

Bay State Council of the Blind

Board minutes for May 16, 2021

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

Cheryl Cumings board member

Mary Haroyan board member

Rafael Toro board member

Ex Officio

Steve Dresser Webmaster

DeAnn Elliott Legislative committee chair

All officers and board members were present except Rafael. Also in attendance were Sharon Strzalkowski and Jessica Barr.

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

The agenda was adopted.

Mary made, Rose seconded, and the board accepted a motion to approve the minutes of our April 2021 meeting.

Treasurer's report; Rick

(Written report)

(Note: This is a combined report from emails sent by Nick Corbett and Rick Morin)

From Nick:

1. It has been determined that QuickBooks is not screen reader accessible without JAWS scripts at a cost of \$725. More information can be found at:

https://myblindspot.org/product-category/quickbooks-jaws-scripts/?product_order=desc

2. Another accounting program, Money Talks by APH, has been identified as a possible alternative to QuickBooks. This program is not as robust as QuickBooks,

but with it debit and credit transactions can be balanced against account balances; report generating capabilities do, however, appear to be limited.

3. I am waiting on CSV QuickBooks exports to evaluate Money Talks functionality against real BSCB financial data.

4. Rick and I will be touching base to coordinate an in-person transition of treasurer responsibilities, likely in line with Rick's desire for a soon transition.

5. I have not yet heard report of my clearance of bonding and have not yet been able to orient myself to BSCB accounts.

From Rick:

A query has been made to our Insurance Agent regarding whether our D and O coverage extends to someone appointed by the board to conduct the business of

BSCB. I will pass along the response as soon as it is received.

Regarding QuickBooks. While \$795 seems like a lot of money, I encourage the board to consider purchasing these JAWS scripts as a cost of doing business.

We have over a decade of our financial transactions in QuickBooks that account for every dollar spent by BSCB. It is industry-standard, and it facilitates,

among other things, the tax reporting by our accountant. Money Talks is a personal finance application that could possibly be made to work, but it would

take a lot of non-value-added effort to configure it and create new reports. The time spent to do this migration will delay the transition to Nick and

this time spent to save \$800 will likely cause the accountant fees to increase substantially to do our tax reporting. This is business reason enough to

justify this expenditure as a reasonable accommodation.

I kindly request that a motion be made to approve this expenditure during tonight's meeting.

Cash has all been received but not all the postings are complete in the Ledger.

Total treasury Value: \$47,661.24, the highest it has been in some time.

(end of written report)

After some discussion, Steve made, Mary seconded, and the board unanimously approved a motion for Rick to purchase QuickBooks scripts from BlindSpot for Nick.

Rick will confirm whether this license can be used on more than one computer.

Rick feels Nick will be ready to take over the treasurer duties by the end of August.

Rick said our taxes are due by May 15.

President's report; Brian

Brian is still negotiating a meeting time with Mass Eye and Ear. (See April minutes).

DeAnn will coordinate a meeting time for June.

Brian updated us on the meeting he and David recently had with MCB commissioner D'Arcangelo and others:

MCB is not planning to close the Springfield office. Should that change, the commissioner will discuss it with the SAB and RC groups prior to any firm decision.

Commissioner D'Arcangelo committed to financial transparency with the SAB and RC.

Per discussion with the board, Sharon agreed to send the following notice on our announcement lists:

"Good afternoon all,

Last week we heard at the Statutory Advisory Board meeting of Mass. Commission for the Blind that there is still funding available for technology training and equipment which must be used by June 30, 2021. This funding is available for people in the social rehabilitation (SR) track of MCB. This would include seniors and others who are not looking for work or going to school, and who are striving to live as independently as possible in their homes. There is no income criterion. If you are not sure if you have an open SR case at MCB, contact your local office or call 617 -727-5550 or 800 -392 -6450. Give the operator your name and location, and then be prepared to explain to an SR supervisor or regional director what technology equipment or training you are requesting. If you prefer,

send an email to: mcb-ombudsman@mass.gov.

