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7 STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND

8 BIMONTHLY MEETING

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14 2200 University Avenue

15

St. Paul, Minnesota

16

Thursday, August 3, 2023

17

5:40 p.m.

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1 APPEARANCES:

2 REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND SSB STAFF

3 Corbb O'Connor, Chairperson Dave Andrews

4 Frank Eller Jennifer Beilke

5 Samantha Flax Jon Benson

6 Ryan Haenze Joe Niffen

7 Tom Heini Alana Strickler

8 Michael O'Day

9 Judy Sanders

10 Ryan Strunk

11 Kyle Van Acker

12

13 ALSO PRESENT:

14 Natasha Jerde, Director of SSB

15 Susan Kusz, State Program Administrator

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21 Whereupon, the following proceedings

22 were duly had and entered of record, to-wit:

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1 MR. O'CONNOR: Well, good evening
2 everyone. Welcome to our State Rehab Council for
3 the Blind meeting for the month of August. I'm
4 Corbb O'Connor and we will call this meeting to
5 order. We are going to go a little bit out of
6 order according to one of the agendas that was
7 distributed and that is to start with the public
8 hearing portion of the meeting, particularly around
9 the ending of the Order of Selection. And for a
10 brief intro I will give it to Natasha.

11 MS. JERDE: Thanks, Corbb. This is
12 Natasha Jerde. We are going to use about five
13 minutes to host a very formal, I say in quotes,

14 public hearing on our proposal to end Order of
15 Selection. We have been on Order of Selection
16 since approximately September of 2015, we have been
17 off of having any waiting list since September of
18 2019 and we have the resources, both money and
19 staff, to no longer necessitate the use of Order of
20 Selection.

21 So with that I will open the floor for
22 any comments, concerns or feedback related to us
23 proposing the end of Order of Selection.

24 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy Sanders.

25 MR. O'CONNOR: Judy, if you will flip

1 a switch on your microphone.

2 MS. SANDERS: Hello. Oh, look at

3 that. I want to say that I think we should call

4 the dessert we had tonight for dinner a celebration

5 cake in honor of the elimination of Order of

6 Selection. And do we need to make a -- is that

7 just a thing you are doing or are we -- do we have

8 to vote on that? We don't vote on that, do we?

9 MR. O'CONNOR: We do not vote on it,

10 we are just taking public comment.

11 MS. SANDERS: Okay. Well, my public

12 comment says that's it's the best thing that's

13 happened in a long time.

14 MR. JACOBSON: Mr. Chair, Steve

15 Jacobson.

16 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, Steve.

17 MR. JACOBSON: I just wanted to add as

18 the president of the NFB of Minnesota my

19 congratulations and thanks for getting us to the

20 point where we can put an end to Order of

21 Selection. This is a good thing, thank you.

22 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Steve. Is

23 there further comment?

24 MS. JERDE: Rocky has his hand up.

25 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, Rocky.

1 (No response.)

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Rocky, we are not

3 hearing you yet.

4 While we are waiting on Rocky are

5 there others with virtually raised hands?

6 MS. JERDE: Nothing right now.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. This will be the

8 most exciting portion of the meeting, but we will

9 leave it open for maybe three minutes more just so

10 that if others are running late and they wish to

11 make comments they can do so.

12 MS. SANDERS: They won't know what we

13 are commenting on.

14 MR. O'CONNOR: And the Zoom people
15 won't hear you if you don't unmute or do your mike
16 there, Judy.

17 MR. ELLER: This is Frank Eller.

18 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, Frank.

19 MR. ELLER: Excuse my ignorance, what
20 is Order of Selection?

21 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha, good
22 question. Order of Selection is a way to
23 prioritize who we provide services to. So if you
24 are -- if you don't have the funds to serve
25 everyone or you don't have the staff to serve

1 everyone you then prioritize those with the most
2 significant of disabilities first and everyone else
3 remains on a waiting list until such funds or staff
4 become available and then you can start taking
5 people off that waiting list.

6 Not that you asked this, but
7 Vocational Rehabilitation Services, our sister
8 agency, has been on Order of Selection since the
9 '90s. They will actually be ending their Order of
10 Selection as well, probably within this year too,
11 which is pretty incredible.

12 MR. ELLER: Thank you, Madam Director,
13 that is awesome.

14 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer. It may

15 be helpful to --

16 MR. O'CONNOR: Can you get closer to a

17 mike, Jennifer?

18 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer. It may

19 be helpful to explain that an agency can be on

20 Order of Selection but have the categories, you

21 know, they may have all categories closed and not

22 be able to take any new customers or they may have,

23 you know, one category open meaning they can take

24 the most significant disabilities or they may have

25 all categories open which is where SSB was at.

1 We were on Order of Selection but we
2 had all categories open, you know, that's where we
3 were at. And now we are just doing away with
4 having to be on Order of Selection at all, the need
5 to have to prioritize, so. Thank you.

6 MR. ELLER: Thank you, Jennifer.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: Rocky, did you wish to
8 make a comment, we haven't heard you yet?

9 MS. JERDE: He went off mute but then
10 he muted himself. There he is.

11 MR. HART: Can he hear me now?

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Hi Rocky, we can hear
13 you.

14 MR. HART: All right. Wonderful,
15 wonderful, thank you very much.

16 Well, this is Rocky. I just want to
17 congratulate State Services for taking a step and I
18 think, you know, as a client myself as someone who
19 has other disabilities in addition to Blindness I
20 think it's very important that SSB give priority to
21 anyone who qualifies for services. And, you know,
22 I think this along with the \$4 million
23 appropriation that SSB received really leads me to
24 believe that our Vocational Rehab agency in the
25 State of Minnesota is prioritizing the needs of

1 Blind people and that is a huge step forward for
2 our agency, so congratulations.

3 MS. JERDE: Thanks, Rocky.

4 Are you ready to gavel us, Chair?

5 MR. O'CONNOR: I was just about to say

6 I think we can probably call that good so we can

7 call the public hearing portion of this meeting to

8 a close. I have been told that I am to gavel us,

9 (knock), there.

10 Any comments you want to make before

11 we move onto the rest of our meeting?

12 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. This is

13 more procedural so you know what's going to happen

14 next.

15 I will be reaching out to the

16 Rehabilitation Services Administration, our federal

17 partner, to have them open up the WIOA State Plan,

18 our portion. I go in and I delete the Order of

19 Selection section and put we not doing this anymore

20 and it's so official. And then I send it on up and

21 then they approve it and it is done.

22 And then we are probably going to have

23 a press release because our Commissioner's office

24 is pretty excited about it. The RSA staff that

25 support us are extremely excited about it and this

1 will ultimately be reported to Congress as well.

2 And that is all.

3 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you very much,
4 Natasha. Then we will then move to the rest of our
5 Council meeting for the evening. I would like to
6 start by introducing the Council members, we'll
7 then move to SSB staff and then to members of the
8 public. We will ask if you would unmute and share
9 your name and affiliation, but we'll start with the
10 Council roll call and we'll start with Frank Eller.

11 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, here.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Samantha Flax.

13 MS. FLAX: Here.

14 MR. O'CONNOR: Ryan Haenze.

15 MR. HAENZE: Here.

16 MR. O'CONNOR: Ryan Haenze is here,

17 hello.

18 Tom Heidl.

19 MR. HEINL: Here.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: Rob Hobson.

21 (No response.)

22 MR. O'CONNOR: Come back to Rob.

23 Catalina Martinez.

24 (No response.)

25 MR. O'CONNOR: Michael O'Day.

1 MR. O'DAY: Here.

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Kristin Oien has moved.

3 Jennifer Points.

4 (No response.)

5 MR. O'CONNOR: Judy Sanders.

6 MS. SANDERS: Here.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: Ryan Strunk.

8 MR. STRUNK: Here.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: Trevor Turner.

10 (No response.)

11 MR. O'CONNOR: And Kyle Van Akre.

12 MR. VAN ACKER: Kyle Van Acker, here.

13 MR. O'CONNOR: I believe we've made it

14 to a quorum. Corbb O'Connor, here.

15 We will move next to our SSB staff

16 members in the room.

17 MS. JERDE: Natasha Jerde.

18 MS. BEILKE: Jennifer Beilke.

19 MR. O'CONNOR: Jennifer Beilke.

20 MR. ANDREWS: Dave Andrews.

21 MR. O'CONNOR: Dave Andrews in the

22 back.

23 MR. ANDREWS: And Joe Niffen is here

24 too.

25 MR. O'CONNOR: And Joe Niffen is here.

1 And staff members on Zoom.

2 MS. JERDE: Jon, you went off mute but

3 we can't hear you.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: We see Jon Benson

5 online.

6 MR. BENSON: Hi. How about now, can

7 you hear me?

8 MR. O'CONNOR: We hear you now.

9 And who else?

10 MS. JERDE: And Alana.

11 MR. O'CONNOR: And Alana, are you --

12 we see Alana online.

13 MS. STRICKLER: Alana Strickler.

14 MR. O'CONNOR: Hello, excellent.

15 MS. STRICKLER: Hi.

16 MR. O'CONNOR: We'll go next to

17 members of the public that are in the room.

18 MS. DUNNAM: Jennifer Dunnam.

19 MR. O'CONNOR: Jennifer Dunnam.

20 MR. JACOBSON: Steve Jacobson.

21 MR. O'CONNOR: Steve Jacobson.

22 And we'll go next to members of the

23 public who are online.

24 MS. GFROERER: Theresa Gfroerer.

25 MR. HART: Rocky Hart.

1 MS. O'CONNOR: Brylie O'Connor.

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Rocky Hart, Brylie

3 O'Connor, gotcha.

4 MS. GFROERER: And did you get Theresa

5 Gfroerer?

6 MR. O'CONNOR: And I heard Theresa,

7 yes. Thank you.

8 MS. GFROERER: Okay.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: And Sue Fager, hello.

10 Who else? Okay, I believe that's everyone. If we

11 missed anyone, let's speak up now.

12 MS. SANDERS: What about our court

13 reporter?

14 COURT REPORTER: Kim Evavold, court

15 reporter.

16 MR. O'CONNOR: Hello Kim Evavold our

17 court reporter.

18 We'll move, then, to the approval of

19 minutes from our June 1, 2023 meeting. Is there a

20 motion to approve those minutes?

21 MS. SANDERS: Judy Sanders, so move.

22 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, second.

23 MR. O'CONNOR: Moved and seconded. Is

24 there any discussion of the distributed minutes

25 from the June 1 meeting?

1 (No response.)

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Hearing none, I will

3 move to a roll call vote.

4 Frank Eller.

5 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

6 MR. O'CONNOR: If you will eat the

7 mike we will hear you a little better. Frank Eller

8 says yes.

9 Samantha Fox.

10 MS. FLAX: Yes.

11 MR. O'CONNOR: Ryan Haenze?

12 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.

13 MR. O'CONNOR: Tom Heinl.

14 MR. HEINL: Yes.

15 MR. O'CONNOR: Rob Hobson.

16 (No response.)

17 MR. O'CONNOR: Catalina Martinez.

18 (No response.)

19 MR. O'CONNOR: Michael O'Day.

20 MR. O'DAY: Yes.

21 MR. O'CONNOR: Jennifer Points.

22 (No response.)

23 MR. O'CONNOR: Judy Sanders.

24 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

25 MS. RYAN: Ryan Strunk.

1 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, yes.

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Trevor Turner.

3 (No response.)

4 MR. O'CONNOR: And Kyle Van Acker.

5 MR. VAN ACKER: Kyle Van Acker, yes.

6 MR. O'CONNOR: Excellent. So of those
7 voting we are unanimous, thank you very much.

8 We will again do these next couple of

9 items out of order for no particular reason. For

10 those who have chaired a committee this year and by

11 year I mean this past September through August, you

12 have a few more weeks in your role as chairperson

13 which means a few more weeks to write your sections

14 of the Council's Annual Report which I need by
15 October 14, mid October. This is the portion of
16 what has your committee been doing in the last
17 year, what have your strengths been, what are the
18 great things we can say about the work that you
19 have done.

20 If you need some samples of prior
21 years' reports or some coaching or advice, whatnot,
22 let me know, happy to send those to you. I would
23 love to get those asks before October 13 if you
24 would kindly send those along, as for our outgoing
25 chairpersons.

1 Has Susan stepped back into the room

2 yet?

3 MS. JERDE: She has not.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. So we will come

5 back to her portion.

6 Let's talk about the upcoming fall

7 conferences. So this is the CSAVR and NCSAB

8 conference, which is the National Coalition of

9 State Agencies for the Blind -- Council, I always

10 get it wrong, National Council of State Agencies

11 for the Blind and then a sister conference for the

12 broader Voc Rehab audience. So this is going to be

13 happening in Savannah, Georgia and it is our time

14 to appoint those who would like to attend the
15 National Coalition (sic) of State Rehabilitation
16 Councils, NCSRC will be meeting on October 28 and
17 then skip a day, Sunday, and we go to Monday when
18 the CSAVR portion kicks off, goes through
19 November 1, and then Wednesday afternoon through
20 Friday would be the more Blindness focused portion
21 of that conference.

22 So for those who wish to attend what I
23 would like to do is find out if there is anybody
24 who is confirmed yes, absolutely, want to go to
25 some or all of that conference, we can work out

1 those specifics later. And are there those who are
2 tentatively interested in going so that we can get
3 that formally appointed and then we can work
4 through the budgeting and expensing process.

5 So I will open it up right now to
6 councilmembers, anybody who wishes to attend all or
7 a portion of that conference?

8 MS. SANDERS: Someone's got to go.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: Judy says somebody has
10 to go. I will throw my hat in the ring as a maybe,
11 this is Corbb, are there others? Beautiful time to
12 be in Savannah, Georgia.

13 MS. FLAX: Samantha Flax, maybe.

14 MR. O'CONNOR: Samantha is a maybe,

15 excellent. Any other brave individuals?

