

Members Present: Donald Deignan – Chairperson GAC; Elizabeth Graves – GAC Member / SRC member; Regina Connor –GAC Member, Carmen Boucher – DOH / SILC representative; Ralph Iannitelli – GAC Member; Barbara Walsh – GAC Member

Members Not Present: Donna Elliott – GAC Member / NFB of RI; John Pimental – Vice President of NFB of RI / GAC Member;

Staff Present: Ronald Racine – ORS Administrator; Laurie DiOrio –Administrator SBVI; Jane Cannata – Sr. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Staff Not Present: Melanie Sbardella – Assistant Administrator SBVI / BEP Program Administrator;

Sandy Pritko SS / IL Supervisor; Rebecca Cloutier – Case Aide SBVI

Guest: None

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- Meeting started at 4:05 PM with introductions.
- June 12 minutes were approved as quorum was completed – minutes were voted on as circulated and approved

SOCIAL SERVICES UPDATE – Laurie DiOrio for Sandy Pritko

- Older Blind population had 424 individuals served
- Unit has recovered from the layoffs last year and the new staff added has been trained.
- Future challenges would be staffing and succession planning with likely retirement of two staff in unit
- Also had vacant O&M position and Rehabilitation Teacher position due to retirement and transfer
- Difficulty finding qualified candidates for these positions

- The positions are being supplemented with a contracted (fee for service) vendor
- Monitoring impact of recent tax reform and potential cuts to programs under “Pay-Go” provision – might reduce or eliminate Older Blind – there were questions from council regarding state budget issues and potential impact on services – this is not known at this time

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VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION UPDATE – Ronald Racine

- ORS/SBVI will be moving to Order of Selection and waitlist for all Categories (1-3) pending approval from RSA
- Due to loss of reallocation funds following recent hurricane season – received less funds than usually are allocated - In order to ensure fiscal prudence
- Does not directly impact SS/IL/OIB but OIB/SS may see more clients referred over for interim services from VR
- Also watching the impact of new tax reform on long term funding outlook for VR and Medicaid programs – question of the “Pay-Go” contingency to balance out federal budget deficits which may trigger funding reduction or elimination

BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM – Laurie DiOrio (for Melanie Sbardella)

- No Report Presented

RISILC REPORT – Carmen Boucher

- Member Update – 3 new members appointed to RISILC for 3 year

terms

- **Working on SILC website improvements and upgrades**
- **Adequately funded to be able to maintain their own website**
- **SILC engaged with the GDC in its public forums over the summer**
- **Collaborated and attended the OSCIL Independent Living Conference**
- **RSA 704 Annual Report for IL Part B is in process to be filed by the end of the year**
- **Suspended member elections for Chair, Vice, etc. until the Spring**
- **Looking at possible bylaw revision**

SRC UPDATE – Liz Graves

- **SRC had new member orientation this Fall over the course of two meetings**
- **Use a training manual and had informative presentations**
- **SRC is monitoring the OOS issue at ORS along with the waitlist and other issues**

MISCELLANEOUS

- **Dates for next meetings: 03/12/2018; 06/11/2018; 09/10/2018; 12/10/2018**
- **Schedule was accepted as motioned by Regina and Elizabeth – approved unanimously – all agreed to having meetings earlier in the day – possibly 2:00 or 3:00 PM**
- **Membership Drive – flyers were sent out with the SBVI calendars this year**
- **Motion to re-distribute GAC recruitment flyer widely and via the SBVI caseloads**

- **Looking for youth membership**
- **Carmen discussed Dare to Dream – youth advisory groups, etc**
- **Don cautioned that members should be primarily persons with blindness issues or persons likewise engaged in the field professional or personally (motioned by Elizabeth and Ralph) approved unanimously**
- **Will request representative from Insight**
- **Chairperson's Final Thoughts: Don Deignan formally announced his imminent departure from the GAC. His term ends March 2018. He has been with the GAC since 1988 and chairperson since 1993. During his time, he has been instrumental in advocating for issues impacting blind Rhode Islanders including children. He believes in advocacy in three major areas: 1) Education – in particular inclusive education for blind children at home and in their communities; 2) Employment – career opportunities for blind individuals which has improved greatly but should continue to be a focus of the GAC and 3) Transportation – which has been and remains a major if not worsening concern**
- **The first order of business for the council this coming Spring of 2018 should be to hold elections for the new chairperson**
- **In closing – Ronald Racine presented Don with a plaque of recognition for this 30 years of service on the Council**
- **Meeting adjourned at 5:07 PM**