

Bay State Council of the Blind

Board call on March 8, 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

David convened the call, as Brian had not arrived by 7:35 PM.

Dianna and Cheryl were excused. All other officers and board members were present, along with Sharon Strzalkowski and Jessica Barr.

Mary made, Rose seconded, and the board approved a motion to accept the minutes of our February meeting.

[Treasurer's report; Rick](#)

(Rick had previously sent Year to Date Profit and Loss
And Current Assets excluding investments)

(Written report)

Commenting on these reports could be misleading since we are in the middle of the certification process and dues collection and the BSCB Spring Convention.

Given this, I draw your attention to the following:

1. All but 11 Members At Large have paid their dues. A special thank you to Mary Haroyan for following up with our members and obtaining their dues, not to mention the added value of reaching out to folks individually.
2. Have not received Chapter Dues from Charles River, Boston, GDUM and Students.
3. The national member database freezes on March 13 for changes and addition to member information
4. Certification must be submitted by March 30.
5. So far, we have collected \$930 in dues into the BSCB treasury
6. We must pay ACB National \$5 per BSCB member for National dues
7. So far, we have received \$2150 convention registration revenue
8. We have received \$2400 in Convention Sponsorships
9. No progress on the securing of BSCB data and credentials project.
10. Nick Corbett has expressed interest in the Treasurer role and with the approval of the board I will ask Nick if he is willing to take this project on.
11. Also, no progress on budget. Last year's actual spending is serving as the budget guideline
12. As was announced by the nominating committee, if I am reelected as treasurer, this will serve as my last term. I am committed to working with potential successors over the next two years to ensure a smooth transition.

(End of written report)

Rick mentioned a pending \$600 reimbursement for his work with the Sagebrush affiliate.

Rick praised Mary for her work in collecting dues from members at large.

Updates to the ACB members database are due a week from now.

The board expressed agreement with Rick working with Nick Corbet as a potential candidate for treasurer.

Members expressed interest in having a special meeting to approve our budget, which will largely be based on last year's budget.

Spring convention report; Frank

(Written report)

Dear all, this will be the final official report to the board prior to the Spring Conference. Some highlights of our work are:

- Steve and I visited the lodge to look at the A/V situation. We will be able to patch into the house sound. All equipment we will need to provide and transport ourselves.
- Rick has provided me with periodic updates to who has registered. Rick has offered to take phone registrations for anyone wishing to register on the phone instead of on the web.
- As of today only one person has expressed a desire to not attend due to the Corona virus situation. All volunteers and speakers are still planning to attend. If we are required to modify or cancel due to an mandatory order from the DPH we may need to have an emergency board call as we did in 2013.

- Carl Richardson has provided me with a contact that will rent us an ALD system. We should be able to accommodate 4 or 5 units simultaneously. The system will be shipped to my home prior to the conference.
- On Saturday March 21 the Boston Chapter will be putting together the goodie bags. At the same time the conference committee will be putting together the registration packets. I may need two or more volunteers to help with that.
- At this point I would like some feedback and if necessary a motion. Each year we have had an ever-increasing number of requests for specific meal accommodations. I have made accommodations for the following groups:
 - A. All meals have a vegetarian option
 - B. All meals have a gluten free option
 - C. Anyone who has written to me and stated that they have a specific food allergy, I have been able to make a special accommodation for

The issue at hand is what to do, if anything, about people who have written to me and asked for special meals, not due to a food allergy but instead because they do not like what is being offered. We can order special meals. However, I would need to order in the minimum quantities, which is 25 units. So a meal created for just one person could cost between \$500 and \$625. I do not see that as being practical, but I am willing to listen to all sides of the issue.

- The Masons are being very accommodating and eager to meet all of us. They are offering free tours during the cocktail hour. We are also able to use their account to buy \$10 parking passes. I have reserved 20 for Saturday and 20 for Sunday.

(End of written report)

Brian joined the meeting at this point.

We discussed how to handle past convention-related expenses paid by Frank. No specific policy was adopted.

Screen reader users have had trouble confirming their meal selections on EvenZilla; Frank said we should check the receipt that is mailed to us upon completion of registration. We can call Frank if we find errors.

Frank confirmed that the convention program includes session times. It will become available soon.