16 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. I guess

17 maybe, I would be at the bottom of the list though

18 because I've done it. It's been a lot of years,

19 but I used to do it a lot, so if there is someone

20 else who wants to.

21 MR. STRUNK: This is Ryan Strunk, I

22 would also go as a maybe. And I want to emphasize

23 that maybe. I know in April when I was supposed to

24 go I had to pull back because of work and yet my

25 registration had already been paid for, even though

1 I was a maybe. So I want to make sure that that
2 maybe is very much understood so that I can make
3 sure all my ducks are in a row with work.

4 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. All our
5 maybes we shouldn't register until we turn it into
6 a yes.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, this is Corbb,
8 thank you very much. And Ryan, while you are off
9 mute a question for you before I go too far rogue
10 on this thought. From a budget perspective there
11 is plenty of funding available to send quite a
12 large number of us should everyone wish to attend
13 for the whole conference, if I remember correctly,

14 and we will get to your budget report later on, but

15 I wanted to make sure that is correct?

16 MR. STRUNK: Let me pull up the exact

17 number for you here so that I can tell you exactly

18 what we are looking at. But there is a fair amount

19 available, yes. So out of state travel expense we

20 are proposing \$5,000 for that, out of state hotels

21 another 4,500, so that's plenty.

22 MR. O'CONNOR: And that's the budget,

23 just to be clear, that covers through this fiscal

24 year?

25 MR. STRUNK: That's travel expense out

1 of state which is mileage, food, airfare, et

2 cetera, that's 5,000. And then the out of state

3 hotel/living expense is another 4,500.

4 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy, how many

5 days?

6 MR. O'CONNOR: Yeah, that's super

7 helpful. Generally if you go the whole week we

8 could pretty much account for a grand in hotel and

9 about 500ish in airfare and 500ish in registration.

10 MS. SANDERS: Well, this is Judy, if I

11 do it I would only be interested in the NCSAB part.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: No problem.

13 So we've got four maybes. I heard

14 Judy, Samantha, Corbb and Ryan as maybes but not to

15 book registrations yet. Anybody else looking to

16 attend as a maybe or as a confirmed for that

17 conference?

18 (No response.)

19 MR. O'CONNOR: Do I hear a motion to

20 approve those four maybe participants should they

21 choose to confirm their attendance with the chair

22 and with our staff liaison, this motion would be

23 for this Council to fund their participation. Is

24 there such a motion?

25 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller motions.

1 MS. FLAX: So moved.

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Frank moves, Samantha

3 seconds. Thank you.

4 Is there any further discussion?

5 (No response.)

6 MR. O'CONNOR: We will vote then.

7 Frank Eller.

8 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: Samantha Flax.

10 MS. FLAX: Samantha Flax, yes.

11 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.

12 MR. HEINL: Tom Heintl, yes.

13 MR. O'CONNOR: Rob Hobson.

- 14 (No response.)
- 15 MR. O'CONNOR: Catalina Martinez.
- 16 (No response.)
- 17 MR. O'CONNOR: Michael O'Day.
- 18 MR. O'DAY: Yes.
- 19 MR. O'CONNOR: Passing Kristin Oien.
- 20 Jennifer Points.
- 21 (No response.)
- 22 MR. O'CONNOR: Judy.
- 23 MS. SANDERS: Judy Sanders, yes.
- 24 MR. O'CONNOR: Ryan Strunk.
- 25 MR. STRUNK: Strunk Ryan, yes.

1 MR. O'CONNOR: Trevor Turner and Kyle

2 Van Acker.

3 MR. VAN ACKER: Kyle Van Acker, yes.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Excellent. And those

5 voting we are unanimous again.

6 Seeing that Susan has stepped back

7 into the room, I believe --

8 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Point of Order.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, sir.

10 UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: I don't think

11 we got your vote on that last motion, Corbb.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you very much. I

13 will vote yes. Thank you.

14 I think that Susan is in front of a
15 microphone, there are two points that we wanted to
16 raise to the Council's awareness related to
17 expenses and reimbursements portion of the web page
18 and on the pre-meeting dinners, Susan.

19 MS. KUSZ: Good evening and thank you,
20 this is Susan. First of all, tonight's dinner was
21 provided by Confidence to Create and this was a new
22 caterer that we used. They actually gave us a
23 thank you card and the card reads: Dear State
24 Services for the Blind, We appreciate you and we
25 hope that you enjoyed this meal. For future

1 catering needs, they left their phone number. They
2 said Confidence to Create, bridging the gap, it
3 takes a village. So I just thought we would share
4 that with you guys, I thought that was nice.

5 Second update from me as the staff
6 liaison. I took some time to update the web page
7 on expenses and the new member orientation area of
8 the State Rehab Council web page. I updated the
9 amounts for meals and also there were some
10 documents that got linked. I kind of revamped a
11 lot of things that were on there, so you may want
12 to refamiliarize yourself with that page.

13 There are things that prior to this

14 time they were telling us, they meaning fiscal,
15 they were telling us that we needed to provide
16 receipts for travel, Judy knows about this, because
17 they were arguing with us that Judy had to provide
18 receipts for her Uber and so they weren't going to
19 reimburse her. And then the next thing I know they
20 said no, you don't need receipts for the Uber. And
21 so we kind of went round and round.

22 So I just think that it's a good idea
23 if people review the updates that I made and make
24 sure that it makes sense and that's about all,
25 Mr. Chair.

1 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Susan. And

2 I think there was some request in there as well

3 that if folks have desires for the dinners to

4 please contact you with those suggestions.

5 MS. KUSZ: Yeah. So the other piece

6 of the dinner thing was Natasha and I were talking

7 and we did make mention of this here and I do

8 apologize. If people are going to be here in

9 person, one of the things that after we kind of had

10 a fiasco last time where the caterer didn't show up

11 on time and so Natasha and I have been talking and

12 we would like to support small, minority businesses

13 that are local.

14 And so we've been kind of kicking
15 around like, you know, ideas of who or where around
16 here. So if the Council has suggestions for
17 caterers that we might be able to use we would love
18 to hear from councilmembers or even audience,
19 public, that come on a regular basis or even not so
20 regular, right. Because we just want to, you know,
21 support small businesses. And so, you know, we are
22 here to serve you and so please, feel free to reach
23 out to me and let me know. Thanks.

24 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Susan.

25 Any questions or comments? Judy.

1 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. Yes, the
2 meal we had tonight was excellent and I guess it
3 meets the criteria for a minority owned small
4 business and so, you know, unless other people have
5 other ideas that accomplish the same thing, I think
6 we ought to let this business do it. Unless
7 there's a reason not to that I don't know.

8 MS. KUSZ: Thanks for the input. I
9 will pass that along to them and then if you had
10 menu suggestions, because what they told me was
11 their menu is open and so if there was like an
12 ethnic meal that you would like to try, you know,
13 like we were talking in the cafeteria, Judy liked

14 kale or something else, healthy foods, I'm sure

15 that they would love to serve us again.

16 MR. O'CONNOR: Wonderful. Any other

17 questions for Susan? And would ask if there is

18 feedback on the food we can absolutely send that

19 via email.

20 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller. Just a thank

21 you to Susan. I think we got a ball game, that

22 catering was good, that food was good.

23 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Frank.

24 Okay. Hearing none other we will move

25 next to the appointment of committees whose terms

1 start on September 1 of 2023 ending August 31 of
2 2024. I have a proposed list here and would
3 welcome y'all's feedback. What we did last year was
4 do this as one big motion, so I can read each of
5 the proposed committees and I will pause for a
6 moment after each one if you have comments,
7 feedback, suggestions I will take those at that
8 time for each committee. And then we will seek a
9 motion at the end to appoint all of the committees.

10 MS. KUSZ: Mr. Chair, one quick
11 question, this is Susan. Will you then pass that
12 list onto me after the meeting?

13 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, ma'am.

14 MS. KUSZ: Thank you.

15 MR. O'CONNOR: So for our

16 Communication Center Advisory Committee the

17 proposed Chairperson is Steve Jacobson, with

18 Catherine Durivage, Ryan Strunk, Rocky Hart, Lynn

19 Johnson, Catalina Martinez, Tom Heini and Frank

20 Eller. Pause if there is any feedback.

21 (No response.)

22 MR. O'CONNOR: For the Customer

23 Satisfaction, Goals and Priorities Committee,

24 Chairperson of Jennifer Dunnam, with Jennifer

25 Points, Steve Jacobson and Ryan Haenze.

1 The DeafBlind Committee, Trevor Turner

2 as Chair with Wendy DeVore, John Filek, Kim

3 Johnson, Ann Mayes, Rocky Hart and Patrick Vellia.

4 The Employment Committee chaired by

5 Samantha Flax with Alyssa Gourley, Catalina

6 Martinez, Kathy McGillivray, Daniel Ashman, Michael

7 O'Day and Kyle Van Acker.

8 The Diversity, Equity & Inclusion

9 Committee, chaired by Briley O'Connor, with

10 Catalina Martinez, Frank Eller, Kyle Van Acker,

11 Gloria Lariniere and Yadiel Sotomayor.

12 Senior Services chaired by Judy

13 Sanders with Barbara Klein, Jan Bailey, Teresa

14 Gfroerer, Linda Warren, Tom Heint and Rob Hobson.

15 The Transition Committee chaired by

16 Samantha Flax with Logan Stenzel, Joya Musa, Ryan

17 Haenze, Sue Fager, Rocky Hart, Jennifer Points and

18 Kotumu Kamara.

19 And Vendor, Outcomes and Measures

20 chaired by Judy Sanders with Jan Bailey, Briley

21 O'Connor, Daniel Ashman Kim Strickland and Rob

22 Hobson.

23 I will make one comment before opening

24 this up for any further discussion, that I very

25 much appreciate several of you stepping into

1 multiple roles. We do have a request that the
2 committees -- that councilmembers sit on at least
3 two committees throughout their time here. And I
4 know that that is a lot, a couple people even
5 chairing multiple committees, very grateful for
6 your willingness and service.

7 For those of you who are on one
8 committee, just ask that as we appoint task forces
9 through the year that you consider jumping in on
10 those so we don't overly tax those who are already
11 involved in many places.

12 That said, there are still a few
13 committees with some open spots so I want to pause

14 and see if I missed anybody. This is open to
15 councilmembers and members of the public that were
16 hoping to serve on a committee, would take those
17 final recommendations before we put fourth a final
18 list.

19 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: Ryan.

21 MR. STRUNK: I did not catch, am I
22 only serving on one committee at this time?

23 MR. O'CONNOR: That's possible. That
24 might be the case, Ryan, yes. I see -- sorry, I am
25 confusing myself by looking at Ryan Haenze and Ryan

1 Strunk, so give me one quiet minute to look and
2 make sure I don't speak out of turn here. I see
3 you on the Communication Center, there is still an
4 opening on Customer Satisfaction, Goals and
5 Priorities if that would be of interest to you.

6 MR. STRUNK: Yes.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you for your
8 willingness to jump in there Ryan.

9 MS. JERDE: Corbb, this is Tasha.
10 There are two staff on the DEI Committee, Alana and
11 Lisa, I don't know if you have those two in there?

12 MR. O'CONNOR: So I don't have them
13 appointed to the committee, but I do have them

14 listed as the staff liaisons. Is there a need to

15 change that?

16 MS. JERDE: Not necessarily, I just

17 got a message mentioning that those two are on

18 there.

19 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. You

20 didn't read the staff contact, which is fine, you

21 know, I'm sure we will be given that.

22 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes.

23 MR. ANDREWS: Dave Andrews.

24 MR. O'CONNOR: Dave.

25 MR. ANDREWS: You probably said and I

1 blanked it out, Kristin Oien has been on the
2 committee and she is leaving, I would presume that
3 when she is replaced we would want to have that
4 person on the committee?

5 MR. O'CONNOR: On the Communication
6 Center Committee I think is the one you are
7 referring to?

8 MS. SANDERS: Yes.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, agreed,
10 absolutely.

11 MR ANDREWS: All right. Just wanted
12 to make sure that we --

13 MR. O'CONNOR: Yeah, when that person

14 is appointed into Kristin's role we can have that

15 discussion as a Council.

16 MR. ANDREWS: All right, thank you.

17 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, David.

18 Okay. Hearing no other --

19 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, Frank.

21 MR. ELLER: So I'm on the Diversity,

22 Equality and Inclusion Committee, I forgot the

23 first committee that I am appointed to.

24 MR. ANDREWS: Communication Center he

25 was also on.

1 MR. O'CONNOR: I want to say it's the
2 Communication Center.

3 MR. ELLER: Okay. I've been watching,
4 I haven't received an email from them yet.

5 MR. O'CONNOR: So we are just
6 appointing them this evening.

7 MR. ELLER: Oh, okay. Thank you.

8 MR. O'CONNOR: So hearing no other
9 discussion I would love to hear a motion to support
10 the committees as read this evening.

11 MS. FLAX: So moved.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Samantha moves. Is
13 there a second?

14 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, second.

15 MR. O'CONNOR: And Frank seconds. I

16 will pause for any discussion.

17 (No response.)

18 MR. O'CONNOR: And hearing none we

19 will move to a vote. Starting with Frank Eller.

20 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

21 MR. O'CONNOR: Samantha Flax.

22 MS. FLAX: Samantha Flax, yes.

23 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.

24 MR. HEINL: Tom Heintl, yes.

25 MR. O'CONNOR: Rob Hobson.

1 (No response.)

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Catalina Martinez.

3 (No response.)

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Michael O'Day.

5 MR. O'DAY: Michael O'Day, yes.

6 MR. O'CONNOR: Jennifer Points.

7 (No response.)

8 MR. O'CONNOR: Judy Sanders.

9 MS. SANDERS: Judy Sanders, yes.

10 MR. STRUNK: Strunk Ryan, yes.

11 MR. O'CONNOR: Trevor Turner.

12 (No response.)

