

Bay State Council of the Blind

Board call, September 8, 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 brought the call to order at approximately 7:35 PM.

Bob and Rick were excused. All other officers and board members were present. Chapter presidents Ann Donna, Sharon Strzalkowski and Jessica Barr also participated.

The minutes of our August board call were approved.

Rick was traveling and unable to provide a treasurer's report.

#### President's report; Brian

Brian praised Rick for working very hard to make recordings of the ACB convention available, despite numerous problems.

ACB has entered into negotiations with HBO, and HBO has asked to meet in person with ACB representatives in Boston.

## Legislative report; DeAnn

(Written report)

The legislative committee has focused on plans for the upcoming BSCB fall conference, which will feature advocacy sessions in the afternoon. DeAnn attended the conference committee meeting, and plans to have something to share with them by September 11th, so they can distribute the agenda with registration materials.

Some working titles are:

Making a difference: Techniques for standing up and speaking out for Yourself and Others

From lemons to lemonade: How to transform challenging life experiences into powerful advocacy Stories

Making your Story Count: Techniques for Effective Personal and Collective Advocacy

Telling Your Story: Empower Yourself by Telling Your Self-Advocacy Story

Members have been generating great ideas! Current program includes reflections from Brian on the importance of self-advocacy, a session on assertiveness (what to do when a person in authority says no) led by Jennifer Harnish and Linda Bolle, a 15-minute video featuring Haben Girma that someone will analyze as an example of good storytelling for persuasive advocacy, some interactive activities, awards to GBLS and a brief presentation from them about legal ways to enforce your rights, and a session about the upcoming census and other topics the BSCB and ACB are advocating for collectively.

This week, Cheryl will meet with David and DeAnn to finish the voting survey, whose results we hope to summarize at the fall conference.

Our attorney has drafted a letter to the Common Application, which should go out this week.

At the RC meeting on September 4th, there were a couple of pieces of noteworthy information. The MCB is looking for content to post on its Twitter and Facebook/LinkedIn accounts. The commissioner invited organizations to submit relevant material for consideration. This may be another avenue for us to talk about the fall conference, census, voting survey, etc. Email suggested content to RC Chair Bruce Howell. Also, the MCB is working to improve the speed and quality of first contact with newly-registered clients. They're developing a questionnaire that will give case workers a better understanding of client needs when they make contact.

TC Breazeale will join the board call and speak for a few minutes about her background with grants, her recent explorations for possible grant sources for the BSCB, and some ideas for the future.

(End of written report)

DeAnn asked that we e-mail any suggestions to her regarding the fall conference afternoon session.

She hopes to have a letter out next week to the College Common Application folks to let them know we are happy with the improvements they have made. We will continue to monitor the application process each year.

She will be talking to ACB officials about getting out some positive publicity to celebrate this important victory.

DeAnn and Cheryl have been talking to T.C. Breazeale about grant writing, and TC agreed to speak to us on this call. She has a background in grant writing.

She told us about the Boston Foundation's Open Door Grant Program. She said they provide grants of between \$10,000 and \$50,000 twice per year, and she feels that BSCB could be a viable applicant.

She also mentioned a couple of other foundations outside the Boston area that may be of interest to us, including the Greater Worcester Community Foundation and the Community Foundation of western Massachusetts.

?She said foundations have funding cycles, and it's critical to adhere to them when applying.

Foundations typically do an information briefing session at the beginning of each cycle.

It would be important that we establish and maintain a good relationship with the foundation representative.

Some groups hire a professional grant writer.

David made, Mary seconded and the board approved a motion to establish a grant funding investigation committee. The committee will comprise TC, Sharon, Cheryl, Rick, and one additional member to be recommended by Brian after he reviews potential candidates from the BSCB membership. DeAnn indicated she is over-extended and must decline direct involvement in this committee.

The committee will designate a committee chairperson.

DeAnn suggested that we put a note on BSCB Announce inviting any members with expertise in grant writing to volunteer to assist the committee.

Brian said Kim has a certificate and frame we will present to Greater Boston Legal Services at the fall conference.

## Fall Conference report; David

(Written report)

The first meeting of the organizing committee took place on August 27. Two decisions are requested from the Board at this point:

- Set participation fee of \$20.
- Set donation level to the Carroll Center at \$300.

Both of these are the same as for the last two years.