You need to reach out to the Mass. Commission for the blind as soon as possible in order to access these funds. Certainly it should be done this week, as it can take some time to reopen a case, put in the referral to the technology department, and have an assessment of your needs.

We hope that this information will be of use to people in our community, and encourage people to take advantage of this unusual opportunity."

Following up on an email he had sent to this board earlier in the day, Brian confirmed that he will resign as president. Several board members offered high praise and gratitude for the many years of work Brian has done for BSCB and ACB.

Publications committee report; David

(Written report)

The Pubs Committee last met on May 13. The next Third Thursday is set for May 20. The topic is the ACB Convention and Janet Dickelman is the guest speaker.

Sharon has developed a solid pipeline of topics for the next several months.

The committee has scheduled a training for our members on hosting Zoom meetings. It is scheduled for Saturday May 29.

The next Bay Lines Express feature articles include one by Steve Dresser on barbecuing and one by Bill Henderson on swimming.

David has contacted Gina Russo of Perkins to get credentials and instructions on how to post content on our NFB Newline channel. Hopefully, it will be

reactivated soon.

We have cleaned up our committee's shared Dropbox folder, reducing it from 500 MB to 30 MB.

If MCB and others agree to recording Statutory Advisory Board and Rehabilitation Council meetings, we will hopefully create a page on the website to post

these recordings.

(End of written report)

It was pointed out that the free edition of Dropbox does not include file version control.

Brian asked the publications committee to write up a re-posting guide and other rules for managing our lists.

Following a lengthy discussion, a motion was made and seconded to authorize Brian to destroy old BSCB documents currently residing in his home. The motion failed by a 4 to 3 roll call vote.

Rick volunteered to scan all of the material, which will then be destroyed.

Legislative committee report; DeAnn

(Written report)

Earlier this spring, BSCB joined with the Carroll Center for the Blind, MAB, the NFB of MA and the Lowell Association for the Blind to advocate for increased

funding to address what is expected to be pent-up demand for technology training and equipment to meet the needs of consumers who are blind and who are

not on a vocational track with MCB. This includes about 90% of MCB consumers. Although the House budget included an additional \$1.7 million for this purpose,

the Senate budget, released this week, did not. We're hopeful that an amendment may be added. If so, the success of the initiative will likely depend on blind advocates calling their Senators and Representatives, so stay tuned!

President Brian Charlson and Vice President David Kingsbury met on April 23rd with MCB Commissioner and the Undersecretary of Health and Human Services

to discuss the BSCB letter sent to the Sec. of Health and Human Services in March. The meeting was polite. They received assurances that at this time,

the Springfield regional MCB office is not scheduled to close. The commissioner will meet regularly with the presidents of the BSCB and the NFB of MA.

It was agreed that delays in the confirmations of new members to the MCB Rehabilitation Council are problematic and the Undersecretary agreed to investigate.

The commissioner said there were no plans to record open meetings of the SAB and RC at this time. The BSCB is seeking more detail about the provision of

financial data to the MCB's advisory boards.

On May 14th, during a regularly scheduled monthly meeting, the MCB Statutory Advisory Board (SAB) discussed an MCB initiative to update the state statutes

that authorize the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind. The statutes were very old and contained references to programs that no longer exist, as well

as outdated language about disability. Approval from the Massachusetts legislature will be required. The Commissioner said MCB's recommendations haven't yet been introduced to the legislature and are currently under review in the Department of Health and Human Services. All bills include a public comment process. SAB member Kim Charlson requested for the SAB to have an opportunity to review the Department of Health and Human Services recommendations before

anything is sent to the legislature.

On its next agenda, the SAB would like to include an exploration of participant and guest requests to make local Zoom recordings of open meetings, when

they can be shared publicly, etc.

The BSCB Elections Access Survey was sent to the Secretary of State's office, the Disability Law Center, DPC, BCIL, and several legislators. It can be viewed

on the BSCB website.

BSCB is working with the Massachusetts Eye and Ear Infirmary to schedule a final meeting to mark the end of our five-year agreement to improve accessibility.