13 MR. O'CONNOR: Kyle Van Acker.

14 MR. VAN ACKER: Kyle Van Acker, yes.

15 MR. O'CONNOR: And Corbb O'Connor,

16 yes. Thank you very much.

17 Apologize, there was one other change

18 to our agenda. And that is from our Diversity,

19 Equity and Inclusion Committee had a request that

20 was a little bit longer, may have more discussion

21 to it than typical of our committee reports and so

22 for that I would like to turn this to Briley

23 O'Connor who is chairing our DEI Committee in the

24 interim.

25 MS. O'CONNOR: Thank you so much,

1 Corbb.

2 So the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

3 Committee this year has opted in the past couple of

4 months to work on some recommendations to give to

5 Jessica Burke, who is the management consultant

6 that's working with State Services for the Blind.

7 We started a lot of this work which

8 Yadiel Sotomayor was chairing, so thank you for

9 your time and service. So we put together these

10 recommendations and wanted to go through them this

11 evening and to get the approval of the Council to

12 be able to pass them on to the consultant. So

13 should I just read those out, Corbb?

14 MR. O'CONNOR: That would be great.

15 And if you -- we can always email these to

16 everybody after the meeting as well I would

17 imagine, is that right?

18 MS. O'CONNOR: Yes. So I will start

19 here. Recommendations for improving diversity,

20 equity and inclusion practices within Minnesota

21 State Services for the Blind. Introduction. These

22 recommendations are provided by the Diversity,

23 Equity and Inclusion subcommittee of the State

24 Rehabilitation Council for the Blind, SRC-B, for

25 the purpose of assisting Jessica Burke, Management

1 Analysis and Development consultant in her work
2 with State Services for the Blind, SSB.

3 Over the course of the past several
4 months the committee reviewed current SSB policies
5 regarding translation and interpreter services, as
6 well as feedback from both SSB staff and customers.

7 As a result we put forth these recommendations.

8 Policy and Process. SSB customer
9 survey and any communications with customers about
10 the survey should be at a minimum available in the
11 five primary languages spoken in Minnesota:
12 Spanish, Somali, Hmong, Chinese and Vietnamese.

13 The training manual for counselors and

14 other SSB staff should be updated to provide
15 clarity on policies governing translation and
16 interpretation services addressing the following
17 points: Clear guidelines on timelines for
18 requesting translation or interpreter services.
19 Information about the location of an approved
20 vendor list for these services. Precise definition
21 of necessary activities -- sorry, precise
22 definition of necessary activities for which
23 translation or interpreter services must be
24 provided, variability in interpretations has led to
25 inconsistent access to information for customers.

1 Inclusion of language emphasizing the importance of
2 obtaining informed consent during the enrollment
3 and service provision process for individuals with
4 limited English language proficiency. Provide
5 staff with consistent access to documents required
6 to procure translation and interpreter services.

7 Update Workforce One to require that a
8 customer's primary language is documented. This
9 will help to reduce the number of times a customer
10 needs to request translation or interpreter
11 services and ensure customers receive both written
12 and verbal information in their primary language.

13 The next section is staff and training

14 recommendations. Provide annual training for all
15 staff who interact with SSB customers regarding how
16 to procure translation or interpreter services.
17 Require all SSB staff to complete the Intercultural
18 Development Inventory to help assess the current
19 level of cultural competence within the agency.
20 Implement a comprehensive cultural competency
21 training program for all staff members who engage
22 with customers, ensuring that they gain the
23 necessary knowledge and skills to effectively
24 recognize and address cultural differences.
25 And employ a culture navigator

1 dedicated to assisting customers and their families

2 throughout the vocational rehabilitation process.

3 And that includes the recommendations we would like

4 to pass onto the consultant.

5 MR. O'CONNOR: So these are -- this is

6 Corbb. These are recommendations that the DEI

7 Committee would like to send as themselves as a

8 committee, as opposed to just them as individuals,

9 which is why we thought we would bring it here to

10 the Council for any discussion before we adopt

11 their committee report. Is there any discussion?

12 MS. FLAX: Samantha.

13 MR. ELLER: Frank.

14 MR. O'CONNOR: I heard Samantha first.

15 MS. FLAX: I just want to say I think

16 this is really great and I want to thank Briley for

17 jumping in when the committee was going through

18 some changes and everything. And I think these

19 recommendations are really important and I'm really

20 excited that they are going to get them, hopefully,

21 because I think it really shows a lot of the

22 improvements that we discovered needed to happen.

23 So I'm really excited about it and thank you to

24 everyone who worked on it.

25 MS. O'CONNOR: Also I want to thank --

1 MR. ELLER: This is --

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Go ahead, Briley.

3 MS. O'CONNOR: I also want to

4 particularly thank Lisa Larges and Alana Strickler,

5 their help as staff members has been invaluable

6 throughout the process. It's really helpful to be

7 able to have somebody who can say here is the

8 policies, here is what the manual says, this is how

9 Workforce One works, which is not information some

10 of us would have at all. So that's incredibly

11 helpful.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Briley.

13 Frank.

14 MR. ELLER: This is Frank Eller. I
15 also would agree with Samantha. I think this was
16 really well done, it's really great. Thank you,
17 Briley, thank you Lisa.

18 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Frank.

19 Is there any further discussion?

20 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy.

21 MR. O'CONNOR: Judy.

22 MS. SANDERS: Are we saying that the
23 committee will present these to Jessica or is the
24 committee saying that the Council would officially
25 present it?

1 MR. O'CONNOR: The request -- this is
2 Corbb. The request right now is for them to be
3 written as Briley read at the top, that it's being
4 presented from the DEI Committee of SRC-B to
5 Jessica as a series of recommendations.

6 MS. SANDERS: And I'm wondering, I
7 mean, I understand their involvement in it, but I'm
8 wondering if it's better if it comes from the
9 Council? And I don't know for sure, but it seems
10 to me it might carry more weight.

11 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. I'm
12 certainly supportive of that. Briley, on behalf of
13 the committee would you support that change?

14 MS. O'CONNOR: This is Briley, I have

15 no opposition to that.

16 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. Any further

17 discussion?

18 MR. O'DAY: This is Michael O'Day.

19 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, Michael.

20 MR. O'DAY: I have a question, maybe

21 it's better for Natasha. So in terms of the

22 process, I guess, the first question is: Is

23 Jessica the right person to receive it and what

24 would be the process from there? They would take

25 these recommendations and build them into a bigger

1 document or kind of maybe you could shed some light
2 on where things go from here.

3 MS. JERDE: Sure, this is Natasha. I
4 actually agree with Judy that having it come from
5 the Council, I mean, Jessica's report is going to
6 have a lot of weight, but I do think having it come
7 directly from the Council as a recommendation for
8 State Services for the Blind is very powerful.

9 Jessica's recommendations are going to
10 embody a lot of things, not that we are going to
11 pick and choose depending on who said what, but I
12 think it's really important that it's delivered
13 directly from the Council to us.

14 And granted the two people who

15 probably most need to hear this are, fortunately,

16 hearing these recommendations and that's Jon and I

17 and I will say these are really, really great

18 recommendations and some things that we also have

19 talked about, and having it formally come from you

20 all, we can share it with our staff, we can share

21 it with those who can actually make the work happen

22 and it does have that power. So you can also give

23 it to Jessica to include in the report, but I would

24 also give it directly to us.

25 MR. O'CONNOR: I think the hope was to

1 send it out before this meeting, so I'm sure that
2 schedules got in the way.

3 MS. JERDE: It's already here.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: It's already here?

5 MS. JERDE: Yeah, we got it in the in
6 box before the meeting started.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: Excellent, great. Any
8 further discussion? Clearly I'm behind a little
9 bit on my email.

10 (No response.)

11 MR. O'CONNOR: Hearing none. While
12 not technically required I would like to take a
13 vote on this and we will start with Frank Eller.

- 14 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.
- 15 MR. O'CONNOR: Samantha Flax.
- 16 MS. FLAX: Samantha Flax, yes.
- 17 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.
- 18 MR. HEINL: Tom Heintl, yes.
- 19 MR. O'CONNOR: Rob Hobson.
- 20 (No response.)
- 21 MR. O'CONNOR: Catalina Martinez.
- 22 (No response.)
- 23 MR. O'CONNOR: Michael O'Day.
- 24 MR. O'DAY: Michael O'Day, yes.
- 25 MS. SANDERS: Judy Sanders, yes.

1 MR. STRUNK: Strunk Ryan, yes.

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Kyle Van Acker.

3 MR. VAN ACKER: Kyle Van Acker, yes.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Trevor Turner and

5 Jennifer Points, I don't believe are here.

6 Corbb O'Connor, yes.

7 Excellent. We will make sure that

8 that gets to the MAD consultants as well as to

9 Natasha and Jon directly.

10 MS. O'CONNOR: Briley.

11 MR. O'CONNOR: Briley.

12 MS. O'CONNOR: Just a quick question.

13 Should I update the document, then, to reflect that

14 its recommendations are on behalf of the Council?

15 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Yes,

16 please.

17 MS. O'CONNOR: And then just put at

18 the bottom -- okay, great. I will do that and send

19 it.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: Where we would normally

21 turn to our SSB Director's report we are going to

22 pause for just a moment more for an update from our

23 Comprehensive State Needs Assessment Task Force

24 that is chaired by Samantha Flax.

25 MS. FLAX: Hi everyone. Thanks,

1 Corbb. So the task force has met a few times over
2 the past few months and we have decided that the
3 best way to go about working on the assessment for
4 this year is to use basically what's already being
5 done and give our recommendations.

6 So we will be attending meetings about
7 the assessment that are held with Jennifer Beilke,
8 thank you, Jennifer, for guiding me through this
9 process. As I learn it we are going to be focusing
10 on areas such as transition and we will be having
11 more of those meetings over the next few weeks to
12 find out what is already planned to be in that
13 assessment and to give our feedback based on what

14 we noticed from last year's report.

15 So I will definitely have more updates

16 on that at our October meeting. But we are moving

17 along and making progress and I think we will have

18 some great recommendations coming up.

19 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Thank

20 you Samantha.

21 Any questions for Samantha and the

22 task force at this point, or comments?

23 (No response.)

24 MR. O'CONNOR: Excellent.

25 As we turn to our SSB Director's

1 report we literally this evening for the first time
2 can turn to our director, thanks to Samantha you
3 will appreciate this, Hedwig is the name of the owl
4 camera in the middle of the room that has been
5 360 degrees circling us. There is no mail dropping
6 out of it yet and there's also been no screech
7 owls, but nonetheless, for those watching at home
8 just a few days after Harry Potter's birthday, we
9 have a camera on that is not being required to turn
10 laptops to make it happen. So thank you to
11 Natasha, Dave and the team for making that happen.

12 And now we will turn to Natasha Jerde.

13 MS. JERDE: Thanks Corbb. And the

14 name actually is courtesy of Jon Benson, he's like

15 we need to call the owl Hedwig, so it was perfect.

16 So before I go into my updates I do

17 want to recognize Tony Lopez who tragically passed

18 away on July 15 at the very young age of 55. Tony

19 began his association with SSB and Radio Talking

20 Book as a volunteer. With a great voice, a love of

21 books and a lot of radio work Tony was a natural

22 fit and a great asset for RTB. He joined our staff

23 25 years ago and served as our volunteer

24 coordinator.

25 In an article about Tony in City Pages

1 Tony said his work at SSB is about a sense of
2 connectedness. Indeed for our volunteers and many
3 RTB listeners Tony embodied that connection.

4 So my first update I want to share is
5 around the Employer Reasonable Accommodation Fund,
6 which I talked about I think the last couple of
7 council meetings we officially got our
8 appropriation and now as we near the September 1
9 launch, things will be ramping up for this pilot
10 program.

11 So as a reminder ERAF, as we are
12 calling it, is an accommodation reimbursement
13 program for small to mid sized businesses. This

14 program will be nestled within our Workforce
15 Development Units employment and training team
16 which is led by Lindsey Hanson, but it is not
17 branded an SSB program.

18 So first I will give an update on the
19 staffing of this. We will be hiring two positions,
20 first is going to be a program coordinator and the
21 second is going to be an administrative or fiscal
22 support specialist. The plan is actually to hire
23 these as permanent positions despite this being a
24 two-year program. And the reason for that is one,
25 the odds are very good that we can transition them

1 to other roles either at SSB or within our
2 department and two, it is so very hard to find
3 people to fill temporary positions.

4 These positions, despite me putting
5 them in early May, are still undergoing an audit
6 with HR and they have not yet been posted. So
7 since we will not have these positions filled by
8 the September 1 launch date, we will be looking for
9 some interim assistance either via a work out class
10 promotional opportunity for one or two of our staff
11 or something else, we are getting creative.

12 And the second thing I want to share
13 is around outreach and marketing. So the key to a

14 successful launch is a good outreach campaign. We

15 are in the process of building a website which will

16 eventually be found at www.mn.gov/deed/eraf. We

17 have it almost built, it's just in staging right

18 now.

19 We also have created an accessible

20 application form for employers to use and we have a

21 centralized email address for all inquiries and

22 questions which will be at eraf.deed@state.mn.us.

23 And our comms team is helping us put together

24 promotional materials and flyers which we will

25 distribute far and wide. We rely on our networks

1 to make sure businesses know about this program, so
2 if you yourself work for a small business that
3 employs less than 500 people, that grosses less
4 than \$5 million or you know of businesses that
5 could benefit from this, we will have promotional
6 materials you can share out and I appreciate that
7 in advance.

8 I will pause for any questions on that
9 because this is a lot of information on a very new
10 program.

11 (No response.)

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Hearing no questions,
13 we can move on.

14 MS. JERDE: The next update I want to
15 give is around our Evolve VR Initiative. And it's
16 been a while since we've shared any significant
17 updates, but that's not because we are not doing
18 anything, but because there is a lot of things
19 happening behind the scenes, many which was a
20 result of the innovation lab that our counselors
21 and VR techs took part in this past spring.

