

Bay State Council of the Blind

Board Call Minutes, October 13, 2019

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 7:32 PM.

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

The minutes of our September call were approved.

Treasurer's report; Rick

(Written report)

Rick e-mailed the following 2 current reports prior to this call:

- Year to Date Profit and Loss Report
- Asset Balances

Notes to these reports are as follows:

- Net Year to date Gain: \$2,594.36
- Total Cash Assets (excluding investment fund) \$40,985.54
- Proceeds from the Presidents' Team at the Breda Dillon Annual Walk at the National Convention: \$6,168.39.
- Aira Referral Proceeds from convention: \$50.00
- \$30 received from Roz Nadler in memory of Marcia Dresser
- \$34.00 From MMS (Monthly Monetary Support): \$34.00
- We appear to continue to be billed from Philmore
- Disability Policy Consortium is having their Annual fund raiser this Thursday. No tickets have yet been purchased by BSCB

(End of written report)

Rick expressed gratitude to Kim Charlson for the revenue generated by the Brenda Dillon walk.

The board approved a \$100 donation to the upcoming DPC annual event; Bob Hachey will represent us.

Brian will send some available dates for us to choose from to get together to discuss handling of confidential BSCB documents and details.

Frank made, Rose seconded and the board approved a motion to approve the treasurer's report.

President's report; Brian

Brian sent an invitation to MCB commissioner David D'Arcangelo to speak at our fall conference. The stated deadline for David's response has passed, but we have not yet heard back from him. Kim also mentioned the invitation to David at a recent meeting.

Negotiations continue with HBO toward an agreement similar to others ACB has negotiated.

Brian named a western MA BSCB member whom he is trying to reach to solicit her involvement in our newly formed grants committee. He will continue trying to reach her.

Discussion of policies related to delegates to national conventions

A motion was made by Frank with multiple seconds and approved by the board to solicit candidates for alternate delegate and delegate only from among individuals who have already expressed interest in attending the national convention.

Jerry made, Frank seconded, and the board approved a motion requiring interested candidates to submit a detailed request to the BSCB secretary.

Jerry made, Frank seconded, and the board approved a motion as follows:

- First-time delegates must attend an orientation session with a BSCB board member.
- Both the alternate and delegate must attend the entire last day of the ACB business meeting.
- Strong preference will be given to candidates who have attended previous ACB conventions.

The delegate and alternate delegate must communicate prior and during the convention to ensure full coverage.

If stipends are budgeted, equal amounts will be given to the delegate and alternate delegate.

Mary will update her draft per this discussion, and Brian will add it to old business on our next board call for discussion and approval.

Discussion of legislative seminar policies

Rick made, David seconded and the board approved a motion as follows:

A candidate who wishes to receive a stipend should e-mail the BSCB secretary, per an announcement that will go out well in advance of the seminar.

A chosen candidate must:

- Include their relevant experience, their congressional district and their legislators in their e-mail to the BSCB secretary.
- Book their return flight on Capitol Hill Tuesday for no earlier than 6:00 PM.
- Arrive the night before the presidents' meeting and plan to be on time and attend the entire meeting.

Cheryl voted in opposition to requiring people to arrive the night before the presidents' meeting. .

Mary will update her draft per this discussion, and it will be discussed for approval in old business during our next board call.

Jerry commended Mary and others for their hard work on these issues.

Legislative report; DeAnn

(Written report)

The Legislative Committee has organized an afternoon program for the upcoming fall BSCB conference on November 16. Speakers have been confirmed, and the agenda has been forwarded to the program committee for conference registration. The legislative committee will meet again this week on October 16 to finalize details.

Big advocacy news this week as the U.S. Supreme Court declined to hear the Domino's Pizza case, thus permitting the 9th Circuit court's decision in favor of the blind plaintiff to stand! This is a huge victory, as it affirms the right for blind customers to take legal enforcement action when private businesses have inaccessible websites. The decision also affirms that businesses have a responsibility to make their websites accessible, and cannot claim that their due process rights have been violated in the absence of clear guidance from the Department of Justice. For those businesses that have taken a wait-and-see posture, this will hopefully resolve some of the uncertainty and encourage them to get busy with accessibility initiatives. There may be a case in the future to decide whether web accessibility applies to businesses that are purely internet-based and don't have a connection to a brick-and-mortar location, but this is a big step forward!