The ACB resolutions committee held its first call this week, in preparation for the national convention in July. Please submit ideas or resolution drafts by June 1, though they will be accepted until July 23. There will be a series of public community calls to discuss the resolutions that are submitted.

The ACB board will vote on them in late August. Resolutions can be sent to gabe.griffith@ccbnet.org
Or deann.elliott@gmail.com.

Greater Boston Legal Services is seeking a presenter for staff training. Board members will be asked if they are interested or if they know of someone they could recommend.

Demolish Disabled Poverty is an initiative being supported by Senators Markey and Warren. It asks President Biden to raise SSI benefits and the income and asset limits as part of the American Family Plan. The BSCB board is considering the initiative.

The 2021 WebAIM Million Report is now available. This annual accessibility analysis of the home pages of the top one million web sites provides insight into the current state of and trends for web accessibility. This year, 97.4% of home pages had detectable WCAG 2 failures with an average of 51.4 errors

per page. Gloomy as this sounds, there were some areas of improvement since 2020. You can read the report by visiting: <https://webaim.org/blog/webaim-million-2021/>

In the Winn-Dixie web accessibility case, the blind plaintiff has requested that the entire 11-member panel of judges hear the case, which was previously decided by a panel consisting of three judges only. The decision was not in the plaintiff's favor, but one of the judges was extremely conservative and has made a number of decisions in other civil rights cases that were not in step with more moderate judges. It's possible a bigger panel will result in a different decision.

May 20th is the 10th anniversary of Global Accessibility Awareness Day (GAAD)!

(End of written report)

Brian volunteered to represent BSCB as a speaker for Boston Greater Legal Services; DeAnn will follow up with an email to Brian and Alexa from GBLS.

DeAnn said resolutions need to be in by June 1.

Rick will add to a resolution about QuickBooks.

David is preparing a resolution on accessible financial reports.

It was recommended that we resurrect the Web Access committee to look into a multitude of accessibility issues.

Brian will contact DeAnn to discuss the legislative seminar.

Cheryl expressed interest in working on the issue of poverty among people with disabilities.

Spring conference report; Frank

(Written report)

The conference was held on all three days (April 23, 24, and 25) as planned.

ACB radio broadcast the entire convention.

list of 8 items

- 89 persons registered for the conference
- 30 non-members registered for the conference
- 3 non-members pledged donations
- 5 persons expressed interest in becoming a member
- 59 BSCB members registered for the conference.
- 5 members said it was the first time they have attended a BSCB conference
- 15 members elected not to register for the auction
- 31 members pledged donations

List end

Examples of feedback have already been forward to this mailing list.

(End of written report)

Rick will get ACBRadio listener statistics.

The auction was a big success.

We need to find a way to help those who do not win bids but are more than willing to spend some money.

Award plaques are to be mailed tomorrow.

Social committee report: Rose

(Written report)

The Social committee will be meeting on Monday May 17, 2021 at 7:30.

The topic is travel.

We will discuss the social hang out on Sunday June 6,2021. Time 1:30 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.,

Save the date has gone out to the membership.

We may need the zoom info from one of the BSCB members of the board.

(End of written report)

Other business:

Brian's resignation:

Brian said the 1st vice president automatically becomes president if the president resigns. Nobody expressed disagreement with David Kingsbury becoming our new president.

Brian formally tendered his resignation. Rose moved to accept it, and Rick seconded. The motion was approved by the board.

David chaired the rest of this meeting.

David again thanked Brian for his many contributions, both to BSCB and to him personally. Brian thanked us for supporting him and pledged to continue to support BSCB.

Brian proposed we elect Frank to fill the now vacant 1st vice president position. Three calls for additional nominations elicited none.

Brian made and the board approved a motion voting Frank as first vice president by acclamation. Frank graciously accepted.

We will discuss the now vacant 2nd vice president position at our June meeting.

Brian agreed to serve as our delegate at the ACB convention in July. Mary will serve as alternate delegate.

Frank will serve as our delegate to the nominating committee.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:20 PM.

Respectfully ,

Jerry Berrier, Secretary