him as a possible next Treasurer for BSCB.

President's Report; Brian

Brian said that all international blindness events have been canceled.

MCB has held 2 town hall virtual meetings with a third scheduled. He and others expressed opinions about these meetings. DeAnn who is now the Chair for the MCB Rehabilitation Council, following Bruce Howell's term, encouraged people to pass along their thoughts to her or Jerry.

Brian especially was deeply concerned over the Commissioner's messaging of a positive financial outlook when the financial future of the state's private as well as state blindness agencies is very uncertain. He believes MCB should be more honest and prepare everyone for difficult times ahead.

Legislative Report; DeAnn

(Written report)

June 14, 2020

A bill that would permit all Massachusetts voters to request an absentee ballot for voting by mail was passed by the Massachusetts House and is expected to be heard by the Senate on June 16th. The House version has an amendment that includes an accessible option, though it doesn't involve online voting. Under the House version, voters who are blind could complete their ballot through an accessible online interface, then print and mail the ballot in a special envelope with tactile markings that identify the place for a signature.

Action alerts in support of the bill have been posted on the BSCB chat and announce lists, and members have shared the alerts and written to their legislators. Cheryl has been working with the Democratic Party, and contacts at the State House have been following its progress. Rose had a meeting at the Attorney General's Office, and DeAnn submitted op-eds to the Boston Globe and Boston Herald, though the piece wasn't printed. The Senate version might or might not include the House amendment exactly as written. Kim and Brian Charlson have been talking to other agencies within the disability community; if an inaccessible version passes, the BSCB will need to decide on next steps.

Steve Dresser featured the issue on Council Connection, and DeAnn and Cheryl were guests.

The ACB resolutions process has been updated, since the ACB constitution does not permit voting on resolutions to take place over Zoom. Any member who would like to submit a resolution for consideration should submit it to advocacy@acb.org by midnight, Friday, July 10th, which will be the end of the 2020 ACB Virtual Conference and Convention. The resolutions committee will meet after the convention to consider the proposed resolutions and recommend a "do pass" or "do not pass" which will be forwarded to the ACB national office. The ACB board of directors will approve the resolutions by majority vote on August 27th. The board of directors will also form a work group to reform the resolutions process.

The Rehabilitation Council of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind met on June 3rd. Commissioner D'Arcangelo said that in light of COVID-19, the MCB had decided to lease the current Worcester MCB office for another year on a month-to-month basis, and will reconsider office location at that time. Chair Bruce Howell, a BSCB member, termed out after six years of outstanding service. DeAnn Elliott was elected as new chair.

Respectfully submitted by DeAnn Elliott

(End of written report)

Members of the Board learned that the Senate is considering offering an amendment on accessible voting. Because this amendment may differ from the House bill, this may result in there having to be a conference to resolve the differences.

Social Committee Report; Rose

(Written report)

June 14, 2020 Report: The members of the Social team are: Nina, Jerry and David. This is our last social committee event until after the fall conference.

I am asking local precedents of BSCB to please share a story of encouragement with our group, as we are "social distancing".

Listed below is the announcement that was sent to members of BSCB on June 6, 2020.

BSCB is inviting you to an Informal Zoom Social chat on Saturday June 27 from 1:00 to 3:00 PM. All are welcome.

We are asking a few folks to share 2 to 5 minute poems, jokes, or stories that you think are silly funny or profound. We will follow with discussion.

Information for joining the Zoom meeting will be sent out closer to the date. If you are interested in sharing with the group, please email me with your topic at:

rosemarymiller3266@gmail.com

Let's zoom and get social!

"What is social distancing"? Social distancing is a set of measures that prevent the spread of contagious disease by maintaining physical distance from others and reducing the number of times individuals come into close contact.

What are the social distancing protocols?

The primary measure for social distancing in the present pandemic is keep 6 feet of distance between yourself and others.

This is particularly challenging when gathering as a large group of people inside a building. You will need to be alert at all times, keeping your "head on a swivel" as they say. Just paying attention to who is around you will significantly reduce close contact.

Also realize that there will likely be moments when people will break the 6 foot plane. In these cases, do not panic. Simply back away or gently speak to the person and ask them to maintain their distance.

A few more considerations relating to social distancing that are good to remember:

1. Always wear a mask or face covering that covers over your nose and mouth to prevent the spread of saliva which carries potentially dangerous germs.

If you and another person move in the same direction at the same time, or if someone walks towards you near a tight space, simply defer and wait for the other person to pass".

(End of written report)

Rose asked if people would send the e-mail announcement about the June 27 social event to other Massachusetts blindness related distribution lists. She would like to hear from people with a basic idea of what they would like to share during the event.

Nothing more was added to the Publications and Membership committee reports as noted below

Publications Committee Report; David

(Written report)

No new developments to report this month. The Council Connection June podcast downloaded properly to podcast players. Bay Lines came out late last month, and Steve added the May Virtual Hangout to the website.

David

(End of written report)

Membership committee Report; Mary

(Written report)

There is no activity to report from the Membership committee.

Thank you,

Mary

(End of written report)

Future Conference planning

Brian began the discussion on future conferences by asking how many in person events should the Board plan during the year.

Jerry made a suggestion to consider planning two.

Frank next suggested having three in person events with one possibly occurring during the ACB National convention. After some discussion, he then rephrased the motion to plan for 3 in person events, taking place during the spring, fall and winter to be held in the state but at different locations. He expressed his thoughts in that the conferences should be considered an experience for people and that having events scheduled in another part of the state and at a partner blindness organization could enhance this. After some more discussion including the importance of planning for transportation needs, a motion was made to authorize the Board to plan for in its budget for the scheduling of three in person events to be held in the state in the spring, fall and winter. The motion passed.

Following a discussion on the scheduling of virtual events, a motion was made and passed to attempt to hold four virtual meetings during the year. David emphasized the importance of having a structure in place for the planning of these virtual meetings.

Carl next announced that GDUM was hosting a community chat on June 18 on the topic of the use of artificial intelligence technology.

Future BSCB election

Jerry brought up the topic of when we would be able to hold election of new officers or if necessary interim ones. With the BSCB constitution only allowing for in person BSCB business to be conducted, it was decided that Brian would reach out to the Secretary of State to inquire what options we might have to conduct business and elections without jeopardizing our 501 C 3 status.

Dianna talked about the on line voting system used by ACB Next Generation.

It was decided that the next Board meeting would be held on July 12 and be primarily devoted to the topic of planning for officer elections with the intention that the meeting not exceed an hour.

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,
Mary Haroyan