Initial conference agenda ideas are as follows:

Morning (David Kingsbury to chair)

- Opening remarks, Greg Donnelly, CCB
- President address on recent BSCB and ACB developments, Brian Charlson
- MCB Commissioner remarks
- Linda Bolle, former BSCB scholarship recipient
- [Matthew Turner](#), BSCB scholarship recipient
- Lou Lasher, audio describer of movies and theater
- Recent tech gadgets (Carl Richardson, Brian Charlson), and status of MBTA AIRA program (Diana Leonard)

Afternoon session – Theme is Advocacy and/or self-advocacy, DeAnn Elliott to chair

- Brian Charlson to talk about self-advocacy
- Self-advocacy exercises
- Greater Boston Legal Services to be presented award from spring convention and give overview of their activities
- US Attorney Office in Boston to provide overview of their activities and how we can work with them
- Census update

As was the case last year, Mary Haroyan' will serve as program coordinator and will further develop the agenda.

The conference committee further decided that the lunch will be pizza instead of Panera sandwiches. Advantages include cost savings to be returned to BSCB treasury, and simplified registration (no need to track lunch choices)

Similar to last year, there will also be a Fifty-fifty raffle.

The next organizing committee call will take place in the latter part of September.

(End of written report)

Brian confirmed he sent an invitation letter to the MCB commissioner.

The fall conference announcement will include a note for anyone with dietary restrictions to contact a designated person.

Dianna pointed out that the future of the AIRA MBTA pilot is in question, so it may not be a suitable topic of discussion at the conference.

David made, Mary seconded, and the board approved a motion to set the conference fee at \$20.00.

David made, Mary seconded, and the board approved a motion to donate \$300 to the Carroll Center for the use of their facilities for the conference.

## Spring Convention report; Frank

(Written report)

### Background:

Nina and I met with Don Moran this past Wednesday at the Grand Masonic Lodge in Boston. We toured the facilities. The lodge is located at the corner of Boylston St and Tremont St. It is directly opposite the green line and is one block from the orange and silver lines. The red line is one stop away at Park Street. The main entrance to the lobby is on Boylston St. there are two steps up into the lobby. The wheelchair ramp is on the opposite side of the lobby. The elevators are on the right if you go into the main entrance. The building has 8 floors. The business offices are on the upper floors and the meeting rooms are on the lower levels. The lower the floor the larger the meeting facilities are. After discussing our needs for a 2-day weekend event with Mr. Moran he offered the use of the two meeting rooms on the lower level. These are large stately meeting rooms. Both have plush carpeting and wood paneling. There is a brand-new audio system with XLR, USB and Bluetooth connections. The rooms have wi-fi. There is no wired Ethernet. The large room will seat between 100 and 300 persons depending upon setup. The smaller room seats approximately 60. The facility manager recommended setting up the main room with a full-sized main table or two and a podium for the head table and then rounds of either 8 or 6. Rounds of 6 may be better for dog guide users. The smaller room can be setup for break out sessions, lunch and cocktail hour. For a weekend event we would be able to use the facilities from 7 AM until 11 PM. Those are hard stops and we would have to be out by the time limit. That gives us 38 hours of usable time for a two-day event. In comparison, at the hotel, we had 29 hours of usable time in a 3-day event. There are three catering services that the Masons have relationships with. At least one will have a liquor license. There are several hotels in the area for folks who wish to stay overnight. The closest is the Ritz, which is actually right next door. All area hotels honor the usual discounts, senior citizen, veteran, triple A, AARP, etc. The Masons have a deal with the parking garage on Boylston Street for \$10 per day per person if anyone is driving to the event. Tremont and Boylston are a very busy area adjacent to the theater and Chinatown areas and there are many restaurants, CVS, and Walgreens within a short walk. Directly across the street is Boston Common for dog relief. The Masons are offering us the use of the facilities at no cost. A donation can be made but they are not expecting it. Their available dates, as of this past Wednesday, are below my signature.

### My recommendation:

Since Boston is the Bay State's capital city, I believe our annual meeting should be in or around Boston. That doesn't mean that I don't think that other meetings and functions at other times during the year should not be held in other parts of the state. I also believe that this presents us with a unique opportunity to develop a relationship with an organization that is well respected and has influential members. Please see the back of a dollar bill or the cornerstone of the state house if you don't know

what the previous sentence means. The venue is very accessible both inside in the meeting spaces and outside via public transportation. Financially speaking the only commitment, we would have been to the caterers with whatever food we order. We would have no contractual relationship with a hotel and would not need to meet a minimum number of guest's rooms which we have failed to meet the past two years. Our guests will have a much lower financial burden as they would need only one hotel room night, if they are from out of town or no hotel room at all if they come via public transportation. I would like to make a motion that we accept the masons' very generous offer and schedule a 2-day event in the Spring of 2020 at the Grand Masonic Lodge of Boston.

