

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

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**February 1, 2019 MEETING MINUTES (Revision)**

**Call to Order** Chair, Lloyd Schmitz welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at the Smyrna Rest Stop, Conference Room, 5500 Dupont Parkway, Smyrna, DE at 10:00 am.

**Roll Call**

**Council Members:** Council Chair Lloyd Schmitz, Patti Addison, Jillian Queen, Deidre Morris, Kat Bottner, Ken Rolph.

**Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) Staff:** Director Elisha Jenkins, Jill Morrison, Michele Hamilton. Wayne Marsh, (BEP); Gary Pizzolo.

**Guests:** Mary Marsh, Rob Keller

**Minutes**

Patti Addison made a motion to accept the December 2018 Council Meeting Minutes, seconded by Deidre Morris. Motion Carried.

Ken Rolph made a motion to accept the January 2019 Council Meeting Minutes, seconded by Jillian Queen. Motion Carried.

**Director's Report – Elisha Jenkins**

**Vocation Rehabilitation (VR).** In January, DVI attended a session presented by DuPont. In discussion to form a collaboration to develop opportunities for visually impaired individuals. Lloyd asked what type of opportunities were available at DuPont. Elisha said there are a lot of opportunities at DuPont. They are in the northern part of the State, but certainly have the potential of expanding.

Lloyd had asked to have the number of people placed in DIB facilities? He received the information that one of the 38 placements went to BISM. However, he wanted to know how many of the placements went to NIB? Elisha will get that information. Successful closures Sept-Dec were not available yet, but Elisha will make sure the Council receives them when they are completed.

**Independent Living.** In January, Melodye May attended Peer Support Group in Wilmington. It was interesting that those who attended were primarily from Kent and Sussex County. The relationship with the Veterans Administration is in development again. That is another objective that we would like to see in 2019 and 2020. Patti Addison shared this is her group and they are planning to expand down into Sussex County. What topics are covered? Peer Support for Vets dealing with vision loss, introducing technology. Requests for topics come from the consumers as well. Patti said she can instruct ILS, but cannot go into the home due to regulations. DVI Independent Living performs these services. Good teamwork. Lloyd asked how often Patti present? Once a month. How often does someone from ILS go with Patti? Just coincidental that Mel was there, but it is scheduled within a referral with Helen Harper. The collaboration is promoted at every meeting. In November 17 Vets attended, 6 wanted to sign up. DVI addressed services for people in DE, but outside DE some were transported by VA. Lloyd said that there was a VA facility in Dover, but he didn't think Patti serviced Kent County? Patti said she has asked and been granted permission to serve Kent. She will be meeting with Sue Barton to coordinate Peer Support meetings in Kent.

Sensitivity Training Sessions have resumed with the New Castle County Police Department. They initiated the contact with DVI for training their cadets. It sounds like they wish to include the training for new cadets.

**Collaboration and Events:** DVI team members competed in WMMR's Birds Box Challenge in which they solicited videos of people trying to catch a football while blindfolded. DVI staff and consumers participated in doing the Philly Special, etc. The video is in the link below. (Staff were blindfolded.) While DVI did not win, WMMR decided that DVI and the Leach School - were runners up! DVI won a \$250 prize which is going to be donated to Camp Abilities – a summer sports camp for children with visual impairments. This was a great opportunity to show the public that people with visual impairments don't let that stop them from participating in activities and enjoying life. <https://wmmr.com/2019/01/11/lets-go-birds-box-challenge-winner/>

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A new partnership has been developed with the Delaware Optometry Association. The Association has begun a program that expands membership beyond eye care professionals. The Division has registered as a partner and will receive exhibitor registration for their annual conference; visibility on the Association's Website; member address labels; Website ads; and online community e-blasts. This will provide an additional spectrum for the Division to showcase their services and reach potential individuals with visual obstacles.

**Workshops.** Still developing a list. Some planned include: Using SurveyMonkey with Jaws, instructions on using Amazon Echo, the overview of a Braille Polaris. The list is combined with technology and independent living. Bi-Monthly events for both programs. Attendance is just not enough for monthly programs yet. The evaluations and requested topics, presentations will be developed. Holiday Baking and paratransit are the exception. Do you have a list for this year? yes. Can you place the list on the website? It is already on the website. When things are finalized, they are immediately put on the website, as well as email and robocall. Do you know when it will be finalized? no. It's still in development. The information will be released as soon as it is finalized, and the information will be shared repeatedly. Newline, too? Yes, as soon as Kat Bottner gets it.

