

COUNCIL ON THE BLIND (COB)

Meeting Minutes February 7, 2020

Welcome & Call to Order: Council Chair Jillian Queen welcomed everyone to the Meeting at the Smyrna Rest Stop Conference Room, located at 5500 Dupont Parkway, Smyrna, Delaware, and called the meeting to order on February 7, 2020 at 10:25 am.

Roll Call: Council: Chair Jillian Queen, Lloyd Schmitz, Kat Bottner, Ken Rolph
Absent: Patti Addison, Pat Carzo, Deidre Morris
Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI): Michele Hamilton, Jamie Towns, and
(on remote conference call) Sandra Miller and Jill Morrison.
Members of the Public: Wayne Marsh (BEP), Mary Marsh, Robert Keller.

Minutes: A motion was made by Ken Rolph and seconded by Lloyd Schmitz to approve the December 2019 Meeting minutes of the Council on the Blind. Motion passed.

MicroMarket Tour & Discussion in January 2020. Jillian said, although a quorum was not recognized at the January 2020 meeting, Council members received information and went on a tour of the MicroMarket at DelDot. There was a good discussion after the tour with some observations and suggestions worth reviewing.

Thanks go to Todd Webb, ADA Coordinator, for the information and the tour of the MicroMarket. Suggestions: Terminal accessibility, Speech output, Braille labels, Audio alert, handles on the doors, Large print and braille instructions on the cabinet, Height of the terminal for people in a wheelchair.
Lloyd asked if there was any movement on the suggestions? Jamie Towns reported that everything has come together. Braille labels should be in place for everything at the point-of-sale terminals on both sides of the room set up shortly. Still working on getting some type of audio alert system so that when someone walks into the area, it will say "Welcome to the MicroMarket. If you need assistance, please press the button located to your left." The update did not include speech output of the terminal nor the handles for the product doors.

Further suggestions: Phone app for terminal access, bar codes on the products doors, or 30 second recorders. Lloyd said to keep in mind that the majority of legally blind people have some vision and can use large print.

Jamie Towns made a list to research the suggestions and what technology exists. Todd is going to keep the conversation going as it is going to be a work in progress. Aiming to make the MicroMarket the model of accessibility for other MicroMarkets, but it is a work in progress. The goal is to meet the needs.

Lloyd shared kiosk accessibility requirements will become mandatory according to an email from OMB and DTI. He had forwarded an email of this information to everyone on the Council and DVI. Sandi said that the parties are committed to working toward accessibility.

Director's Report - Sandi Miller reporting

Independent Living Skills: December, DVI VR staff attended the 2019 Association of Vision Rehabilitation Therapists Conference in Jacksonville, Florida. Learning new topics in the field of blindness and low vision as well as network with other professionals. Sessions included a presentation on one touch self-defense, which Independent Living Service intends to offer as a workshop in 2020. They also learned about the free BrailleBlaster tool that provides high-quality braille material. Jillian shared that BrailleBlaster is a little challenging for non-tech individuals, but it has a lot of features, does Nemeth translation well, and is a completely free braille translation program. She noted that if there is a glitch in the program, there's communication methods within the program and the developers respond to the issues very quickly. She said she uses Braille2000 more only because she is more familiar with it. Good to have options and we can get some additional information and certainly look into that.

Updated: Referrals: Reporting period 10/1/19 to current - Independent Living 48, Elderly 130.

Project to assess the accessibility of the ASSIST website. This is a State of Delaware website with a single access point that allows individuals and community-based organizations access to screen and apply for a broad range of social service programs. (i.e., long term care, health care coverage, cash assistance, LIHEAP, etc.) The staff found the website difficult. The new website was scheduled to be up and running by the end of January 2020 and the assignment was given in

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December 2019. Sandi feels it was very good to have been involved in that project. Working with the State staff to explain how accessibility works. Trying to get the message across the importance of DVI being involved in these projects earlier, before they go live.

New Position: Training Center Unit has a new position entitled Education AT Trainer. The position will support students, TVIs and LEAs with technology needs. Lloyd asked what the criteria for the position will be. Sandi said that the limitations of the position descriptions prevents asking for specific qualifications, but that the experience work with visually impaired and specific-blindness related technology knowledge will be sought in the interview. Discussion: Applicants applying will not be qualified. Also, the applicants will not be aware or prepared in these specialized areas. Council seemed to think there may be better, more efficient hiring methods. Jillian suggested a “preferred” qualifications list. Council made a request to get the jobs list with their descriptions for review. Sandi agreed with the comments, but in this particular case, she feels that the applicant is well qualified. Job offered? Yes. She will get the start date as soon as it is available.

Vocational Rehabilitation (with updates.) Current caseload 201, Individuals Ready to Work 37, Transition Aged Students 14-21 years 79, Education and Training 40, with six Successful Closures FY 2020. VR District Administrator retired. A position will be posted by next week.

Education (with updates). There is no compensatory time nor overtime due to either the Education or Orientation and Mobility Units. Updated: Reporting Period 7/1 to current - Education 33, Orientation & Mobility 77. Staff Updates: Four TVIs are currently in a program: three TVIs are expected to complete their program by December 2020 and one is expected to be done in August of 2021. Sandi said that there are 4 more teachers starting the TVI certification process. Vacancies? Tuition reimbursement still in place? Yes. Time frame limitation to complete certification? Sandi will check on that information. Jillian said that DOE has a two year limitation for school districts. Sandi will find out. MOU: Lloyd suggested that there could be a review of the MOU. That is being discussed. Are you going to reach out to the people who were working on that MOU? It is important that it is not completed without this discussion. It is not at that point, but yes.

Upcoming Staff Training. Moving training center to another office and under construction. Hoping to get a plan in the next few months and Sandi will share when that is completed.

DVI’s portion of the state plan is out for public comment. It is on our website and comments can be provided by emailing infoDVI@delaware.gov or calling 255-9800.

RSA on-site monitoring is scheduled for May, 2020. DVI has submitted the requested documents and is waiting for the schedule of the prep calls.

Upcoming Meetings

2/10 Services to Consumer Sub-committee presentation 9:00 am.

2/20 Sunset recommendations meeting 12:00 pm.

2/25 JFC presentation 1:00 pm

End of Director’s Report.

Election of Council on the Blind Chair: Jillian opened the floor to nominations for Chair. Jillian Queen said that she is still interested in continuing as Chair, and nominated herself, seconded by Lloyd Schmitz. No one else was nominated and the floor was closed. Vote was unanimous in favor of Jillian continuing as Chair. Motion carried.

Additional Comments and Public Comments: Sandi Miller said that Jamie shared that the VR District Administrator position will open tomorrow and close Feb 14. Qualifications CRC counselor required? No, but our counselors should have that. After the Council has reviewed the positions and criteria lists, we can get together to discuss preferred requirements for the positions and wording in the postings.

Adjournment: Ken Rolph made a motion to adjourn, Kat Bottner seconded. Motion carried. Jillian Queen adjourned the meeting at 11:24 am.

Respectfully submitted by,
Jillian Queen