22 So here are some broad sweeping
23 updates, but there will be some more significant
24 updates, especially for that team in future staff
25 meetings.

1 So if you recall we had a model that
2 we called MAP so it was evolve mindset, evolve
3 awareness, evolve process, personnel and
4 performance. So evolve mindset we are just
5 wrapping our work with Jessica Burke with MAD who
6 we talked about earlier. She has been collecting
7 feedback from staff, stakeholders and customers. I
8 will say unfortunately when she would reach out to
9 people no one would get back to her or respond to
10 her, so our pool was small. But whether it's good
11 or bad I don't know, the information she collected
12 really validated the results we got from our
13 customer satisfaction survey which shows that our

14 satisfaction survey is a very valid and useful tool

15 and we better make sure we are using that

16 information to inform our businesses.

17 There will be a staff meeting at the

18 end of September to review the results and hearing

19 the customer perspective is incredibly important.

20 Every decision we make we should be asking

21 ourselves how will this impact the people we serve

22 and then secondly, how is it going to impact our

23 staff who are actually providing those services?

24 So evolve awareness. We are hiring a

25 second outreach coordinator we will partner with

1 Lisa Larges so we can put maximum power behind our
2 campaign to spread the word. We have been featured
3 in several news outlets, we actually just notably
4 were in I think it was a Star Tribune article last
5 week about providing reasonable accommodations to
6 individuals who are neurodivergent and our presence
7 is going to continue to grow.

8 Next is evolve process. We are still
9 in the midst of reviewing and recommending changes
10 to Rule 3325. We are nearing the end of the very
11 grueling task of combing through it line by line,
12 putting together our thoughts and ideas. Our
13 ultimate goal is to get rid of or change burdensome

14 policies and procedures that are a barrier to our
15 customers participating in the program or processes
16 that otherwise burden our staff which impact our
17 customers.

18 We have already put the moratorium on
19 financial participation and we do plan on making it
20 much more challenging to institute financial
21 participation in the rule. And at our public
22 hearing meeting earlier we are ending Order of
23 Selection completely, these two processes actually
24 cause a lot of paperwork for our staff, in addition
25 to not being very customer friendly, so it does

1 save time for our staff to get rid of those two
2 things. There are many other processes we have
3 that can simply go away and we will be working
4 through those as we work our rule.

5 We bought a policy management program
6 called DocTract and Courtney Wanek, our director of
7 policy, is still in the process of uploading all of
8 those policies into it. But it allows for easier
9 access to our policy manual, including a way to do
10 quick searches, as well as test our staff on the
11 knowledge of the policies.

12 We also are embedding an electronic
13 case review tool into our case management system

14 and it will also have a reporting feature so we can

15 see how people are performing in their casework.

16 Onto evolve personnel. So we have

17 been working very closely with our HR team

18 regarding pay equity in our vocational

19 rehabilitation job series. This also has extended

20 to other job classes within State Services for the

21 Blind. Unfortunately I am in the cone of silence

22 and sworn to confidentiality so I can't give really

23 much more information on that right now, but we

24 have been working really hard on this, it feels

25 like, for the last two years.

1 In addition, our very first staff
2 person has taken advantage of our offer of tuition
3 reimbursement towards a master's degree in rehab
4 counseling, so congratulations to Emily Zaccardi
5 for being accepted at UW Stout's online program.

6 This is part of a larger effort to invest in our
7 staff and allow for better career pathways into
8 higher level positions.

9 And since it's so hard to find
10 counselors when we have a vacancy, we want to grow
11 our own and we know that the people that we are
12 growing have an investment in the work that we do.

13 And finally, for evolve performance we

14 are hiring a second data analyst that will be
15 building our data dashboards. This will allow the
16 Council, partner, stakeholder, staff in realtime
17 see how SSB is doing performance wise.
18 Our current data analyst, Mansur, will
19 hopefully be returning to us after a very long
20 medical leave after the Christmas holidays.
21 Courtney and Jon are reviewing a time study model
22 that will allow us to look at how much time staff
23 are spending doing data collection versus actually
24 working with customers. This would potentially
25 allow us to hone in on those areas that are more

1 time consuming and look at ways to set it up better
2 in our case management system so they can turn
3 their attention back to the more important piece
4 which is working directly with the people we serve.

5 I will pause before I go onto projects
6 and notable news.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: Are there any questions
8 or comments at this point in Natasha's report?

9 MS. JERDE: Rocky raised his hand.

10 MR. HART: Yes, can you hear me?

11 MR. O'CONNOR: We can, Rocky, go
12 ahead.

13 MR. HART: Wonderful, thank you very

14 much.

15 Natasha, I know I've asked questions

16 in the past about consumer financial participation

17 and you had mentioned -- I know you mentioned that

18 there is going to be a moratorium and that there

19 has been one for quite some time and when you said

20 that CSP, that you are essentially going to try to

21 make it harder in some ways to require CSP in your

22 rules and policies. And one of the things that I

23 am aware, or at least that I have been told, is

24 that CSP is partially contingent upon SSI

25 eligibility. So, for example, if someone is

1 receiving SSI they would also be eligible for CSP.

2 Is that still the case? How have the rules on that

3 particular policy changed?

4 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. So

5 financial participation is waived for people who

6 are receiving Social Security, SSI, SSDI or other

7 public benefits, so it doesn't apply to them.

8 Financial participation only applies

9 to those who have income of some sort and then it's

10 on a sliding scale essentially on how much they

11 would contribute to some of their services. And by

12 making it harder my vision, I don't know how it's

13 actually going to turn out, but my vision is to

14 have financial participation able to be instituted
15 but it has to go before a public hearing, much like
16 Order of Selection. And so the public can weigh in
17 if we are to propose going on financial
18 participation.

19 MR. HART: If you have a client, for
20 example, who is receiving -- just to follow up, if
21 you had a client, for example, that was
22 receiving -- that they are gainfully employed and
23 have been and their case is not successfully
24 closed, let's say they decide to seek
25 post-employment services, would they be required to

1 participate in CSP?

2 MS. JERDE: This is Tasha. Well, at

3 this point no one is requiring or no one has to

4 participate toward their services and only some

5 services fall under financial participation and

6 post-employment job placement type services do not

7 have financial participation requirements.

8 MR. HART: Thank you.

9 MS. JERDE: You are welcome.

10 MS. O'CONNOR: Briley.

11 MR. O'CONNOR: Briley, go ahead.

12 MS. O'CONNOR: Well, you mentioned

13 that the consultant will be providing a report to

14 the staff upcoming. Will that be something the

15 Council will receive also?

16 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. That's a

17 really great recommendation and I will -- Jon is on

18 the call. Jon, you are off mute but we cannot hear

19 you.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb, it's the

21 double mute, it's the mute on the headset and the

22 mute on Zoom.

23 MS. JERDE: Yep.

24 MR. BENSON: Can you hear me now?

25 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, Jon.

1 MR. BENSON: Okay. Yes, we would be
2 more than happy to share that information with the
3 Council as we move forward with all aspects of our
4 evolve VR, so certainly. I have yet to see the
5 results myself, so I am anticipating some very
6 interesting information, or at least I hope so. So
7 yeah, I would be more than happy to have that
8 included in a report as we go forward in this
9 process and also with other council meetings.

10 MS. JERDE: This is Tasha. Jon, would
11 it be presumptuous to say that we can also send on
12 the link for that meeting?

13 MR. BENSON: Oh, I don't think it's

14 presumptuous at all, no. I will make that note and

15 we will make it happen.

16 MS. O'CONNOR: Thank you.

17 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. I will

18 put a note for us to maybe see if getting that

19 presentation in some form at our October meeting as

20 well, some discussion of that specifically.

21 Any other questions, comments on this

22 portion of our Director's report?

23 (No response.)

24 MR. O'CONNOR: Hearing none.

25 MS. JERDE: All right. Onto some

1 projects and notable news. The first is around our
2 facilities, our cafeteria remodel. We received the
3 quote to remodel the cafeteria to be more dual
4 purpose. It will still be a cafeteria, but also
5 will be a place to provide independent living
6 skills training to our customers. Our partners
7 will be able to use this space as well as our
8 staff. We will have a full kitchen setup including
9 a stove and laundry area.

10 We have a meeting with the feds on
11 Friday, next Friday, to talk about all of the
12 paperwork I'm going to need to fill out in order to
13 pay for this, but it sounds like we will be able to

14 use our federal funds which will be great. It will
15 take seven months before the feds will approve all
16 of that paperwork because they sent me all of the
17 stuff I need to do and I'm like oh, my goodness,
18 but it will be worth it.

19 And we do hope to be able to start our
20 conference room remodel this winter. I never want
21 to put a date on it because they are swamped and
22 they will get to us, I think, when they can get to
23 us. In the meantime we now have our Hedwig, which
24 isn't perfect, but it at least gives a little bit
25 more feeling of being in the room than me sliding

1 my laptop all over.

2 MR. ELLER: This is Frank Eller. Is

3 Hedwig snowy white?

4 MS. JERDE: This is Tasha, white and

5 gray with looks like a cone with two glowing eyes.

6 MR. ELLER: Lovely.

7 MS. JERDE: And some community partner

8 highlights. There are currently 29 executed

9 contracts with our community partners. Previously

10 we've hovered around 45. These are our partners

11 that provide adjustment to Blindness training,

12 employment related services and pre-employment

13 transition services.

14 We do have one contract on hold

15 because of the Department of Human Rights and so we

16 have to wait to authorize until that's cleared.

17 We are negotiating with four community

18 partners for new contracts and we have two

19 proposals submitted and we do have some various

20 amendments we are processing. What's really cool,

21 even though we are down community partners, we have

22 some really interesting new partners that we've

23 never contracted with before that are providing

24 some pretty incredible and innovative programing,

25 especially for our students with disabilities. So

1 while we have less we have some pretty high quality
2 service offerings.

3 Our previous request for proposal for
4 those services, adjustment to Blindness, employment
5 and Pre-ETS, that expired on June 30 and we do plan
6 to have it reposted soon. There are at least two
7 agencies that Jennifer has met with that are
8 intending to submit proposals for a contract.

9 And we now have all contracts executed
10 for our staff adjustment to Blindness training. We
11 are working with BLIND, Inc, Vision Loss Resources
12 and the Lighthouse Center for Vital Living. And we
13 are keeping them busy because I have a whole slough

14 of staff updates I will be sharing.

15 And the employment related services

16 training that's required by contract for community

17 partners providing employment services and Pre-ETS

18 has been updated and redesigned. This training is

19 electronic, very short, about 30 minutes and it's

20 self-paced. It provides a quick overview of the

21 roles of the SSB team members, Pre-ETS, topics

22 specific to Blind, visually impaired or DeafBlind

23 individuals and a brief introduction to assistive

24 technology.

25 Alana did a demonstration of the new

1 training at the July 2023 community partner forum,
2 I heard she did a fabulous job. The training is
3 available on our training platform YesLMS and free
4 access to that system is offered to all of our
5 community partners. The YesLMS system offers CEUs
6 and a variety of training on SSB policies serving
7 people with disabilities and so we have offered
8 that to all of our partners at no cost.

9 The next step is to have that same
10 training available on our website and potentially
11 have links to it from other DEED social media
12 platforms. And any community partner who would
13 like access to YesLMS can contact Jennifer Beilke

14 or Tara Sullivan, our training coordinator, and we
15 can get them access. The next quarterly forum is
16 on Tuesday, October 10 from 10:00 to 12:00.

17 And I have some outreach news from
18 Lisa. Our department has a new director of public
19 engagement, her name is Ekta, and we have been
20 coordinating with her and other DEED agencies to
21 have a presence at summer festivals and fairs.

22 We will at the Minnesota State Fair at
23 the Minnesota Council on Disability booth. We will
24 be in the Education Building and you can find us
25 there on August 31 and September 1.

1 Dr. Georgiann Jensen is a retired
2 optometrist who fully believes in the work that SSB
3 does. She has been volunteering her time to
4 promote our work with eye clinics to help staff
5 know how to refer patients and coordinate with us.

6 On August 7 and 8 Dr. Jensen and Lisa
7 will be doing a grand tour of the Duluth area.
8 Recently they met via Zoom with a Fergus Falls
9 clinic alongside Lauren Eliason from the Senior
10 Services Unit. And they have also been visiting
11 clinics in the Twin Cities.

12 And work continues on improving SSB's
13 website. You will notice changes when you visit

14 mn.ssb.org. Please send Lisa any suggestions, also
15 sometimes links to older materials can get broken,
16 so if you do find a broken link send that onto her
17 as well.

18 Take a quick pause.

19 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Just
20 one question on the staff training piece. Is that
21 typical of years past to have all three Adjustment
22 to Blindness Centers as staff training venues?

23 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha.
24 Historically, yes. There was a period of time
25 where we only had two, but yes, we are back to

1 where we would like to be with all three providers.

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. Any other

3 questions or comments?

4 (No response.)

5 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay.

6 MS. JERDE: All right. Onto some

7 pre-ETS and transition quick hits. SSB hosted 20

8 students over two days for the Summer Transition

9 Program. Students engaged with Sky's the Limit to

10 focus on financial literacy and self-advocacy.

11 Sky's the Limit is one of our new contractors,

12 David De Notaris who is very much East Coast and is

13 a hoot if you have ever met David. He did some

14 really great training with our students.

15 We are again partnering with

16 Wilderness Inquiry for a canoe trip on August 9.

17 This time students will be canoeing on the

18 Mississippi and learning about self-advocacy. And

19 I might have mentioned this, but I think it's worth

20 noting, the reason we have this relationship with

21 Wilderness Inquiry is because one of our former

22 customers, actually I was their counselor back in

23 the day, a DeafBlind individual, actually got their

24 dream job as a program coordinator for Wilderness

25 Inquiry and reached back out to State Services for

1 Blind and said hey, we want to do something with
2 SSB. And so Jennifer worked with them to get a
3 contract and this is our second annual canoe trip
4 on the river and students love it. So kind of a
5 neat story how we got a new partner.