**Education.** There is no compensatory time due for any student. Everyone has received their materials on time and there is no backlog.

**Business Enterprise Program (BEP).** Lloyd asked for a report for BEP. Elisha said there is no information or request that falls under this Advisory Council jurisdiction to share. The Blind Vendors Committee (BVC) brings the BEP information to their meetings and has the overseer capacity on BEP. Lloyd asked about the previously discussed annexed location that was a satellite. Was brought out to the public and advertised? Yes. The public notice was in Jan. 2019 and most recently last Thursday. Was it annexed prior to being announced to the public? Yes, it was on the agenda prior to the meeting. However, because the operator was in the position for over a year and had a priority selection, the operator met the requirements according to the policies to show that they can successfully run that location. From there, it is a Division matter to finalize it. Lloyd said he asked about this location and it was already annexed prior to the public announcement. Lloyd did not feel that this was handled properly. Elisha said they followed the proper protocols and procedures. She invited Lloyd to file a response form if he wished to express his concerns.

Lloyd asked about the new Carvel Building renovations. Elisha said that she has no further response to this Council on the Business Enterprise Program insofar as an advisory capacity jurisdiction. Elisha said that this Council is an advisory Council that should work in collaboration with the Agency. Lloyd asked if DVI is not going to share the information with this Council on the Business Enterprise Program, how are they to stay informed and have questions addressed? That information is shared at the BVC Meetings. Wayne Marsh suggested attending the BVC meetings. Jillian asked if the BVC meetings available through conference call? That is determined by the BVC. They have the capacity if they would like to do that.

Rent was not collected from the Hollaway location? There are clauses in the contract that permit this administratively. Food truck RFPs went out for three locations with option to expand. Did they pay a fee to BEP? Yes. Last year, too? If they were operating, yes. Were the fees in the profit and loss (p/l) statement? Yes, but it depends if that was an unassigned location or not. Also, if there were repayments. If it was collected, as long as there was no clause in the contract for administrative provisions, it was reported. Lloyd doesn't recall seeing income in the p/l. Jillian Queen said, as a suggestion, even if there is an administrative provision, it would good to have it on the p/l report anyway. Wayne said, of course, it would be on the p/l report.

In the DVI audit, a weakness in accounting software was identified? This, too, was discussed at the BVC. Lloyd said that we have not attended the BVC, VRAC, or ILS meetings. This is the Governor's Advisory Council on the Blind (GACB) meeting. Elisha said that there are Councils that exist and have different parameters and responsibilities. She doesn't feel there is collaboration between this Council and the Agency. The type of questioning is not something that the Division is going to participate in. Elisha said this Council is not the overseer of DVI. Jillian said it was presented as such to her. Lloyd said it is. Elisha said it is not, according to the statute. Lloyd suggested we need some clarification and for Elisha to discuss this issue with the Secretary.

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Lloyd asked if anyone started training from the BEP meeting last month? No.

**Staff:** VR Staff vacancies? 2. Education vacancies? 5 Teachers for the Visually Impaired and 2 O&M. A new Technology staff person started last week. This position will travel statewide with referral driven locations.

**Equipment:** Was any technology equipment added? No. Were requests made to the Joint Finance Committee for technology equipment? Not specifically. Requests are made for the Education side whenever the need arises.

**Meetings:** Joint Finance Committee will discuss DVI on February 19 at 12:30 pm. Joint Sunset Committee meeting has not been scheduled yet.

In reference concerning this Council, Elisha read from the statute from Title 29, Section 7913, subsections (a) and (b) and the legislation governing this Council. The portion of the statute is attached.

### **New Business:**

Patti asked about the bylaws and rules of this Council. Patti asked Jill Morrison to read from the FOIA (Freedom of Information Act) "Heading: Voting. Must be open. No secret ballots. Secret are strictly forbidden. Minutes must reflect how each member voted. No voting in executive session, even if the body can enter executive session, all votes must be conducted during open session." Patti challenged the Election for Chairman of the Council held in December 2018. Since it was held by secret ballot, is not valid and the election vote for Chair should be re-taken. Lloyd agreed.

