

# GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL ON THE BLIND STATE OF DELAWARE

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## March 3, 2017 MEETING MINUTES

**Call to Order:** Chair, Lloyd Schmitz called the meeting to order at Smyrna Rest Stop at 10:00 a.m.

**Welcome:** Lloyd Schmitz welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### Roll Call

**Council Members:** Council Chair Lloyd Schmitz, Deidre Morris, Jim Law, Marjorie Deska, Ken Rolph, Patti Addison, Jillian Queen. Absent: None.

**Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) Staff:** Elisha Jenkins, Director; Dava Newnam, Deputy Director; Michele Hamilton, Administrative Specialist; Jill Morrison, Director of Constituent Relations.

**Guests:** Wayne Marsh (BEP), Mary Marsh, Larry Byler, Elizabeth McBroom, Rob Keller.

### Minutes

February 3, 2017 were emailed. No corrections were noted. Margie Deska made a motion to accept the minutes, seconded by Jim Law. Motion carried.

### Director's Report: Elisha Jenkins

Introduced and welcomed Jill Morrison, DVI Director of Constituent Relations. Permanent position? yes.

**Independent Living Services.** March 17 "Labeling and Organization" workshop, informing consumers about Braille Club and Century Gardening Club. Lloyd said he was very impressed with Deborah Talley's mailing to inform consumers about events. Publication how often? Jill Morrison will be working with Deborah on that.

Not a periodical.

**Vocational Rehabilitation.** Good start with transition counseling. Two sessions in the month of February. One on parent info. Another on transition. Lloyd asked how many parents/families participated statewide transition program in February by county? Statewide transition program is from New Castle, Milford? Elisha will get this information. 60 transition students/individuals? Elisha will check, but she felt that number was higher.

**Exciting News.** Employee at the Dover Air Force Base nominated for Associate of the Year and Associate of the Quarter. Is that at BISM Office Eagle? yes. It was an NIB program? yes, Ability One Program.

**Council Appointment Applications.** Lloyd reported that the manager of the Eagle Store at Dover AFB Office, sent her Council member application, but has not heard anything. Elisha said that there were applications under the former Governor, so they have contacted applicants to re-apply under the new Governor's application.

Raymond Lewis has taken over for Lydia Prigg Massey taking these applications. How many applicants were contacted? Michele Hamilton said 2-3. Elisha will inquire about the applications for the Council to make sure all applicants know they need to reapply.

**Orientation and Mobility.** A parent contacted DVI concerning her visually impaired son who required an accommodation of wearing hood and sunglasses. The parent felt this could be perceived negatively with police. DVI and the parent reached out to the City of Wilmington Police Dept to provided awareness training. Each of the two session were attended by about 30 police officers. Patti Addison said the Police personnel were very receptive. DVI hopes this training will lead to implementation in other PDs and State Police. Lloyd said info was shared as a public service announcement. Jill Fredel did a press release. Patti said it is a good ILS subject. She shared a discussion about first responders. When calling 911, the person calling should inform the responding agency that there a visually impaired or mentally impaired person at the scene before they arrive. It will be helpful to the victims and the responders and safer for both. Lloyd shared that the Developmental Disabilities Coordinator is looking for apps and accessible ways to communicate with visually impaired people. Lloyd reported he suggested applevis.com and to contact DVI.

### Education:

**Presentation.** Feb 21 met with Special Ed Directors; DVI presentation about TVI Role, A.T., and the Academy. Pleased with interest and progress.

**IEP Plus.** Feb 17, DOE training for IEP Plus. IEP Plus is a electronic system to write, update, view, and store special education students' Individual Education Plans. TVIs now have access. Does DVI administration? No. Does Erin Weaver? Yes, as a teacher. Lloyd said administration needs to have access to IEP Plus to verify that TVIs are attending IEP Meetings and students are being served. Elisha said TVIs were not attending because they were not invited to meetings. IEP Plus access resolves this issue. Jillian Queen said TVIs have to sign in at the school for the meetings. TVIs sign the IEP? yes and the IEP notes, which are entered into IEP Plus. Lloyd asked who would have access to this information? Elisha said the TVIs give a report and submit the student's IEP hard copy. Margie asked if meeting attendees are listed? yes. Elisha said TVIs access to IEP Plus is a huge improvement. Lloyd said it was a step forward, but he would like to see a "trust and verify" method.

**Accessible Instructional Materials.** *Men with a Message* Braille Transcription Program is not operational because of the tragedy at the Smyrna Correctional Institution. DVI is working with internal staff to address alternate methods to adapt students' materials. The Memorandum of Understanding with CDS (Center for Disability Services) at the University of Delaware, in the AIM (Accessible Instructional Materials) center, is that still in effect? yes. Has the CDS been affected by the prison event? no, because all requests for materials for VI are sent to DVI. Is there a backlog of materials? Not yet, but it could, if the closure continues. Lloyd said that perhaps the MOU should be reviewed to see how CDS services could be better utilized. The MOU is supposed to be reviewed annually. Adaptation for VI students might be outside the realm of AIM. CDS database and resources available? yes. DVI will purchase books from outside sources, however, new curricula books are mostly not available. The Materials Center had the Vanguard Group volunteer for a day working on large print, binding, and assembled kits for the teachers. DVI's Volunteer of the Month, Ying Chan, works at the Materials Center, entering data into AIM. DVI continues to have independent volunteers each month, Delaware Autism, and NC County Career Center.

