**Department of Rehabilitation Services**

**Bureau of Education and Services for the Blind (BESB)**

**Advisory Board for Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired (DORS-BESB Advisory Board)**

# Draft Minutes

## September 13, 2018

**Members Present**

**Alan Sylvestre, Chairman, Eileen Akers, Astread Ferron-Poole (representing DSS Commissioner Bremby) David Gregoire, Katherine Guzman, Mary Silverberg, Stephen Thal and Randa Utter.**

**Members Absent**

**Andrea Giudice, Darcy Jones and Beth Rival.**

**Others Present**

**Brian Sigman, BESB Director, Chris Lassen, Adult Services Supervisor, Catherine Summ, Education Supervisor, Edward Owens, Business Enterprise Program Supervisor, Mary Burgard, Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor, Lisa Tanguay, Office Supervisor, Lori St. Amand, Volunteer Program Coordinator, Andrew Norton, Legislative and Administrative Advisor.**

**Welcome and Introductions**

**Chairperson Sylvestre called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.**

**Public Comment**

**Mr. Thal recommended compiling an on-line resource guide including a list of local community providers where members of the public would be able to purchase devices or receives services for those who are not eligible for BESB services. The listing could include examples such as the NEAT market center and the Lions Low Vision centers. Mr. Thal and Ms. Silverberg will work together to discuss the resources that are recommended for inclusion and will report back to the Advisory Board at the December meeting.**

**Old Business**

**MOTION: A motion was made by Ms. Akers, seconded by Ms. Utter to adopt the minutes from the June 21, 2018 meeting. Motion carried unanimously.**

**New Business**

**Order of Selection Workgroup Update**

**Mr. Sigman reported on the Order of Selection work group’s recent activities that included a proposal to update the Vocational Rehabilitation policy on Order of Selection. The board members reviewed and discussed the proposed policy update.**

**MOTION: On a motion by Ms. Silverberg, seconded by Mr. Thal, the Advisory Board voted unanimously to present the draft policy update document for public comment, contingent upon the draft document being accepted by the SRC as well.**

**Budget Update**

**Mr. Sigman provided an overview of the current status of the Vocational Rehabilitation budget. BESB recently received $431,000 through the federal re-allotment process. For FFY 2019, current projections indicate that sufficient funds are available to serve all eligible individuals in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. FFY2020 is projected to have less funding available, but current projections do indicate it will be at a level sufficient to serve all eligible individuals in that year as well.**

**Bureau Update – Adult’s and Children’s Services**

**Mr. Lassen reported that some of the staff within the Adult Services Program have been working closely with Maven, the contractor that is developing the new client management system for DORS. Mobility Instructor John Waiculonis retired effective August 1st and was brought back on August 17th as a temporary worker retiree to help continue the delivery of services through the end of the calendar year. Adult Services and the State Unit on Aging will be meeting together to discuss how the two bureaus can collaborate for the delivery of services. BESB’s Volunteer Coordinator Lori St. Amand reported that the volunteer program had three less volunteers due to two retirements and one who passed away. BESB volunteers delivered a total of 13,418 hours of service during the fiscal year, valued at $30.24 per hour.**

**Ms. Summ reported that the Children’s Services Program sponsored four events and two summer programs this past year. Upcoming events include pre-school, school age and special services Fall in-service trainings for school district staff during the last week of September and first two weeks in October as well as a pre-school/early elementary field trip scheduled for Saturday, September 15th at the Beardsley Zoo. Two Education Consultants retired effective August 1st and two new Education Consultants were subsequently hired. Recruitment is underway to fill two additional Education Consultant positions.**

**Legislative Update**

**Mr. Norton reported that the legislature is not currently in session.  As a reminder, one bill of interest that passed last session was HB 5503, An Act Concerning the Killing or Injuring of Seeing Eye Dogs and Assistance Dogs which would increase liability for a person whose dog has injured a guide dog or assistance dog.  Mr. Thal reported that for those who have questions pertaining to service animals, they can contact the ADA Resource Center at 1-800-949-4232.  Mr. Norton reported that some members of the legislature asked whether DORS would be changing the name of the agency to reflect the fact the DORS now includes the former Department on Aging.  DORS staff provided input for a new name at an agency-wide staff meeting last month.  This issue is still under review.  Currently, there are no proposed Bills the agency is planning to submit for the next session.  At the request of Eileen Akers, Mr. Norton will provide the Board with an update at the next Board meeting on Public Act 18-3, a bill that created a** **“t*ask force to study best practices for providing transportation for persons with disabilities, senior citizens and veterans.”***

**Board Vacancies and Reappointments**

**Mr. Sigman provided an update on the status of appointments to the Advisory Board. Two vacancies presently exist.**

**Meeting Dates for 2019**

**MOTION: On a motion made by Ms. Akers, seconded by Ms. Utter, the 2019 meeting dates were unanimously adopted as follows: March 21, June 20, September 19, and December 12, 2019.**

**Points to the Good and Welfare**

**Mr. Sigman reported that the DORS website is currently being updated, and expected to roll out by the end of December. The website will be formatted by type of services rather than by bureau specific web pages.**

**Ms. Akers reported that she spoke to her state Senator to inquire about White Cane Safety Day. Mr. Norton reported that he is working on a draft media advisory to highlight pedestrian safety. Ms. Akers reported that BCAC has an initiative on pedestrian safety with some of the school systems as well as inviting members of the legislature in Norwich take a sighted guide walk.**

**MOTION:  On a motion by Ms. Silverberg, seconded by Ms. Akers, the meeting adjourned at 11:48 a.m.**

**Next meeting – 13 December 2018, 10:00 a.m. to noon at 184 Windsor Avenue, Windsor, CT**