Lloyd Schmitz opened the floor to nominations for the Chair of the Governor's Advisory Council on the Blind. Ken Rolph nominated Patti Addison. Patti Addison accepted the nomination. Deidre Morris nominated Lloyd Schmitz. Lloyd Schmitz accepted the nomination. Members present verbal vote: Lloyd Schmitz voted for Lloyd Schmitz, Deidre Morris voted for Lloyd Schmitz, Jillian Queen voted for Lloyd Schmitz, Ken Rolph voted for Patti Addison, Patti Addison voted for Patti Addison, Kat Bottner voted for Patti Addison. Results: Three votes for Patti Addison; Three votes for Lloyd Schmitz. The election was a tie.

The rules are not clear in the event of a tie. There was a suggestion to postpone the election until next month. Lloyd said he will not be in attendance at the March meeting. Deidre Morris made a motion to table the election to the April Meeting. No Second to the motion. Motion failed.

A suggestion was made to call someone at the State level to inquire as to the procedure when there is a tie.

**Break:** 10 minutes.

After researching, Elisha said that Open meeting rules do not address a tie. Since the issue needs further investigation, Deidre Morris restated her Motion to table the election to the April meeting, Ken Rolph seconded. Motion passed.

### **Public Comments:**

Gary Pizzolo offered to share information with anyone interested in learning more about BEP. Interested individuals can attend a meeting, but there is information on the DVI website, and they can contact him.

Patti said BlindSight had a workshop with Logan Tech out of Connecticut. Most impressive was an electronic braille labeler. The owner of the company came down. He has a child that is non-verbal due to a brain injury. He was very down to earth and sensitive. There was also a Braille Coach teaching device. Everything was well presented and described.

DE Assistive Tech Initiative and School for the Blind. Matt Tseronis and DVI tech staff attended an event and spoke with the Logan Tech staff. Many individuals were in attendance.

Life Conference was yesterday. Great attendance. Events are already scheduled in each county.

**Future events:** Friday Oct 4 sit down dinner for 45th anniversary of DABA. Look forward to celebrating this. Patti will have ticket information and attire closer to the event. Nov 1 is the Disability Ball.

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Rob Keller said a fundraiser is being planned to honor his father.

**Motion to Adjourn:** Ken Rolph made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Jillian Queen. Motion carried. Lloyd Schmitz adjourned the meeting at 11:22 am.

Respectfully Submitted By,  
Jillian Queen, Council Member

**§ 7913 Council on the Blind.**

- (a) There is established the Council on the Blind.
- (b) The Council on the Blind shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Administrator of the Division for the Visually Impaired and shall consider matters relating to the general supervision and control of the education, training and welfare of persons who are blind residing in the State. The Council shall also consider such other matters as may be referred to it by the Governor, the Secretary of the Department or the Administrator of the Division for the Visually Impaired. The Council may study, research, plan and advise the Administrator, Secretary and Governor on matters it deems appropriate to enable the Division to function in the best possible manner.
- (c) The Council on the Blind shall be composed of 7 members who shall be appointed for 3-year terms by the Governor.
- (d) At least 3, but no more than 4, members of the Council shall be affiliated with 1 of the major political parties and at least 2, but no more than 3, of the newly appointed members shall be affiliated with the other major political party; provided, however, there shall be no more than a bare majority representation of 1 major political party over the other major political party. Any person who declines to announce such person's political affiliation shall also be eligible for appointment as a member of the Council.
- (e) Members of the Council shall serve without compensation, except that they may be reimbursed for reasonable and necessary expenses incident to their duties as members of the Council.
- (f) A Chairperson of the Council shall be chosen by the members of the Council from among its members and shall serve in that capacity for a term of 1 year and shall be eligible for reelection.
- (g) Any replacement appointment to the Council to fill a vacancy prior to the expiration of a term shall be filled for the remainder of the term.

29 Del. C. 1953, § 7913; 57 Del. Laws, c. 301, § 1; 57 Del. Laws, c. 591, § 66; 61 Del. Laws, c. 329, § 2; 70 Del. Laws, c. 186, § 1; 78 Del. Laws, c. 179, § 317.;