6 It's been a busy summer with students
7 engaged in programs like BLIND, Inc.'s PREP, Duluth
8 Center for Vital Living Camps, MSAB summer school
9 and a variety of internships.

10 We are also working on our annual
11 Pre-ETS Blueprint which is basically our road map
12 of activities being offered throughout the year.
13 And we are also in the early stages of crafting a

14 brand new position that we are calling Multiple
15 Systems and Pathways Navigator. The purpose of
16 this position is to help young adults with multiple
17 disabilities and their families identify and access
18 resources that fit their needs and circumstances,
19 including and especially how do you navigate the
20 waiver system, which working with counties and the
21 DHS system can be very complex, this individual
22 will help navigate that process.

23 Onto our Communication Center
24 Technology Updates. So while it is taking longer
25 than we anticipated, work on moving the Braille

1 Unit to new software continues to move forward. We
2 have pumped the brakes a little bit because we want
3 it done right and we want it done well and we knew
4 there are still some things that needed to be
5 worked out, some kinks, so we are taking our time
6 but we are going to do it right.

7 We also did not get an overwhelming
8 response to our recording software request for
9 proposals, we only got one, so we are currently
10 evaluating our options. All of this will happen,
11 it just takes time.

12 Audio Services. So I'm super jazzed
13 to share this update. So Audio Services is excited

14 to announce the completion of the American
15 Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and
16 Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth
17 Edition, lovingly known as the DSM-5. This
18 professional manual is the most comprehensive
19 current and critical resource for clinical practice
20 available today for today's mental health
21 clinicians and researchers and it has never before
22 been transcribed into audio, ever.

23 Weighing in at over 1,000 pages, it's
24 a biggie, multiple home and studio volunteers
25 contributed their talents to create an 87 hour long

1 accessible audio book with digital bookmarks,
2 because they use DAISY for ease of navigation.

3 The book is currently available to
4 Communication Center customers. We've already had
5 five or six people asking for it and will soon be
6 available nationwide via the National Library
7 Services BARD. Big shout out and thank you to our
8 Audio Services volunteers.

9 What this means is that a critical
10 resource for Blind professionals entering into
11 mental health, psychology, psychiatry, school
12 counseling, this is a critical piece of information
13 that they need access to. So for me this is

14 employment right here.

15 Development Office Updates. So Angela

16 shares that our annual fund for Federal Fiscal Year

17 '23 as of end of July we have leveraged about

18 \$150,000 from approximately 450 donors. Our August

19 planned giving newsletter will arrive to 3,500

20 people's mailboxes in mid-August and our similar

21 plan giving newsletter from April resulted in about

22 \$12,000 in donations.

23 Give to the Max is coming up on

24 November 16 and we've been developing a media plan

25 including tweets and PSAs on Radio Talking Book.

1 And our largest direct mail solicitation of the
2 year will hit people's mailboxes in mid November.

3 Last year we got about \$18,500 from that
4 solicitation.

5 And onto Senior Services. Ed gives
6 three very quick but very important updates. First
7 is still very busy and on pace for a record year
8 and yes, they are. They are also waiting anxiously
9 and impatiently for HR to move on a new hire in the
10 Rochester area because this area, because of our
11 Mayo partnership, has resulted hundreds and
12 hundreds of referrals. So Angela cannot keep up
13 down there.

14 And Mayo, speaking of, is going very
15 well, however, Vivian Yipp is leaving and Vivian
16 was really the reason this was so successful. And
17 she did a great job cross-training her colleagues
18 before she moved to another eye institute in the
19 Cities, I believe, which means we are going to have
20 another four or five hundred new referrals from her
21 new eye clinic, so.

22 And I'm going to pause there before I
23 get into some Workforce Development Unit data.

24 MR. O'CONNOR: So this is Corbb. With
25 the Mayo change, forgive me I am not as familiar

1 with names, so SSB will still have a presence at

2 Mayo?

3 MS. JERDE: Yes, absolutely.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: And there is not an

5 interruption in that because of the cross-training

6 that was done; is that correct?

7 MS. JERDE: For the most part. I

8 think there is some, actually what Ed said, a few

9 hiccups, but it's been going well.

10 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. Other questions

11 or comments? I see Jennifer moving to a

12 microphone.

13 MS. DUNNAM: Yes, just curious. You

14 mentioned Braille, the software being changed and I

15 am sure I should probably know, but are you talking

16 about real translation software or tracking

17 management software for the Braille Unit?

18 MR. ANDREWS: Tracking management, not

19 translation.

20 MS. DUNNAM: Thank you.

21 MR. O'CONNOR: Dave is saying off

22 microphone tracking management, not something.

23 MR. ANDREWS: No translation.

24 MR. O'CONNOR: No translation.

25 MS. DUNNAM: Thank you.

1 MS. JERDE: Thanks, Dave.

2 MR. ANDREWS: You don't need to panic

3 me like that.

4 MS. JERDE: Dave is our project

5 manager for the CCS replacement project, so he

6 knows it like the back of his hand.

7 All right. I am going to do some fun

8 data downloads, I will try to make it exciting.

9 But for the Workforce Development Unit, we have

10 started our program year off with a bang, granted

11 it's only been one month, but our employment rate

12 right now is at 46 percent. 46 percent means that

13 out of all of the total closures, 46 percent were

14 successful.

15 We have had a not great streak for

16 employment rate, we have been hovering in the 30s,

17 but when I share some of the data we are making a

18 lot of headway and our goal is to have it over

19 50 percent.

20 So some information from July 1, so

21 far we have received 12 applications, we are

22 serving 683 people. We have one applicant who is

23 waiting for their eligibility determination. We

24 have already had six successful closures, seven

25 unsuccessful. We have an average caseload size of

1 42.

2 And I had to pull some trends for my
3 operating review with the Commissioner's office and
4 I thought you might be interested in these. So
5 this is looking at program year '22, '21 and '20.
6 So for number of applicants we went from 206 in
7 program year '20 to 216 to now 260 applicants for
8 '22. So we are coming out of the COVID slump and
9 we are slowly making increases in how many people
10 are coming to us.

11 The number of people we serve is
12 fairly consistent, 815 in '20, 834 in '21 and we
13 served 847 in '22, but still some increases. Our

14 successful closures are -- well, they are kind of
15 hovering there. We had 62 COVID year of '20, 82 in
16 '21 and we had 75 in '22.

17 And our unsuccessful closures was
18 looking better for program year '22. We started at
19 118 unsuccessfuls in '20. We had a big jump of 169
20 and we had 105 unsuccessful closures in '22.

21 And our employment rate, this is where
22 it gets good, we were at 38.8 percent in '20, 36.3
23 percent in '21 and we had an employment rate of
24 44 percent in '22, which is a number we have not
25 seen in many years.

1 Now, for some staff updates. This is
2 probably the majority of my presentation, because
3 we, you probably know, got some money. We got
4 about \$2 million a year appropriated and we are
5 using that to invest in staff who can serve our
6 customers.

7 So we had requested three vocational
8 rehabilitation technician positions to be filled,
9 one to replace Charlie Romain who left for another
10 DEED division, one to replace Brent Benson who got
11 a promotional opportunity as a job coach, and an
12 extra position to provide additional help for the
13 team. Cheryl Lavrenz started yesterday as a VR

14 tech replacing Charlie. We are in reference checks

15 phase for the second VR tech replacing Brent and

16 the bonus VR tech is currently going through

17 interviews.

18 Our SSB's employment and training team

19 continues to staff up. We have hired two job

20 coaches, Brent Benson and Alexis Robinson.

21 Alexis's background actually is from the Perkins

22 School and she dived right in and they both have

23 already got a number of referrals, especially for

24 students on certain work experience sites.

25 We also have hired two orientation and

1 mobility trainers. Michelle who started in April
2 and Jenny Pelletier who comes from the State
3 Academy for the Blind. And we are in the process
4 of extending an offer to a candidate for the low
5 vision assistive technology trainer position.

6 Our second data analyst position is
7 still sitting at HR being audited. Our current
8 data analyst, Mansur as I mentioned, will be out at
9 least through the end of the calendar year. We
10 have had some data help from another DEED division
11 and Michael Prideaux has been incredible, but we
12 only get him for maybe one day a week.

13 Within our administrative team we are

14 adding two new positions. I have already mentioned
15 the second outreach and communications specialist,
16 they will also be responsible for our WIOA Combined
17 State Plan and will eventually be serving on the
18 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Task Force
19 and anything related to the State Plan.

20 We are also getting Jennifer Beilke
21 some help. We are getting an assistant contract
22 specialist to work with Jennifer so we have more
23 time devoted to maintaining our community partner
24 handbook, working with our staff and partners on
25 questions and overall just hoping that will help

1 with the process.

2 Senior Services is hiring another

3 specialist down in the Rochester area and we have

4 other positions such as another broadcaster in

5 Radio Talking Book, a quality technician in Audio

6 Services, the two ERAF positions I mentioned, and a

7 part-time driver, not intermittent, but an actual

8 part-time driver so that there is more consistent

9 availability for people who need a driver.

10 And finally, speaking of hiring, I am

11 working with HR on the language they have been

12 putting in all of the job postings. This hit

13 social media and I feel the pain. Every position

14 states that, I don't know the exact phrasing, but

15 that you either need a driver's license or another

16 reliable form of transportation.

17 Granted what it is saying is you don't

18 need a driver's license, but it is so confusing and

19 so easy to be misinterpreted and it's worded in

20 such a way that it is discouraging people from

21 applying for jobs. And I asked HR, because they

22 said well, this is a State of Minnesota language

23 thing. I said I don't care. So they are going to

24 add additional clarifying language that emphasizes

25 not having a driver's license is perfectly fine and

1 we do have drivers available.

2 And I see Jennifer's hand up.

3 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer. I'm

4 sorry -- maybe I will go to a microphone right now.

5 MR. O'CONNOR: I will encourage you to

6 use a microphone, Jennifer.

7 MS. BEILKE: This is Jennifer. Just a

8 comment. I'm sorry to interrupt, Natasha, because

9 this is an item that irritates me as well. Because

10 also in those position descriptions it also states

11 that applicants need to have insurance, auto

12 insurance, which is ridiculous if you aren't

13 driving. And, you know, it says or have

14 alternative, you know, alternative transportation,

15 but it says you need to have auto insurance.

16 And I have actually called HR and

17 asked them about that and I asked why do you need

18 to have auto insurance because when you are driving

19 a state vehicle you are covered by the state and,

20 you know, their answer is because the state

21 requires it. And I know I have never been asked

22 for a copy of my insurance, but yet it's required.

23 So it's very much an item that irritates me so I am

24 very happy to see you addressing that issue, so

25 thank you.

1 MS. JERDE: You are welcome.

2 MR. ANDREWS: How do you really feel

3 Jennifer?

4 MS. JERDE: I don't see Jennifer fired

5 up that much and Jennifer was fired up. I love it.

6 MS. BEILKE: It's just stupid.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: Any other comments,

8 questions, excited remarks that I love to see?

9 (No response.)

10 MS. JERDE: That's it, that's all,

11 that's my report.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Are there -- well, just

13 open it up one more time for comments through

14 anything that was covered by the report in general

15 or that we missed in particular sections?

16 (No response.)

17 MR. O'CONNOR: Hearing none, thank you

18 Natasha for your report. And it is 7:05 almost,

19 let's take a ten and a half minute break and we

20 will start promptly when the clock strikes at 7:15.

21 (Break from 7:05 to 7:18 p.m.)

22 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb and now

23 we are three minutes behind, uncharacteristic of

24 me. There was hypothetically some cake being

25 distributed in the room here to which Susan offered

1 a tossup of cake, but that just seemed messy.

2 Let's move on to other exciting things

3 like the budget. And for that we will turn to our

4 Budget Task Force chairperson who has been

5 reporting on that for several meetings now, so

6 Ryan, for whether it is the recap or next year's

7 budget I turn to you.

8 MR. STRUNK: All right, I appreciate

9 it, thank he very much Mr. Chair.

10 We do find ourselves in a bit of a

11 situation as I have reported to you at previous

12 meetings it has been a challenge to pull together

13 the budget for the mid year report. And so as we

14 continue to wrangle and chase those numbers, we
15 eventually came to the 2024 fiscal year at which
16 point we thought, well, perhaps we will just do the
17 2024 budget.

18 So I have distributed a copy. We
19 conducted much of this by email so I wanted to give
20 my fellow task force committee members an
21 opportunity to respond. We also got some great
22 help from Chris Johnson in accounting, so the
23 proposed budget is one that I have sent over to
24 you. I will go through some of the most important
25 items so that as we look to approve the budget you

1 are properly informed about what we need to do.

2 So I want to start with the

3 suggestions from Chris. Previously we had a number

4 of different things for conferences. We had per

5 diem, we had food, we had hotel, we had out of

6 state mileage, we had out of state travel, we had

7 out of state food, it was a whole big thing. So

8 her first suggestion was to combine and make one

9 budget total and, let's see, she is looking to do

10 this for -- I'm sorry, I'm looking at the wrong

11 thing. So let's try this again.

12 Councilmember comp, which includes

13 conference per diem for two participants for

14 conferences, she has also gotten rid -- so those

15 two things will be combined, essentially the

16 compensation for being on the Council as well as

17 per diem, those things will be combined.

18 Living expense out of state and food,

19 because that is accounted for in another place, she

20 has proposed that we move that to another category

21 as well.

22 So I will move through these in just a

23 moment so help everybody understand all of these.

24 Interpreters and closed captioning she has moved

25 into one specific category which we approved of, it

1 is called other purchased services and she provided
2 us with a update.