Some thoughts about the role of BSCB going forward:

- For the BSCB name to appear on an initiative, we'd want for it to be serious, so our "brand" continues to be associated with legitimate, high-quality issues.
- It would be good to involve lots of members in the effort, because it would allow us to incorporate a range of life experiences involving different kinds of websites, and would give us access to different kinds of technologies (ZoomText, JAWS, Voiceover, etc.)
- The goal should be improving access. If a settlement is involved, it's secondary.
- It may be better to do a good job on five than half a job on 100. Details matter, as does follow through.
- There are lots of ways to prioritize an issue: the number of people affected, the importance of the site to our members, the availability of an attorney to work on it, the ease or difficulty of fixing it, and opportunity (who we know, who has standing, personal experiences of members, etc.) It would be good to give this some thought so we have guidelines for how to prioritize and use limited resources to best advantage.
- We should ask the person bringing a website to our attention how we can be most helpful. Some members would have a personal stake in it/unique expertise/standing based on an experience and would like our support and guidance to pursue it themselves. The outcome may impact their employment. There's satisfaction in getting a successful resolution, which is energizing. It's an opportunity for experienced members to mentor newer ones and learn from each other. Other members don't have time and just want someone to fix it for them. If people are concerned that their issues may be resolved in a way they wouldn't find satisfactory, they might be reluctant to come forward.
- There are so many problematic websites out there that there's plenty of work to go around.
- Scalability is an issue. ACB is a good resource for legislative issues, for legal advice, or for contacting members in other states who may have had similar experiences. They can lend a national name and we can pass national resolutions. but a handful of employees in the national office can't do everything. We can do a lot of work ourselves. We should work with ACB to ensure that our initiatives do not conflict with or duplicate work being done elsewhere, and strategize about how they should be involved.
- We can encourage members to report website difficulties they're having, and create a system for documenting true accessibility bugs.
- Within the blindness community, we can educate and empower members to identify true accessibility barriers, and raise awareness of rights under the ADA.
- With the public, we can work to raise awareness of web accessibility as a civil right, and address misperceptions.
- Any member can take legal action on their own, but we should discourage frivolous claims.

- BSCB support should be a benefit of membership
- We should be thorough in our documentation of issues, reasonable about offering the opportunity to fix something, and firm when necessary.
- We should be mindful about offering ourselves as partners and web accessibility resources. While we want to be cooperative and offer insights, companies have a responsibility to make their sites accessible, and we're not the free quality assurance labor force for the private sector.
- Not every issue needs a lawsuit. A dozen guide dogs in front of an offending company is also a strategy. It's okay to brainstorm for different approaches.
- What's the best administrative configuration to address these new challenges and opportunities? Is it something for the legislative committee, or might a new committee/task force be better suited?

(End of written report)

Up to 30 minutes will be allocated on our next board call to discuss the above list.

Fall conference; David

(Written report)

We are almost ready to put out the email announcement.

Registration will begin at 8:45 AM, followed by the general session at 9:30. The conference will conclude at 4:00 PM.

The morning general session will start with a welcome from Carroll Center President Greg Donnelly. BSCB President Brian Charlson will talk about recent BSCB and ACB accomplishments. MCB Commissioner, David D'Arcangelo will tell us about MCB priorities. Psychologist and Life Coach, Dr. Linda Bolle will discuss lessons learned related to adjusting to blindness and educating others about realities of vision loss. Hannah Fairbairn will tell us about her new book "When You Can't Believe Your Eyes: Vision Loss & Personal Recovery." Lou Lasher will discuss his experience doing audio description of movies and live theater. Matthew Turner, an MIT student who was awarded an ACB scholarship will also speak.

The afternoon will be exclusively devoted to advocacy issues with an accent on strategies for effective self-advocacy. Lawyers with Boston Greater Legal Services will tell us about their activities, including those with the BSCB. Results from the 2018 voter survey will be presented. Accessibility issues related to the 2020 National Census will also be discussed.

(End of written report)

Rick will send David a PayPal link to be used to register for the conference; the cost is \$20.00.