We agreed that we cannot accommodate special banquet or lunch meal requests strictly based on food preferences.

[Publications committee report; David](#)

(Written report)

The website has been updated as follows:

- Two new pages – Donations and Dues/Membership – were recently posted. However, the PayPal links are broken and need to be replaced with valid ones.

- The Events page has been updated with information on the upcoming convention. After the convention, it will be updated on a monthly basis with event information extracted from Bay Lines Express.
- The Bay Lines page will be fully updated as soon as the Spring 2020 edition comes out.

The next edition of Bay Lines should be out in the next week or so.

A problem with the Council Connection email message not being posted correctly to the Announce list seems to be resolved now.

We need a correctly-formatted BSCB icon in order to get the Council Connection up and running. Steve Dresser is communicating with Gretchen Thompson about this.

(End of written report)

David pointed out that the PayPal link is not working properly and asked Rick to send a corrected link.

BayLines is out, but not everyone has received it. Bob is working on the distribution process.

David recommended he just put it on the BSCB Announce list, rather than postpone it for non-members. There was no opposition to David's suggestion.

[Legislative committee report; DeAnn](#)

(Written report)

DeAnn wants to thank Brian Charlson, who is chairing his final meeting as BSCB president. The board is in a stronger position than it was when he became president, and solid organization helps the legislative committee, as well as other committees, do their work. Nice job!

ACB Legislative Seminar was held in Washington D.C. February 23 to 25th. Discussion of highlights.

The legislative committee met on March 4. We discussed voting machines from the primary election on March 3rd. Most members of the committee had a good experience using the voter assist terminals. The voting survey is complete, and Cheryl and David are working to distribute and post it. Cheryl has volunteered to work on it for the upcoming 2020 election if we can do it more quickly. Do we still have a Survey Monkey account?

DeAnn sent a message to attorney Matt Handley on BSCB letterhead about the Common App, which is due to be released on August 1 for the 2020/2021 academic year. Jennifer Harnish has agreed to follow up with him to see that a letter is sent to the right people to thank them for their efforts last year and remind them of the importance of including accessibility features in this release.

B.L.I.N.D. Legislative Day will be held at the Mass. State House on Tuesday, March 31st. Rep. Kay Kahn will be the award recipient. Talking points are being drafted. Most likely there will be

a \$350,000 consumer “ask” for equipment and training for the community services budget.
What is best way to consolidate conversations around this topic?

There was a meeting of the Rehabilitation Council on March 4th, in which the relocation of the Worcester MCB office was discussed. The Southborough location is still a contender and seems to be favored. Sharon S. attended the legislative committee meeting and will contact Worcester representatives that the Central Mass. Chapter has previously contacted in order to see if more information is known about the move. The office must move by July 1, so a decision is expected soon. The commissioner says no decision has yet been made.

The Commissioner spoke at the NFB conference in February. When the next BSCB president is elected this month, they may want to schedule an appointment to go in and introduce themselves to him in person and discuss our strong desire to have him attend one of our events.

The BSCB’s phishing friend has been busy again. Next steps?

The legislative committee has been strategizing about 2020 and beyond. DeAnn would like to use some of the time between now and the election to build on the work already done to build capacity for the legislative committee and board to respond quickly to unexpected issues while still being strategic and working collectively. Cheryl proposed a Dropbox account that might allow members of the legislative committee to share templates, draft documents, etc. which could be very useful. How do we set one up that’s associated with BSCB?

(End of written report)

DeAnn gave some highlights from the ACB legislative seminar and encouraged those interested to listen to the session recordings.

Mary said one person in the Springfield area had trouble using the accessible voting machine. Several on this call stated they had no difficulty.

Brian mentioned a problem with ballots sticking when being removed from their envelopes for early voting.

Rose said her ballot got stuck in the Automark machine, and she had to wait for an official to come and unstick it.

DeAnn praised Cheryl for her work with the voter survey, and she said Cheryl has agreed to do it again.

David said the reports need to be out shortly after the surveys are done, certainly within three months.

Rick said a board decision was made to give up our paid Survey Monkey account, but we do still have the free version. He will check whether the free account could meet our needs for the next survey. DeAnn pointed out that it will be very similar to the 2018 survey we used.