3 So what I am going to do is go through
4 very briefly and quickly and please tell me if I am
5 going too quickly, through what sort of last year
6 to this year and the proposed amount.

7 So last -- so again, just very
8 briefly, comp, this is the one that we had looked
9 to increase moving \$4,620 to \$6,000.

10 Per diem last year we budgeted 3,500
11 and as we discussed previously, that one has no
12 budget this year.

13 Court reporter and transcriber 4,200

14 last year, that now is -- last month or last year,
15 rather, we spent 1,979, so we had decreased that
16 from 4,200 to 3,100.

17 Educational instructional services.

18 We have not changed the proposed amount that's
19 \$1,360, that is for if we want to pay honorariums
20 to people for coming to do presentations.

21 Travel expense in state. Last year we
22 budgeted 6,000, we only spent \$209.58 and so we
23 have lowered that to 1,000. The reason there is
24 still some head room there is in case people decide
25 they want to start taking Ubers and getting

1 reimbursed for them.

2 Living expense in state hotel, last

3 year \$400 was budgeted, no one took us up on that.

4 We will keep it as 400 and adjust as needed.

5 Private auto mileage in state. We

6 budgeted 1,800, no one took us up on that either,

7 we've moved that down to \$700.

8 Travel expense out of state. Last

9 year we budgeted 2,000, we spent 4,000 and change

10 and so this year we had budgeted 5,000 for that to

11 account for the fact that travel costs have gone

12 up.

13 Living expense out of state hotel.

14 Last year we budgeted 2,000, we spent \$3,266 and
15 change, so we have upped that amount to 4,500.

16 Living expense out of state food.

17 Last year we budgeted 2,500 and because of some
18 accounting challenges that was never actually
19 billed against and so that's why that has been
20 rolled into the out of state travel and expenses
21 that I mentioned previously.

22 Private auto mileage out of state. We
23 didn't budget anything last year and we aren't this
24 year because nobody has taken us up on that one in
25 years.

1 Awards and supplies. 350 last year
2 and 350 budgeted again this year. Last year we
3 spent \$250, that's for things like when
4 councilmembers come off we provide them with
5 something to recognize their service to the
6 Council.

7 Registration fees for conferences.
8 Last year we budgeted 2,000, we spent 3,600 and
9 some, and so this year we are budgeting 4,000.

10 Food not food service. We did not
11 budget for it last year, this was catering -- or
12 I'm sorry, not catering, but actually the cost of
13 the food. Last year we budgeted nothing for this

14 one and we ended up spending 1,600 -- I'm sorry,

15 \$1,016 so this year we have budgeted 1,500,

16 inflation is a thing.

17 The repairs and furniture. This has

18 been an empty category for quite some time.

19 Other purchased services and

20 interpreters. Last year was 2,500 and we did not

21 spend anything on that last year.

22 Veritext closed captioning, 2,500.

23 Last year we spent 7,500 and so this year we are

24 budgeting 7,820.

25 Transportation paid to vendor was an

1 empty category last year and this year.

2 And so that gives us a proposed budget

3 this year of \$35,730 which is the same as last

4 year. Again this is all. There's a clean budget

5 that demonstrates all of this waiting for you in

6 your inbox if you have not seen it already. Are

7 there any questions about this proposed budget?

8 MS. KUSZ: Mr. Chair.

9 MR. STRUNK: I believe that's Susan.

10 MR. O'CONNOR: Susan, yep.

11 MS. KUSZ: I have a clarifying

12 question for Natasha. If I'm not mistaken, the

13 food, not food service, isn't this the one that I

14 do for the special request for expense? I thought
15 I had asked Chris about this and if this is the
16 line item that I use for the catering, this does
17 need to be changed to 19 from the 15, because
18 that's what I put in for the special request for
19 expense for this next fiscal year.

20 So if that's what it is -- I believe

21 Chris's response to this was it could be adjusted
22 at a later point in time. And I think this
23 printout that I have in front of me, which is what
24 Ryan just went over, basically was kind of the
25 things that Chris was suggesting. But when I put

1 in the special request for expense I put it in for
2 1,900.

3 MR. STRUNK: Okay. I appreciate that,
4 I was not aware that that was a thing that had been
5 proposed to, you know, as far as us going over the
6 budget, if that was a change it wasn't a change
7 that I at least have an immediate record of knowing
8 about.

9 So what I would say is this, you know,
10 we could certainly increase that amount, but we
11 would have to on the fly here make another change
12 to the budget to really hit that \$37,500 and I'm
13 not exactly certain in this exact moment where we

14 ought to make that change.

15 My recommendation would be that

16 halfway through the year there is supposed to be a

17 review of the budget and at that time if we find

18 that we are approaching the ceiling or even for

19 that matter if we are overdrawn at that point we

20 can make recommendations at that point. Otherwise

21 I don't know if I could quickly make that change

22 and find \$400 somewhere else.

23 MS. KUSZ: So this is Susan. I

24 totally agree with what you are saying, Ryan, and

25 being that, you know, as the staff liaison I've

1 worked on the Budget Task Force all the time as
2 well and we don't always spend all the money out of
3 all these magic pots of gold, so to speak anyways.
4 So, you know, just because I put in a special
5 request for expense for \$1,900 for the food doesn't
6 necessarily mean that \$1,900 is going to get spent
7 anyways, because some of the time it fluctuates.
8 It's just that was my guesstimated amount. I just
9 thought that you should be aware that that's what
10 was put in for. Okay?

11 MR. STRUNK: Sure. So the next task
12 force should take it under advisement, of course we
13 will have it in these minutes as well, that the

14 amount that is currently proposed based on Susan's
15 estimate may not be enough and so that will be the
16 benefit of having the midyear review so that if we
17 need to adjust that upward we can find the money
18 elsewhere in the budget.

19 MS. KUSZ: Absolutely. Thank you for
20 your graciousness.

21 MR. STRUNK: Absolutely.

22 MR. O'CONNOR: So this is Corbb. Are
23 there other questions, comments on the proposed
24 budget for the next, I am going to try and get this
25 right, the next federal fiscal year? There is

1 program years, state fiscal years, federal fiscal

2 years.

3 MR. STRUNK: We haven't even got the

4 calendar year in there.

5 MR. O'CONNOR: Any other discussion on

6 the budget? I will throw one question out there,

7 Ryan. I know that part of the reason that we have

8 been delayed in getting some of these updates was

9 there was money spent against some of the wrong

10 categories, according to the way the Excel sheets

11 came down. Do we believe we resolved that issue

12 going forward?

13 MR. STRUNK: It does appear as though

14 things have now been properly allocated. Chris was
15 able to clean some of those things up, but we will
16 want to be very diligent in the coming year to
17 ensure that there is understanding across the board
18 as to where things ought to be allocated. Because,
19 yeah, we definitely ran into some things where
20 registrations were budgeted against the
21 compensation for the Council and other sort of
22 carfuffely things, but I'm hopeful that is in the
23 past.

24 MR. O'CONNOR: Great. This is Corbb.

25 And I would add as well for those attending

1 conferences, to please make sure to, as much as you
2 can, within a day or two of returning home to get
3 all of your materials to Susan for those
4 reimbursements so that that can be processed
5 quickly, saving everybody a little bit of minutia,
6 things get hairy if you wait too long.

7 MS. KUSZ: Mr. Chair.

8 MR. O'CONNOR: Susan.

9 MS. KUSZ: Mr. Chair, one of the
10 things with the, you know, the per diems and the
11 expense report forms that I have to put in, after
12 the last carfuffle with the budget report that you
13 were referring to with Ryan and things getting

14 misallocated, I talked with Chris and Gabby and so
15 they are having me do some different things at the
16 bottom of the nonemployee expense report forms to
17 make sure that things get put in the correct
18 buckets with the budget numbers. So we are trying
19 to be a little more diligent about where the money
20 is taken from.

21 I think Chris and Gabby do an
22 excellent job with all of the stuff that they have
23 to do for this agency and, you know, keeping an eye
24 on our stuff for the Council, I think they did a
25 really good job of pulling that pivot report and

1 finding the errors. So I would just like to say a
2 big thank you to them.

3 MR. STRUNK: Misallocated was also my
4 fourth grade teacher and I wasn't a fan so I am
5 glad we have a retirement in place for her.

6 MR. O'CONNOR: Oh my goodness.

7 All right. Hearing any -- let me ask
8 one last time, any discussion before we move to a
9 vote? Well, let me first see if there is a motion,
10 let's do this in the right order.

11 Is there a motion to approve the
12 proposed budget?

13 MR. STRUNK: So moved.

14 MR. O'CONNOR: I hear Ryan moves, is

15 there a second?

16 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller seconds.

17 MR. O'CONNOR: And Frank seconds.

18 Somebody else was in there, I appreciate the

19 enthusiasm. Any final discussion?

20 (No response.)

21 MR. O'CONNOR: Okay. We will take a

22 vote. Frank.

23 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

24 MR. O'CONNOR: Samantha Flax.

25 MS. FLAX: Yes.

1 MR. O'CONNOR: Ryan Haenze.

2 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.

3 MR. HEINL: Tom Heintl, yes.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Jumping down to Michael

5 O'Day.

6 MR. O'DAY: Michael O'Day, yes.

7 MS. SANDERS: Judy Sanders, yes.

8 MR. STRUNK: Strunk Ryan, yes.

9 MR. VAN ACKER: Kyle Van Acker, yes.

10 MR. O'CONNOR: Corbb O'Connor, yes.

11 Got a tip for the most expeditious vote of the

12 evening. Thank you very much and thank you to our

13 Budget Task Force, you have been working overtime

14 and you might as well be a standing committee for
15 the amount of work that you've been doing the last
16 few months and very much appreciate it and excited
17 to give you folks a little bit of a reprieve before
18 we do this again for the midyear update. Thank you
19 Ryan and task force.

20 Speaking of thank yous, I would like
21 to offer a thank you to Angie, our captioner this
22 evening.

23 And as we move on, then, to our
24 discussion about the National Coalition of State
25 Rehabilitation Councils. Last meeting we heard

1 from -- was it last meeting or the meeting before
2 we heard a presentation from the NCSRC president
3 about their work and about whether -- what it took
4 for a Council to join. We had a discussion about
5 some of the accessibility or inaccessibility of
6 some of their materials and their application to us
7 and specifically at a Blindness focused agency as
8 opposed to a general VR agency.

9 I would like to open the floor for a
10 discussion about whether it would be prudent for us
11 to join the NCSRC and would welcome participation
12 from anyone, including of course our
13 councilmembers, but also members of the public and

14 the SSB staff. Is there anyone that would like to

15 offer comments on us joining or not?

16 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy.

17 MR. O'CONNOR: Yes, Judy.

18 MS. SANDERS: You know when they first

19 formed this thing we opted out, but we also wanted

20 to make sure that we knew what they were doing.

21 Because what we found when we first visited a

22 meeting we found that most of it did not relate to

23 an agency for the Blind and it seemed like a waste

24 of expenditure to go to the extra meeting and so we

25 didn't do it.

1 And I don't know, but I don't know
2 that we missed it, you know, I think we get far
3 more benefit out of the NCSAB one, even going to
4 CSAVR is questionable, I think, because a lot of
5 the same information is repeated.

6 So anyway, so I guess I am thinking
7 that we don't need another thing to join.

8 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Judy.

9 Others?

10 MS. KUSZ: This is Susan. While I
11 have never been to any of these conferences, Corbb,
12 you and I did have a little bit of a sidebar at our
13 meeting that we had and while I kind of hear what

14 Judy is saying, maybe it's time for the State Rehab

15 Councils for the Blind to be included in this

16 National Coalition.

17 Because it seems to me that while I

18 was looking on their website, it seems that this

19 seems to be a National Coalition for State Rehab

20 Councils and not necessarily State Rehab Councils

21 for the Blind. So to me it seems like there's a

22 little bit of exclusivity and if things are

23 supposed to be accessible, which is what they are

24 claiming on their website, then I think that maybe

25 it's time to maybe push the envelope a little bit.

1 Like the conversation that I heard
2 when I was sitting in the room the last time was
3 that the accessibility piece is super important to
4 this Council, as it should be, as it should be to
5 all councils for the Blind. And it's an important
6 piece of my job and it's important to me as well
7 and the people that I serve. And I think that is a
8 big piece of it.

9 Corbb, you and I talked about that so
10 I think the accessibility part of it needs to be
11 pushed.

12 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Susan.

13 MS. O'CONNOR: Briley.

14 MS. FLAX: Samantha.

15 MR. O'CONNOR: Briley and then we will

16 go to Samantha.

17 MS. O'CONNOR: So I don't see the down

18 side of participating, you know. We don't get to

19 complain about things if we don't take a seat at

20 the table when we are offered it. So I don't

21 entirely understand the objection to participating

22 with them. It's possible we could learn something

23 and more likely it's possible we could provide a

24 lot of really good information. There is no harm

25 in information sharing, we don't have a monopoly on

1 good ideas so, I would encourage us to participate.

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Briley.

3 Samantha.

4 MS. FLAX: I think that I agree that

5 accessibility is an extremely important aspect of

6 this and that's why I don't think we should

7 participate. I think that if we were to join then

8 a lot of our attention would have to go to fighting

9 them on making things accessible. If we are going

10 to join we can't be complicit in what they are

11 doing, therefore, we have to spend a lot of our

12 time and energy rather than spending it on Blind

13 people in Minnesota, spending it on arguing with

14 people where we may not win the argument.

15 I think that it is a fight that needs

16 to be fought, but I think it is beyond the scope of

17 what the Council can do right now. I know for me

18 personally I would want to jump in and do all sorts

19 of things with explaining why accessibility is

20 important and trying to change and, you know,

21 explain why things are a problem.

22 But I don't know about everybody else,

23 I don't have the bandwidth to do that right now and

24 I would rather spend my time focusing on the

25 improvement we could make for SSB. I don't think

1 joining this would help the SRCB or SSB, I think in
2 a way it might be a statement that we are agreeing
3 with how they are doing things, which I personally
4 don't.

