

Executive Board

New York State Commission for the Blind

March 12, 2015

Minutes:

Welcome and introductions:

Present, Karen Gourgey, David Stayer, Carl Jacobsen, Mindy Jacobsen, Frank Meyer, Brian Daniels, Joe Nye, and Christina Curry. (Julie Phillipson and Margo Downie had to return to Buffalo due to Julie's illness.)

Congratulations were extended to David Stayer for being named "Social Worker of the Year" by the National Association of Social Workers.

Adoption of Minutes for the October 30 meeting and the March 12 meeting agenda: Both were approved.

Update from Brian Daniels followed by discussion of specifics from Brian's report:

Brian informed the Executive Board about administrative changes at NYSCB. Sheila Poole, formerly OCFS Acting Commissioner, is now Deputy Secretary to the Governor for Human Services. Roberto Velez is now OCFS Acting Commissioner.

The Commission continues to be in full compliance with federal standards and indicators. The Commission has increased job output this year.

The Executive Board's influence has helped the commission to continue to improve technology for the blind.

There was discussion about the GED test and accessibility issues. The Executive Board will appoint one of its members to work with Brian to resolve these accessibility issues.

Brian opened a discussion about "blind etiquette." What is and is not appropriate when dealing with the blind? Many anecdotes were shared, and consensus seemed to indicate there is no real format or guideline to determine "blind etiquette."

Brian informed the group of the Taste of New York Project. It will set up vending machines on public college campuses and other public properties throughout the state. This has the potential to lead to more jobs for the blind and visually impaired.

Nominating Process:

The group discussed proposed requirements for new prospective Board members. These guidelines were submitted by Julie Phillipson and David Stayer. They are as follows:

- An interest in contributing to the well-being of the needs of blind New Yorkers in all aspects of daily life
- An ability to engage in oral and written communications
- An ability to use Creative problem solving skills in individual and group situations
- An ability to have the initial financial commitment and time to serve on the NYCB Executive board
- The ability to participate in on site as well as teleconference meetings
- An ability to be Efficient when using assistive technology enabling one to communicate with other members of the Board
- The ability to access community resources to accomplish a goal
- An ability to demonstrate strong interpersonal skills
- an ability to present one's self in a professional manner
- An ability to function independently utilizing the necessary alternative techniques to accomplish the above requirements

These guidelines were discussed, and it was suggested to remove the word “requirement” and a few skills the candidate must possess.

Karen Gourgey indicated she was going to move along with developing the letter to nominate Arthur Jacobs and Dawn Savino.

Discussion of 2013-14 draft report:

Brian indicated the report was good. His strongest recommendation was it needed to be stronger in some areas. Making the report stronger would increase the potential of legislators taking notice. He pointed to some specific areas of the document that were in need of revision. Brian also addressed some issues regarding word choice, and he encouraged either changing or eliminating some words.

After Brian left, the Board discussed various ways to strengthen the report, and it agreed to implement several strategies to make the document more attractive to its readers.

Priorities and work for next 6 months including assignments:

The group brainstormed about ways to get legislators to respond to the Executive Board’s report. The Board members identified members of the legislature they knew personally, and they discussed different strategies to approach these lawmakers. Mindy Jacobsen indicated the report should go to anyone who has the ability to influence legislators.

It was brought up that some aging people who are losing their vision might be able to be helped by the Department of Education as well as the NYSCB. This idea is going to be researched.

Mindy Jacobsen agreed to work with Brian Daniels regarding the UED Braille transition.

David Stayer is going to work with Maria Garcia regarding a childhood section for the final draft of the report. The intent of this section is to make the report stronger. Christina Curry indicated a short report followed by a story has more of a tendency to get the attention of legislators.

The board considered a meeting in June.

Adjournment:

Karen Gourgey motioned the meeting to come to an end, and it was second by David Stayer and Carl Jacobsen.

Minutes submitted by Frank Meyer.