We discussed the upcoming BLIND Day, and members expressed concern that we and agencies close to us do not seem to be in full agreement on what we should be promoting.

Bob will organize a call with himself, DeAnn, Dina Rosenbaum and possibly others to move toward a unified stance.

The legislative committee will create a Dropbox folder to share time-sensitive information and make themselves more ready to respond quickly to issues that arise.

Sharon sent letters to legislators in the Worcester area expressing our concerns regarding the impending move of the Worcester office of MCB.

Bob included Sharon's letter in Baylines and encouraged readers to contact legislators.

We discussed this topic at length, and several members expressed strong feelings regarding our powerlessness over this initiative.

[Membership committee report; Mary](#)

(Written report)

The Membership Committee did not meet in February.

On March 7 there was another meeting held in Northampton. A number of people who attended the January meeting came, along with a few new participants. Two of the participants handed in dues for membership in BSCB. Along with existing BSCB members at large involved in the group, this will bring the total to 8 for BSCB members. The next meeting scheduled for May 2, will continue the planning for forming a BSCB chapter.

The Membership Committee will continue to plan for an April members at large phone call.

(End of written report)

Mary hopes our new BSCB president will be able to attend the meeting in May.

When speaking to members at large, Mary made sure to talk about our convention, and she encouraged them to subscribe to our BSCB announce list.

Mary suggested we mention on BSCBAnnounce that the convention will be broadcast on ACBRadio.

Because there is no Ethernet available at the convention site, Rick said we may end up using Zoom instead of broadcasting on ACBRadio.

Social Committee report; Rose

(Written report)

We had our follow up meeting on February 23, 2020, at 8:00 P.M. all members were on the call.

. To discuss the results of the Social survey December 2019. There were various results:

First choice was Who has talent

Second were walking tours

Third choice were eateries

Fourth choices were ferry rides

Not many picked sports events.

It was suggested, and we all agreed to having a social event with NFB in Boston May or June.

There was a conflict with May.

So, June 6, 2020 is the date at Noon to 3 P.M

Social event at The Fours in Boston June 6, 2020 , time 12noon to 3:00 P.M.

This should be BSCB spring social event in June.

I spoke with Shara from NFB and invited them and gave the time & date June 6, 2020.

Shara will share it at NFB's next monthly meeting in March.

Shara tells me that NFB meets on the first Friday monthly at the democracy on Temple Place and invites us to join them next month 5:30 P.M

(End of written report)

Grants Committee report; Sharon

(Written report)

The grant committee met recently and is beginning to focus more narrowly on a couple of goals: namely, transportation to conferences, conventions and the like, and ways to defray convention costs that are incurred by BSCB.

TC is focusing on learning the grant language that we will need to adopt, and is working with Rick to understand the kinds of costs we incur. Cheryl Cumings is also assisting.

Myra is investigating Pioneer Valley Foundation for transportation options. TC investigated a transportation company in western Mass. To get an idea of how much it would cost to transport 10 people from a pickup point and deliver them back to that same place. If memory serves, it is close to \$900 for one such venture.

Brian and Rick will communicate with the committee anything they can learn about the grant cycles for large foundations in Boston that have assisted other blindness organizations in the area.

Sharon is delighted to say that she has an appointment with an officer at the Greater Worcester Foundation on March 16, and later that week with a grant writer at U. Mass. Medical School where she works. She is also investigating a couple of bank foundations.

Cheryl is keeping her eyes and ears open for any grant opportunities for us, as she pursues financial help for Our Space our Place.

There is some excitement and focus growing in the group, and it is good to see!

(End of written report)

Our next board call is scheduled for Monday April 13 at 7:30 PM.

There being no further business, the call was adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Respectfully,

Jerry Berrier, Secretary

Emergency Board Call on March 11, 2020

President Brian Charlson requested an emergency call to discuss our upcoming convention in light of the current state of emergency brought on by the CoronaVirus.

After an executive session to discuss this difficult situation, , the board made the following unanimous decisions:

Our spring convention will be postponed until we can reasonably re-schedule it.

All who have paid dues and/or made convention-related donations will be fully reimbursed as soon as possible.

(End of emergency meeting minutes.)