Dates available as of this past Wednesday:

sat March 7 and 8

sat March 21 and 22

sat March 28 and 29

sat April 4 and 5

April 18 and 19 \*Boston marathon, not recommended

Sat May 16 and 17

(End of written report)

Rose made, David seconded, and the board approved a motion to accept the offer from the masonic lodge permitting us to use their facility for our spring convention.

We agreed to avoid recommending a specific hotel, but we will provide a representative listing of nearby lodging for attendees. Lodging will not be booked or managed through BSCB.

The convention venue will be at no charge, but the committee has not yet determined approximate prices for catering and other expenses.

We must use a caterer from a list that will be provided to us by the Masons.

We cannot bring in our own food for meals.

David made, Mary seconded, and the board approved a motion to hold our convention the weekend of march 28 2020.

## Membership report; Mary

(Written report)

The membership Committee met on Aug. 19.

Plans continue to move forward for the Sept. 28 meeting in West Springfield for those interested in low vision and blindness concerns.

The topic of the sharing of member contact information was discussed. Committee members thought that amongst chapters this could be more easily done but

within the entire affiliate harder to manage. The importance of the BSCB Social Committee was brought up as a way for members to meet each other.

I have reached out to Ardis Bazyn as ACB Membership Committee Chair and gotten her thoughts on this. They are as follows:

“In California, our new constitution just asked that each chapter have a policy on sharing information. At the state level, the office only shares information to committee members of a committee or tells the member that someone is requesting their info. My chapter circulates a roster to all members in the chapter and each member lets me (the roster preparer) know if all the info received for CCB is ok to share with chapter members. So I have three rosters for our chapter, one to send to chapter members, one to send to CCB, and one I have with possible members. If members outside our chapter want a member’s info, we let the member know. If the member’s info is on the website as a contact person for the chapter, then that info is public already and can be shared.

I don’t share ACB members info except when it’s available online- committee chair, president, etc. We can bring this issue up on our next call.”

And, also, Cindy Van Winkle, ACB Membership Services Coordinator, said it is best to air on the side of discretion with regard to the sharing of member information, saying, “The membership contact list for all affiliate members does not need to be shared with all affiliate members.”

(End of written report)

Regarding sharing of contact information, we agreed as follows:

If a member contacts a chapter president or the membership chairperson requesting contact information for another member, With the requester’s permission, their contact information will be forwarded to the member they hope to contact. It will then be up to that member to decide whether to respond to the requester.

Chapter presidents may adopt their own policy with regard to sharing contact information within their chapter.

## Social committee report; Rose

The team is planning a Duck tour on Sunday September 29, 2019 for 11:00 A.M. departure. People should meet at 10:30 A.M. 53 Huntington Ave. Boston, near

the Star Market and Pru Towers. Below was one of our e-mails.

This was one of the original e-mails. and this seemed to confuse a few people. However, I will resend another one after this meeting tonight.

Dear BSCB members:

You are invited to another BSCB social event

On Sunday, September 29, come enjoy a ride on a Boston duck Boat tour.

Everyone will meet at 10:30 AM at 53 Huntington Avenue, to be ready for an 11:00 tour departure.

the cost for blind and visually impaired riders of the tour is \$20 per person; this is a special accommodation price. The cost for sighted guides is \$39.

To secure a spot, you need to make a reservation in advance. Please call the Boston duck Boat Tour office at: 617-267-3825

And hit option 3. You will need a credit card or Debit card for payment.

For more information or to schedule a different tour pick-up location, you can go to the web site:

[www.bostonducktours.com](http://www.bostonducktours.com)

Upon return from the tour at 53 Huntington Avenue, near the Prudential, we will all meet at 1 P.M. for lunch at a local eatery.

(End of written report)

Rose gave additional details and clarification regarding the duck tour trip.

## Old Business

We agreed to table the discussion of a draft policy written by Mary and others regarding BSCB delegates and related matters until our next meeting. Brian will put this discussion on the agenda before committee reports to ensure we can give ample time to it.

## Next Meeting

Our next meeting is scheduled for October 13 at 7:30 PM.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 PM.



Respectfully submitted

Jerry Berrier, secretary