Brian and Rick will handle morning coffee and cold drinks.

Brian will invite Mary Mahon McCauley, new head of MOD, to speak at our fall conference.

Spring convention; Frank

- (Written report)
- Our keynote speaker, Kenneth Semien Sr has confirmed his availability.
- With the help of Deann we have reached out to Mark Richeart to invite him to be our banquet speaker with no response yet.
- I am working with the caterer and should have approximate banquet and meal pricing within two weeks. I had an original estimate but the committee voted down the Sunday night social dinner so the prices of the other meals will increase.
- BSCB does not have a liquor license so we cannot have a cash bar. We have the option of the caterer serving beer, wine and liquor at an additional cost.
- The only speaker for Saturday that has not confirmed is Commissioner D’Arcangelo from MCB. All other Saturday speakers and time slots are filled.
(End of written report)

Brian recommended we offer an option for banquet attendees to buy drink tickets.

Brian recommended a national speaker, and a couple of others on the call agreed.

We discussed cost of national speakers; Frank said there is no budget for the spring convention, so ticket prices are affected by what we choose to spend money on for the convention.

Frank expects to be able to predict ticket prices at our next board call.

Publications report; David

(Written report)

The Pubs Committee last met on September 26.

We would like to restart the Council Connection podcast using Libsyn. There are several monthly subscription options which enable podcast subscribers to access current and previous episodes: \$5 for 50 MB; \$15 for 250 MB; \$20 for 400 MB; and \$40 for 800 MB of storage. We feel the \$20 for 400 MB of storage is the best option and wish to request Board approval for this plan. Tim Cumings has the necessary expertise to work on this. He and Steve would work together to reestablish the Council Connection monthly podcast.

Philmore is once again fully functional. The voice mail has been working for several weeks now, and audio uploads to the various menu options are again operational. Posts for Council Connection, BSCB events, blindness community events, and news from the Board are again current.

The Pubs Committee wishes to take the initiative to Collect and centralize critical BSCB account information (with the exception of financial accounts (user IDs, passwords, account and authorization numbers, etc.). If the Board is OK with this, David will send out a list of accounts to the Board and it would be nice if people could respond promptly.

Regarding website development, David will build a Donations page. He will write draft language and work with Rick to insert a PayPal link.

Steve will work on a Membership and dues page. He will research the best way to create a form that can appear on the web site. He will first reach out to Jerry to see if using Google Forms is a viable option. If not, he will contact Mystic Access to see if they can help out.

The next edition of Bay Lines is targeted to come out in late October, prior to the fall conference.

(end of written report)

Rick made, David approved, and the board approved a motion to pay for the 400MB plan from Libsyn at a cost of \$240 per year.

Social committee; Rose

(Written report)

The Duck Tour on Sunday September 29, 2019.

The announcement was sent about four times before the event, to the whole membership. However, we only had seven members participate. What do you think we need to do to encourage our members to be more social?

Do we need to pay for some of the cost of the events?

Do you think we can get grants to assist with this?

Can I get more suggestions from the "board"?

Thanks to all that attended the Duck Boat Tour

(End of written report)

Brian thanked Rose for her hard work on arranging the duck tour.

Membership; Mary

(Written report)

Mary and Nona Haroyan traveled out to West Springfield on Sept. 28 to join the scheduled gathering organized by BSCB member at large Rafael Turo. There was a total of 7 people in attendance and an 8th person who was contacted through a member's cell phone. The group met for about 2 hours and discussed topics such as paratransit and being part of a community. There seemed to be real interest in scheduling a second meeting and among other things, determining whether a BSCB chapter might be formed.

Daisy Russell has agreed to represent the BSCB Students Chapter and Brian indicated he will represent the Charles River Chapter.

The Membership Committee met on Monday, Oct. 7. A discussion of possible places to outreach was conducted.

(End of written report)

Mary asked, Brian agreed, and there was board consensus, to permit chapter presidents to post on BSCB-Announce.

ACB/BSCB Lists: If you don't seem to be receiving e-mails to the lists, send an e-mail to jeff@jeffbishop.com.

Our next meeting is scheduled for Sunday November 10 at 7:30 PM.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:20 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Jerry Berrier, Secretary