5 So I think it might actually be more
6 valuable not to join and to express to them why,
7 like the accessibility stuff. I think that we
8 could use that energy to make things more
9 accessible, that passion in a lot of other places
10 that would be a lot more meaningful to SSB, to the
11 Council and to Blind people and people with other
12 disabilities in Minnesota.

13 So I would encourage everyone that we

14 shouldn't join at this point.

15 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Samantha.

16 MR. HART: Rocky Hart.

17 MR. HEINL: Mr. Chair.

18 MR. O'CONNOR: Rocky. Tom, I will get

19 to you after Rocky.

20 MR. HEINL: All right.

21 MR. HART: Thank you very much. I

22 attended the meeting where the presentation was

23 delivered and I can tell you from a prospective of

24 a consumer of State Services and as someone who

25 serves on several subcommittees for the Council, I

1 share many of the same concerns that others have
2 expressed, Judy expressed, Samantha expressed.
3 Accessibility is obviously going to be a big issue
4 and if there is concern about whether or not their
5 screen reader -- their websites, for example, are
6 accessible to screen reader users, yeah, I think
7 that probably the better approach would be maybe to
8 work with them on improving that without
9 necessarily making a formal decision to join as a
10 Council, because if we do that we may be in danger
11 of saying, you know, we are supporting this.
12 The other concern I have is I recall
13 that I specifically asked a question regarding

14 whether or not DeafBlind members, if there are any

15 DeafBlind members on the Council, and the answer to

16 that was not clear. And that's also a concern to

17 me, one, because I am a DeafBlind person myself

18 and, two, State Services is -- has become very

19 well-known for serving the DeafBlind community.

20 And so if we are to be an advisory community to

21 State Services I'm just a little concerned that if

22 we take the step that we may be placing ourselves

23 in sort of a conflict because we want to make sure

24 that we are advising State Services not only on

25 accessibility issues but also that as we join the

1 Council there are going to be other issues.

2 And the other thing, too, is it's a

3 cross-disability Council and that's something else

4 we have to think about is are our issues going to

5 be mixed in with other issues because while there

6 are benefits to that I can also see there being

7 some drawbacks. So I would not be in favor of it

8 at this time.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Rocky.

10 Tom Heisl.

11 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk.

12 MR. HEINL: Yeah, you know, I keep

13 hearing about all these accessibility issues, I

14 haven't heard of one concrete example of where they
15 are not accessible or what the problems really are.
16 Is their website not accessible or is there
17 materials -- like I never heard any concrete
18 examples of what is not accessible, if things
19 aren't accessible, and I think that that would sway
20 my vote one way or the other knowing if, in fact,
21 we have some positive examples of nonaccessibility.

22 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Tom.

23 Ryan, do you want to respond to Tom's
24 comment or shall I provide some examples and then
25 come to you?

1 MR. STRUNK: I want to respond to Sam
2 and to Rocky, so if you want to provide some
3 examples, please go for it.

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Go for it.

5 MR. STRUNK: Okay. Here is what I
6 would say about accessibility. Any time we run
7 into these sorts of situations you do not have
8 power if you do not have a seat at the table. And,
9 you know, oftentimes the idea of sitting aside and
10 sharing the concerns that you have, you know,
11 certainly raises your profile, but it does not
12 create a place for you to actually sit down and to
13 be a part of the conversation.

14 I would also say that this does not
15 preclude us as individual consumers, interested
16 parties, people who are active on places like
17 LinkedIn, Facebook, X and what have you from
18 raising these sorts of concerns as individuals.
19 You know, there is not -- there does not have to be
20 exceptions on behalf of members who are part of
21 this Council who is part of that collection.

22 The other thing that I would say is
23 with regard to accessibility we have a number of
24 people on the Council with accessibility expertise
25 in addition to which you have a number of people

1 who are adjacent to the Council itself with
2 accessibility expertise. And I can't speak for all
3 of them, but I will say that myself, I am happy to
4 lend my opinions and advice and such in that area,
5 but if we want to be a part of the conversation,
6 and SSB has been great at that with our leadership,
7 I think the Council ought to consider filing suit
8 and raise these issues from the inside.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Ryan.

10 This is Corbb. Tom, just to provide
11 some of the clarity around your question, I, for
12 example, observed that the pdfs on their website
13 are read by a screen reader as one big wall of

14 text. There are not headings, for example, in
15 those pdfs. The website itself has a number of
16 screen reader challenges and Graham presented
17 saying that they were looking into making the site
18 screen reader compatible, even though it is a brand
19 new website.

20 So those couple of comments coupled
21 with Rocky's concern around DeafBlind individuals
22 and the inclusivity of those meetings, there is a
23 distinction that Rocky eloquently drew, I believe
24 it was Rocky and Samantha drew, in that
25 presentation with Graham about universal design

1 versus requiring people to request accommodations.

2 So, for example, at this Council

3 meeting we have captions provided not necessarily

4 because one person requested an accommodation, but

5 we want this meeting to be inclusive and that's one

6 way of making an inclusive meeting is to have those

7 captions, to have accessible slides for a power

8 point presentation distributed in advance.

9 And that seemed to be Graham's

10 presentation focused more on requesting an

11 accommodation than by creating an accessible

12 learning environment from the start.

13 MS. FLAX: Samantha.

14 MR. HEINL: Tom.

15 MR. O'CONNOR: I hear Samantha, I

16 heard Tom and Natasha, do you --

17 MS. JERDE: I had my hand up.

18 MR. O'CONNOR: All right. Natasha has

19 her hand up. We'll go to her as someone who hasn't

20 shared just yet and then we will come back around.

21 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. So not

22 trying to sway anyone's decision, this is your

23 guys' decision, but something to maybe consider is

24 before deciding on whether it's worth actually

25 having a membership or not, to actually attending

1 one of the national conferences to see what value
2 they may or may not bring to this Council.

3 If you are looking at some of the
4 agendas, I have the agendas up from previous NCSRC
5 conferences and they have a lot of power, this
6 group does, at influencing Congress, at making
7 national level decisions that impact our program
8 here in Minnesota.

9 So going back to having a voice, if
10 you are at the table you have a voice, if you are
11 not you are abdicating that power to others to make
12 those decisions for you.

13 The presentations that they offer, so

14 they had RSA there and the RSA liaisons that are
15 specific to state rehab councils, they talk about
16 how to write and put together an annual report that
17 can actually impact your legislators, they offer
18 training on what is really the purpose of WIOA and
19 the partnerships with other programs.

20 And I think the purpose of the NCSRC
21 is to build a national coalition that has power
22 with Congress, but also build state councils that
23 also have power and influence in our own
24 legislative areas as, well as for the agency
25 itself.

1 So no, I am not saying that we should
2 disregard all of these other really important
3 factors, but I just wanted to put it out there as
4 part of that informed choice that maybe if you
5 decide we don't know if we are really comfortable,
6 maybe see what value it can bring by attending one
7 of the conferences and then making an informed
8 choice that way. But I leave that all up to you.

9 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. And I
10 appreciate the pun of informed choice, visiting
11 something before making a decision applies in so
12 many ways.

13 MS. JERDE: Yes.

14 MR. O'CONNOR: Is there further
15 discussion? I heard a couple but I didn't hear who
16 they were.

17 MR. HART: Rocky Hart.

18 MS. FLAX: Samantha.

19 MR. O'CONNOR: I heard Rocky,
20 Samantha. Are there others, just so I can line
21 folks up?

22 MS. SANDERS: Maybe Judy, depending on
23 what they say.

24 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller.

25 MS. O'CONNOR: Briley.

1 MR. O'CONNOR: Oh my goodness, all
2 right, we have several. I heard Rocky first, we'll
3 go there, and then Frank we will come to you,
4 Samantha, Ryan, Judy in that order.

5 MR. HART: Thank you very much,
6 Mr. Chairman. I don't think the issue here is
7 whether or not we have a seat at the table, you
8 know, I have heard people mention that and I agree
9 that we should have a seat at the table where we
10 can actually be effective.

11 My concern here is that this is
12 already a website and an organization that, number
13 one, is cross disability; two, we are not entirely

14 clear as to how multiple people with multiple
15 disabilities are included, are enacted with. I
16 think there are just -- there are questions that we
17 really need to have answered and, of course, we
18 have some concrete accessibility issues that we had
19 discussed regarding this but, you know, I think,
20 you know, as many have said, it needs to be an
21 informed discussion and I think at the very least a
22 decision should be maybe not necessarily no, but
23 not yet.

24 I think maybe as Natasha has
25 suggested, attending one of these conferences might

1 be -- or having certain councilmembers designated
2 to attend these conferences might be very valuable
3 in us getting some insight.

4 Because I agree, we need to have a
5 seat at the table if we are going to make
6 decisions, you know. We don't need to advocate
7 that, but I also think if we are going to really be
8 effective we don't need to be a part of an agency
9 that is going to cause additional issues and get us
10 into situations where we may not necessarily
11 understand -- we may not necessarily assist with.

12 So I want us to have as a Council to
13 have the best -- and as members of subcommittees to

14 have the best chance at success. Anyway, go ahead.

15 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Rocky.

16 I believe it was Frank that was next.

17 MR. ELLER: Sure, this is Frank Eller,

18 thank you Mr. Chair. I keep forgetting what was

19 all said because there are too many voices going at

20 once, but I have a question for Susan. Susan, I

21 think I heard you wrong when it comes two

22 organizations, the NCSAB and the CSAVR, did you say

23 that they should merge together as one organization

24 or is that just me in my loony mind? Thank you.

25 MS. KUSZ: No, I never said that they

1 should merge.

2 MR. ELLER: Thank you, my apologies.

3 MR. O'CONNOR: Samantha was next.

4 MS. FLAX: I agree with Rocky. I'm

5 hearing a lot of people talking about we are not

6 having power if we are not sitting at the table and

7 my question is: Why is this a table we want to be

8 sitting at?

9 My concern with the Congress example,

10 that's a great example of power and why it might be

11 good, however, I am concerned what they are saying

12 to Congress if the attitude of that inclusive and

13 universal design is as problematic as it was during

14 the presentation, then I would be concerned about

15 what we are saying by joining this organization.

16 When -- I'm forgetting the man's name

17 at the moment, the one who was presenting -- he

18 discussed the fact that we could still go to the

19 conferences, we could still do those things even if

20 we are not members. So I guess I'm really

21 struggling to understand what being a member would

22 gain for us. I think going to the conference is a

23 good idea and I love what Rocky said about not yet.

24 I think if we were to say to them we

25 would love to join, we need to see you make some

1 changes, these are things that need to happen and
2 if these things happen we are happy to meet with
3 you about them, we are happy to share knowledge
4 about how to do them. To Ryan's point about we
5 have lots of people who know about accessibility,
6 I'm not saying not to have those meetings, I
7 absolutely think we should, I think it's worth
8 talking to people about, but I'm very uncomfortable
9 with us joining because to me that makes a
10 statement that we are all okay with what they are
11 doing.

12 So my argument would be let's go to
13 some conferences, let's learn more about them,

14 let's have some meetings, see what they are willing
15 to do on accessibility, what they are willing to do
16 with universal design, what improvements they are
17 willing to make and then once we have that
18 information then and only then should we join.

19 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Samantha.

20 We will go Ryan, Briley and then I'm going to see
21 if the Council is ready to vote or make a motion, I
22 should say, there may not be a need to vote, so let
23 me clarify.

24 Go to Ryan and then Briley and we'll
25 see if there is a motion. Go ahead, Ryan.

1 MR. STRUNK: All right. All due
2 respects to Thomas Jefferson, but I do believe you
3 can put a fire out from inside the house. I think
4 with a group that is putting recommendations to
5 Congress that is as involved as this group is in
6 policy, certainly we can be a part of the
7 sidelines, we can go to conferences and we can
8 whisper in people's ears and we can make
9 encouragements and that sort of thing. But we also
10 get a vote, we get to count votes and we get to
11 influence votes in a bigger way if we are at the
12 table.

13 And to the point about do we -- you

14 know, are we giving tacit consent to the things
15 that are going on? I don't think so. I think we
16 have the ability to be very vocal about the things
17 that we don't like and I think, you know, for that
18 matter if things that happen that we don't like get
19 worse or don't change as a result of our input,
20 there is nothing to stop us from taking our toys
21 and going home.

22 So I think this is worth doing and I
23 think that it is a place where we can have the
24 greatest influence if we are there and then if we
25 need to make a statement then we can.

1 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Ryan.

2 Briley.

3 MS. O'CONNOR: One final last point.

4 The idea that we don't want to be involved with

5 something because some things may be inaccessible

6 is -- I don't know that that's a realistic one, you

7 know. The Department of -- Minnesota Department of

8 Education puts out pdfs that are inaccessible all

9 the time, you know. We are involved here and not

10 everything is perfectly accessible all the time for

11 state employees.

12 Things are not accessible all the time

13 and we are not saying that that's not an issue,

14 that's not something to be resolved, but you don't

15 just take your ball and go home because everything

16 is not exactly right on the first day. So that's

17 just my final point.

18 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Briley.

19 MR. HEINL: Tom Heidl.

20 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. Can I ask

21 a question about something that I'm not sure of?

22 MR. O'CONNOR: Go ahead, Judy.

23 MS. SANDERS: Did they say this year

24 that the schedule is Saturday for the CS-- the

25 general councils and then nothing on Sunday and

1 then the first group starts Monday?

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Kind of. So I'm going

3 to defer to Natasha who will know this better than

4 I will.

5 MS. JERDE: This is Natasha. It's

6 Saturday, Sunday, so it's the 28th and 29th. It

7 typically is all day Saturday and most of the day

8 Sunday.

9 MS. SANDERS: Oh, okay.

10 MR. O'CONNOR: That would be for the

11 NCSRC, correct, Natasha?

12 MS. JERDE: Yes.

13 MR. O'CONNOR: And then, Judy, to your

14 point, CSAVR, the more general council --

15 MS. SANDERS: Starts Monday.

16 MR. O'CONNOR: -- is Monday to

17 Wednesday and then Wednesday afternoon to Friday

18 would be the Blind specific NCSAB.

