# Minnesota Statewide Independent Living Council Minutes

July 9, 2025 4:00 to 5:30 p.m.

Public Forum July 9, 2025 7:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Access North, 1309 East 40th Street, Hibbing, MN 55746 and Virtually by Zoom

**Call to Order:** Chairman Robyn Block called the meeting to orderat 4:15 p.m. with a quorum present.

**Present:** Bethany Schwerr, Brian Valantii, Deborah Gleason, Frances Lane, Jacob Knaffla, Kelly Lemke, KiloMarie Granda, Linda Lingen, Monique Doward, Rand Stenhjem, Robyn Block, Stephen Larson,

**Absent:** Jennifer Clement, Morris Thompson, April Smith **Excused:** Jacob Schuller, Joe Dailey

**Ex Officio Member Present:** Amy McClellan **Ex Officio Member Absent:** Michelle Severson **Ex Officio Excused:** Meghan Hanson

**Guests:** Staff and board members from Access North: Don Brunette, Johnn Riocks, Sue Sunvold, Katelyn Thompson

Brittany Pope, Amber Hipman, Shawn Corban, Kiri Basore. Other guests: Lee Francisco and Janine Mcmurlyn

**Approve Agenda** – A motion was made by Stephen Larson, seconded by Linda Lingen to approve the agenda for July 9, 2025 as presented. The motion passed. Frances Lane abstained from voting.

**Approve Minutes, May 8, 2025** – A motion was made by Stephen Larson, seconded by Monique Doward to approve the minutes from the May 8, 2025 council meeting. The motion passed. Brian Valendini and Frances Lane abstained.

**MCD Update** – There was no update.

**SSB Update** – Amy McClellan reported that SSB is working on a new budget. SSB hired a couple of people for the DEI project. For any SSB customers who use the Alexa device for the radio talking book, the new upgrade to Alexa does not include the capacity for it to connect. SSB is working with the company to correct the issue.

**SRC – G –** Deborah Gleason reported that VRS is working with in budget changes and restrictions. They are only serving people with a level 1 application and that may be at risk. The SRC – G is creating a new committee structure and revising the Bylaws.

**SRC – B –** Kelly Lemkereported on “white cane days” coming up this fall. The DNR (Department of Natural Resources) talked to the council about funds they have available to help people experiencing blindness more involved in the community. There was a guest speaker talking about the Navi Lens, an orientation and mobility app.

**DEED/VRS** – Robyn Block read notes drafted by Jo Erbes from meeting with Linda Lingen, Deborah Gleason, Brad Westerberg, and Meghan Hanson to layout the process for the Request for Proposal (RFP) for the study on underserved and unserved people. This RFP is the process needed to advertise the study not completed in 2024-2025. The RFP will need to be posted for 21 days. MNSILC will share the recommendations with the council, presumably by the September 11th. There is $70,000 available for the project from last year. The panel to review the responses are Randy Sorenson, Bonnie Danberry, Linda Lingen, Deborah Gleason and Meghan Hanson. Estimated start date would be October 1st or after the date of approval and notification. We presume it got presented to DEED Fiscal, but we don’t know that for sure. No update from DEED.

**Participation in events**: MNSILC is seeking volunteers from Options to staff the MCD booth at the Polk County Fair – July 10 to 13. KiloMarie Granda will be attending the Kandiyohi County Fair – August 6 to 8 in the MCD booth. Jo Erbes will staff the SWCIL booth at the Lyon County Fair on August 14 – 15, Volunteers at the MCD booth at the state fair will be Rand Stenhjem, Monique Doward, Bethany Schwerr, Brian Valentini and Jo Erbes. Robyn Block will ask SMILES about the Blue Earth County Fair. Jacob Knaffla will ask about the St Louis County Fair. Monique Doward will be making a presentation to staff at Fond du Lac. Bethany Schwerr offered to display MNSILC materials at the St Louis County Social Services event in October.

**Committee Reports –**

**Advocacy Committee –** New position papers for 2025 are about transportation and employment. Linda Lingen made a motion seconded by Monique Doward to approve the 2025 position papers about transportation and employment as presented. The motion passed unanimously. One of the topics of discussion at the Advocacy Committee meeting was that UCare has ceased operations in the Arrowhead area which means dropping 88,000 clients from their health care program, which could have a cascading effect on other health care providers. Deborah Gleason brought up the topic of reaching out to the SILC and CILs in Kerr County Texas and offer moral support after the disastrous flood.

**Finance Committee** – Stephen Larson noted that the Finance Committee is being very mindful about expenses. He noted that we should be engaged with the centers and attend a council meeting at a center at least once a year. It’s an opportunity to meet the staff and learn about what they do.

**Outreach Committee –** They are working on a tag line to be added to printed material to eliminate the perception that CILs are residential facilities.

**Next Meeting** – September 11, 2025 at State Services for the Blind, 2200 West University Ave, St Paul MN from 9:00 to 2:30 p.m.

**Adjourn** - The meeting adjourned by consensus at 5:05 p.m. to reconvene in a public hearing at 7:00 p.m.

**Submitted by Linda Lingen, Secretary**

**Recorded by Jo Erbes, Coordinator**

mnsilc/meetings/minutes/2025