**Outreach and Communications.** DVI offered space in *Vital* magazine, formerly 55+. Opportunity to collaborate and to provide information about VI. Lloyd said DSAAPD (Division of Services for Aging and Adults with Physical Disabilities) puts out an excellent resource guide. Opportunity for DVI to work with them? Elisha said it has been discussed. Lloyd asked if Carol Barnett was the contact? yes.

**TVIs.** Certified TVIs? Seven. How many hired TVIs can serve students? All of them can go into the schools; non-certified teachers cannot do assessments or teach braille. On the DEEDS website, are employees listed as "pending" considered certified TVIs? no. They are special education teachers, but not TVIs. How many pending on certification? Six. Are you still recruiting teachers for the visually impaired? Now recruiting any special education teacher with five years experience. Concerns: Lloyd said DVI is hiring teachers with no experience serving visually impaired students. It will take them two years to certify as TVIs if they complete the program. It is not solving the problem. Elisha said there is a National TVI shortage. It is better than no one serving students. Jillian said that if DVI is training experienced special education teachers to become TVIs, it is still a move in the right direction.

**Salaries.** Lloyd feels a increase in salaries would attract qualified applicants with experience working with VI. DOE pay scale offered? yes, however, DVI does not have a district portion of salary. Jillian said that is the problem. Margie asked if teachers make more money working for a school district vs DVI? Elisha said it could be, but she doesn't know. Jillian said yes. How much more? about \$20,000 more which is a big difference. Lloyd said that he heard the Delaware School for the Deaf has its own district. Can DVI do that? Elisha said DSD is part of Christina School District. Elisha will send Lloyd the contact information for the School for the Deaf. If DVI could become part of a school district, then the salaries would be comparable. No incentive for a school district to do that. Margie suggested to approach the joint finance committee. Dava said they are already in discussion about it. Lloyd asked if the principal position is still posted and if the requirements have changed? The Principal position is still posted unchanged for now.

**DIB (Delaware Industries for the Blind).** Elisha reported, regretfully, DIB is approaching the suspension of the operation with the exception of the government contracts, scarves and US Geological Survey uniforms. Decision based on orders and turn away businesses because the resources are not there. Employees are working with the counselors to obtain employment elsewhere. Why resources not there? cash flow issues prevent them meeting responsibilities.

Is the NIB (National Industries for the Blind) status going to be maintained? not discussed with NIB yet. Focused on the suspension. Reapplication of the contract would be required. DVI is unable to make commitment. What will happen with the profits from scarves contract? they will be used to pay DIB's massive debt. Plan documented? yes, transition document. Exit plan? Plan for equipment since not all equipment was purchased with State funds? Surplus Services will be involved. Lloyd would like to be a part of those discussions. Dava will make a note of that. How many VI people work there? Elisha has that information. Employees informed? yes, officially informed a month or two ago. Eligible for unemployment? yes. Are they aware of that? They will be informed. Working with Ability Network of Delaware? yes. Is the janitorial service also suspended? DMS employees have provided janitorial services for DVI for about a year, but the former janitorial service would also be suspended. Employment outcomes? WIOA being affected? Oct 1 – Sept. 30. or July 1 – Sept 30. The program year did change. Elisha believes it is July 1 – end of Sept. Closure numbers? Elisha will send that to Lloyd. Lloyd is concerned about the visually impaired employees having income interruptions without adequate notification. When was DVI aware that DIB was going to be eliminated? Dava said she recommended discontinuation in October, but it was postponed until the new Governor was in office. Employees were aware for one or two months? no, they have known this was probable outcome much longer and DVI counselors have been available to discuss their options with them.

Lloyd sent an invitation to the Secretary. Dava said that the Secretary responded that she would be honored. When? no commitment of a date. Lloyd said we may wish to have this discussion with the Secretary. Ken Rolph asked if anyone has contacted other agencies? BISM? yes BISM wanted \$3 million a year for 3-5 years to assist. The Precisionists, new facility in Delaware, was contacted. KSI (Kent-Sussex Industry)? no discussions with them. Lloyd will send the contact information. Elisha will get back to Lloyd about the Government Support Services and the equipment. Elisha said it is regretful, but everything has been explored. Some DIB VI employees will become DVI employees. Lloyd said that's good. DIB employees placed? DIB had 21 employees. All the employees have been offered employment, but not necessarily close in proximity to where they live. Six have been placed and 14 have not. Within the 14 not placed, five on remaining DIB government contracts. One person was placed at a sister agency. DVI has already three hired employees, one full time and two part-time, and is in the process of hiring two more part-time. Three former employees have expressed no desire to work with DVI.