19 MS. SANDERS: Right. And it's been a

20 lot of years since I actually participated in it,

21 but I do remember a lot of repetition and we save a

22 lot of money if we only go to the start with the

23 NCSAB one because, you know, Rehab Administration

24 comes back and they talk to us, as well as the

25 other ones and who wants to sit through it twice

1 and pay?

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Judy.

3 Tom, did I hear you looking for the

4 floor?

5 MR. HEINL: Yes, I am. If we are

6 basing our decision on the fact that this website

7 is not universally designed, or whatever you want

8 to call it, and that's why we are not going to

9 join, there is very few websites that are

10 universally designed at the present time. And most

11 of your disability websites, or even the federal

12 government's websites say if you need special

13 circumstances or adaptations to let us know ahead

14 of time so we can set them up.

15 So the argument about don't go with

16 them because they are not diversified I think could

17 hold for many, many sites. So I don't think that's

18 a rational reason for not joining.

19 MS. FLAX: Samantha.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Tom.

21 And go ahead, Samantha. And then I

22 would like to see if we can move to some other

23 business this evening if possible, but if there is

24 more debate wish to be had, this chair can be

25 persuaded.

1 But go ahead, Samantha.

2 MS. FLAX: This is not just about the

3 website, this is about how people with other

4 disabilities were spoken to by the representative

5 who came to talk to us. This is an immaturity of

6 not wanting to get involved in a battle that is

7 hard. This is about thinking about what is worth

8 it to us, what is a good use of our energy.

9 Saying I don't like it and so I'm

10 going to take my ball and go home is not a fair

11 assessment of what this is about. This is about

12 certain organizations if you tell them their

13 website isn't accessible or you ask a question and

14 they say we know we need to work on it, it's going

15 to be better, we don't say well, you should have

16 told me that you had another disability before

17 asking your question.

18 To me it's not just about whether a

19 website is accessible, it's how people are treated.

20 A lot of Blind people now have multiple

21 disabilities and I don't want anyone to feel

22 alienated as I personally did by us joining this

23 organization.

24 MS. KUSZ: Mr. Chair.

25 MR. O'CONNOR: Susan, I'm going to see

1 real quick with the folks here, is there a motion
2 that someone wishes to make on the Council?

3 (No response.)

4 MR. O'CONNOR: Hearing no motion --

5 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk, I would move
6 that we join the organization.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: So Ryan is moving that
8 we join, is there a second?

9 (No response.)

10 MR. O'CONNOR: The motion dies for
11 lack of a second, but I think what's exciting to me
12 is that we have, it sounds like, an interest from
13 several folks in the content and material of what

14 the NCSRC is putting together, we have a consensus
15 that accessibility is important to us and that we
16 would like, it sounds like, several folks are
17 willing to attend some of their meetings. And I
18 heard maybe multiple and then come back and revisit
19 this at a future date.

20 So it sounds like we actually have had
21 a really helpful discussion, I found it very
22 helpful to know where folks are coming from and I'm
23 excited that we can find the information that we
24 need that may make us a stronger Council and that
25 we can, perhaps, in the future help to make NCSRC a

1 stronger organization that is more inclusive and
2 more accessible in what it produces.

3 MR. O'DAY: Corbb. This is Michael
4 O'Day.

5 MR. O'CONNOR: Michael.

6 MR. O'DAY: Yeah, I was wondering,
7 maybe what we can do, I don't know that this
8 necessarily needs a motion, but I think it would be
9 good for whoever does go to the conference and
10 attends this to come back and give a report so that
11 we can kind of make an informed decision one way or
12 the other. I think that would be helpful that
13 whoever goes to this should go with the

14 understanding that they come back and tell us, you
15 know, what happened, was it valuable in their eyes.

16 And I think part of the reason for
17 joining is as a networking vehicle so to just see
18 does it live up to expectations, that kind of
19 thing.

20 MR. O'CONNOR: This is Corbb. Thank
21 you, Michael. Great idea and I don't think we will
22 find any opposition to a report after we come back
23 from that meeting, granted the four people who
24 signed up are all maybes, so we don't yet know if
25 any of them are going, but we will make that

1 happen.

2 Say, how about we move on to some

3 committee reports and let's start with the State

4 Rehabilitation Council. Do we have a report from

5 the SRC?

6 (No response.)

7 MR. O'CONNOR: Excellent. How about

8 the State Independent Living Council? Judy.

9 MS. SANDERS: Well, yes. They are now

10 meeting every other month so my problem is I never

11 remember where we left off, but I guess what I

12 would say is we are doing a lot -- we are going to

13 be reviewing our bylaws again. We have our state

14 plan, we always have to write a it's called a SPIL,
15 State Plan for Independent Living and for some
16 reason we had to amend it because the RSA that
17 tells us what we have to do wanted it to be
18 extended for another year. We usually have a
19 three-year plan like we do here, but we had to --
20 our plan was just approved by them so we must have
21 done something right.

22 And then we have an upcoming meeting
23 this month where we are traveling to I think
24 St. Cloud, one of the other centers again, only it
25 is going to be just a one-day trip. I think that's

1 probably enough.

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Judy. The

3 Communication Center Advisory Committee is chaired

4 by Steve Jacobson, I can't talk any slower, whose

5 making his way to a microphone. Steve.

6 MR. JACOBSON: I am here and I will

7 speak quickly. Our last meeting was in May so I

8 gave you a report at the June meeting about our

9 hearing about DAISY so I will only say that our

10 next scheduled meeting, for especially the benefit

11 of those who are newly appointed, it will be

12 September 28 at 2:00 p.m. and we generally meet

13 virtually at this point.

14 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Steve. And

15 very grateful for your willingness to continue

16 chairing that committee.

17 Customer Satisfaction Goals and

18 Priorities Committees is chaired by Jennifer

19 Dunnam.

20 MS. DUNNAM: We will have a report

21 later in the fall once our survey results come in.

22 The end.

23 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Jennifer.

24 No meeting scheduled just yet, is that right?

25 MS. DUNNAM: Not just yet, until we

1 have results.

2 MR. O'CONNOR: Got it, thank you very

3 much.

4 DeafBlind Committee.

5 MS. KUSZ: Meets next Tuesday.

6 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you DeafBlind

7 Committee.

8 Employment Committee does not have a

9 report. Daniel said that he was not able to get

10 that group together.

11 Diversity, Equity and Inclusion we

12 heard from earlier in the meeting, is there any

13 other update that that committee wishes to provide?

14 (No response.)

15 MR. O'CONNOR: Hearing none, Senior

16 Services chaired by Judy Sanders.

17 MS. SANDERS: Hello again. We started

18 at the beginning of our year wondering how we were

19 going to get more visibility for seniors and then

20 came along the Mayo Clinic. And now we've got so

21 many people we don't know what to do, kind of like

22 with shoes or something.

23 So the thing, though, that we are

24 going to do, we decided last meeting or something,

25 we are going to partner with this agency, with

1 Blind, Incorporated, and I thought something else,
2 but anyway, to do something that we've done before,
3 it's a Seniors' Possibilities Fair where we plan an
4 event that allows there to -- we invite seniors and
5 the National Federation of the Blind plays a big
6 part in this because they have expressed
7 willingness to -- whatever costs are involved in
8 paying for both the room where we have the displays
9 and if we have a luncheon they will cover the cost
10 of it.

11 SSB has agreed to cover the cost of
12 the mailing so that we can spread the word to
13 senior centers. And this is going to be our -- and

14 then we will have exhibits where they can visit and
15 see what's out there for them. So that's going to
16 be our big project for the year.

17 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Judy, and
18 the Senior Services Committee.

19 Our Transition Committee is chaired by
20 Wendy DeVore, is there an update?

21 (No response.)

22 MR. O'CONNOR: Hearing none.

23 Vendor Outcomes and Measures, again
24 Daniel mentioned that there is not an update at
25 this time.

1 We now have as our final order of

2 business is there any public comment?

3 MR. STRUNK: Ryan Strunk.

4 MS. FLAX: Mr. Chair.

5 MR. O'CONNOR: I heard Strunk and

6 someone else. Start with Strunk and then we'll go

7 to that person.

8 MR. STRUNK: Okay. Just in sort of

9 thinking about this motion a moment ago that died

10 for lack of a second, I think one of the things

11 that I would like to propose to the Council for

12 those people who are opposed to the idea of working

13 with this group is that there is a hesitation

14 because of various stances that they have taken or

15 at least stances that were taken by one particular

16 representative.

17 If we are essentially abstaining from

18 joining the organization as sort of a protest move,

19 or at least a fact finding mission, then I wonder

20 if it is worth putting together some sort of a

21 statement, a position, a white paper, what have you

22 to the organization to ask them to prioritize these

23 particular things?

24 MS. SANDERS: This is Judy. I started

25 all --

1 MR. O'CONNOR: Before you jump in,
2 Judy, if you don't mind. Was there someone else
3 seeking the floor?

4 MR. ELLER: There was.

5 MS. FLAX: Yes.

6 MR. O'CONNOR: Oh, Samantha. Yes.

7 MS. FLAX: One quick thing, one, I
8 think that's a good idea, I think we should do it,
9 but that's not what I was going to say. What I was
10 going to say is just a note to councilmembers, I
11 will be sending out a survey and talking to people
12 individually about different kinds of professional
13 development that the committee has come up with,

14 different ideas, I would like to know which things

15 people would be most interested in.

16 I recognize that me saying in a

17 meeting come to me if you have ideas could be

18 daunting and easy to forget. So I will be reaching

19 out to people so be on the lookout in your emails

20 for that information so that we can prepare more

21 professional development activities.

22 MR. O'CONNOR: And on that note at our

23 next meeting John Filek from the Helen Keller

24 National Center is scheduled to present to us, so

25 thank you to the Professional Development Task

1 Force.

2 Judy.

3 MS. SANDERS: Well, I just wanted to

4 say that I think I sort of started this whole --

5 no, you asked the question so you did it, Corbb.

6 I wasn't even thinking about

7 accessibility because I try very hard not to think

8 about it. And so I just think that what they do is

9 very repetitious to what we do just by coming to

10 NCSAB and meeting with other councils for agencies

11 for the Blind. So I didn't have any objection to

12 what they do, I didn't -- I have never known them

13 to be -- I never hear of anything they do with

14 Congress, so I didn't know about that.

15 But I think we are well enough

16 connected, both ourselves and through our consumer

17 organizations, that we've got that covered, so I'm

18 not worried about it, so anyway.

19 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Judy.

20 Is there further public comment? I

21 heard TikTok and thought there might be some TikTok

22 comment.

23 Is there further public comment?

24 (No response.)

25 MR. O'CONNOR: Steve, did you have any

1 announcements from the National Federation of the
2 Blind about, say, on upcoming meeting in November
3 that you wanted to share?

4 MR. JACOBSON: I can do that, I
5 actually hadn't thought about that for the next
6 meeting, but yes, we will have a state convention
7 coming up November 3 through 5th in Rochester,
8 Minnesota and more details will become available
9 shortly.

10 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank you, Steve.

11 Any other public comment?

12 MS. SANDERS: Does that mean this is
13 going to run into NCSAB?

14 MR. O'CONNOR: That does mean if you
15 wish to attend you could do what Corbb did last
16 year and do a marathon travel, I was on the road
17 for three weeks straight and I do not recommend it.
18 But you could fly back Friday morning and go
19 straight into convention if you are attending the
20 NFB convention in Rochester.

21 Say, our next meeting of this council
22 is on October 5 and you will want to remember as
23 well that we will have a potentially infamous
24 meeting on December 7 later this year as well, so
25 please keep those dates on your calendar. And

1 hopefully at the December meeting we will have an
2 annual report to approve on December 7.

3 Is there any -- hearing no other
4 further business to come before, I wonder if there
5 might be a motion that doesn't die for lack of a
6 second to adjourn?

7 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, motions.

8 MR. O'CONNOR: Frank Eller. Is there
9 a second?

10 MS. SANDERS: I will second it.

11 MR. O'CONNOR: Thank goodness, Judy.

12 Judy kept the motion alive, thank you, Judy.

13 We will move to a vote, Frank Eller.

14 MR. ELLER: Frank Eller, yes.

15 MR. O'CONNOR: Samantha Flax.

16 (No response.)

17 MR. O'CONNOR: We will come back to

18 Samantha later.

19 Ryan Haenze.

20 MR. HAENZE: Ryan Haenze, yes.

21 MR. HEINL: Tom Heinl, yes.

22 MR. O'DAY: Michael O'Day, yes.

23 MS. FLAX: Samantha Flax, yes.

24 MS. SANDERS: Judy Sanders, yes.

25 MR. O'CONNOR: Let's not make the

1 court reporter write three things at once.

2 Judy Sanders votes yes.

3 Ryan.

4 MR. STRUNK: Strunk Ryan, yes.

5 MR. O'CONNOR: Kyle Van Acker.

6 MR. VAN ACKER: Kyle Van Acker, yes.

7 MR. O'CONNOR: And Corbb O'Connor,

8 yes. Thank you very much. See you October 5.

9 Thank you everybody.

10 (Meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.)

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1 STATE OF MINNESOTA)

2) ss.

3 COUNTY OF HENNEPIN)

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7 REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

8

9 I, Kimberly K. Evavold, do hereby

10 certify that the above and foregoing transcript,

11 consisting of the preceding 115 pages is a correct

12 transcript of my stenographic notes, and is a full, true

13 and complete transcript of the proceedings to the best

14 of my ability.

15 Dated: August 10, 2023

16

17

KIMBERLY K. EVAVOLD

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Court Reporter

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