**BEP.** Follow up on the 16 interested individuals. They are in the process of completing the preliminaries. Wayne Marsh said they won't start until April. Elisha said doing the background check now, math test, etc. Wayne said no, nothing starts until April, and only five people will be selected. Lloyd said the requirements are to be legally blind, Delaware resident, and referred from VR? yes. Elisha and Dava said that they know nothing about the information Wayne shared. Elisha will send Lloyd the schedule plan.

**Delaware Tech.** Update on expansion planned? Profit? \$4000? Dava heard \$7000, but could have been a different month. Moving forward, getting more equipment? yes. Doing a lot of catering. Catering with the Governor. Just saw the first profit, discussion of getting it out on bids. Lloyd said that is an opportunity. It is only a three year contract, so the sooner it is out for bids, the better. Agreed. Lloyd asked Elisha if Del Tech was contacted by any of the other campuses as per our recommendations? not aware of this contact. Lloyd offered to contact Wilmington College? Elisha said they will.

### **End of report**

### **Old Business:**

**BEP** Dava Newnam and Wayne Marsh reporting.

**Expense.** Dava is researching the January 2016 \$8073 BEP expense and will report her findings when it is completed. That money is still owed. Dava will bring it up at the BBC meeting. Lloyd asked if the \$8073 expense matched the P&L report? Dava will check, but \$8073 is the correct figure.

**Smyrna Rest Stop.** Dava Newnam and Wayne Marsh reporting. Still contingent upon agreement with DelDot for their administration building. Vending opportunity started? no. Waiting for the written revised waiver to sign that stipulate that no subsidy will be provided. Lloyd doesn't believe they can offer a subsidy. The Council offered to write a letter? not necessary. DVI wants to move forward, Deldot is holding up action.

**Carvel Cafeteria.** Moving forward? yes, open in the next two weeks. Dealing with inspections now, and will open with a contractor to get the people the services, then put it out for an RFP after the six month contract with contractor. Expenses for the renovation of the facility absorbed by DVI? How are they being recorded? Dava will find out this information. DIB signed contract? yes.

**Accessible Materials.** Posting of accessible materials? DVI plans to provide workshops to educate how to author accessible documents for DVI's site as well as others. It was explained that PDF text documents created in a word processing program, such as MS Word, are usually accessible. However, if the document was saved as a picture, it is not accessible unless software to convert the image to text is used. This software is called optical character recognition or OCR. Lloyd said that some documents are accessible and some are not. Ken Rolph said that his screenreader can read some PDF documents, but not others. However, the Kurzweil program can read all of them. The Kurzweil program implements the conversion using the OCR processing tool. What are the plans to make all documents accessible? DVI is providing the guidance and training for all document authors to make accessible documents as a standard procedure. Follow up in April. Lloyd shared information about the KNFB reader, which has been available on mobile devices, is now available as a computer program for \$20. This program takes a picture of text, convert it, and read it out loud.

**House Resolution** March 14 Doors open 1:30 pm. There will be a vote in the House in Dover to encourage all state departments and agencies to make all information to the public accessible. Vote at 2:00 p.m. Lloyd encouraged anyone to attend to represent visually impaired community.

**End of report.**

**New Business: None.**

**Public Comments:**

**DABA Events.** Larry Byler asked Patti Addison if she were going to put upcoming DABA events. Patti said she is posting events.

**Newsline.** Elisha doesn't know if there is an administrator for Newsline. The former admin moved away. That's NFB sponsored. Lloyd suggested contacting Kat Botner. Jim said that now when you listen to Newsline, it says processing your request. Lloyd asked DVI to check into this to let someone know the problems. The state pays \$20K a year for this service. They need to find out who and what maintenance can be done. Elisha will contact. Elizabeth McBroom said that she came with Deidre Morris. She said she learned a lot and finds it fascinating. Mary Marsh, is Wayne Marsh's mother, said things are very different from when Wayne went to school. Agreed. Jill Morrison said she just started last Monday. She looks forward to working with everyone.

**BlindSight.** Patti Addison said she developed a document with updated BlindSight information. She will distribute it. Volunteer Recording Service for the blind that we still provide.

**DABA (Delaware Assoc. for Blind Athletes) Activities.** As President of DABA there are a lot of activities posted. They are taking care of costs for the Beach House events. Open to the Public.

April 21, 2017 DABA Fundraiser at the Deerfield Country Club. Recognition dinner for volunteers. Please let Patti know if you need the details.

**Outside Resources.** Talking about outreach, Lloyd said he was impressed with mailing that Debbie Tally sent out. Ken Rolph does things with independent resources. Can DVI dedicate a webpage to these outside sources for the blind? Elisha said that DVI would need to manage it. DVI will look into it.

**Adjournment:** Patti Addison made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Ken Rolph. Motion carried. Lloyd Schmitz adjourned the meeting at 12:22 pm.

Respectfully submitted by,

*Jillian H. Queen*

Jillian Queen,  
Council Member