

Connections for Independent Living
Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, May 26, 2021 @11:00 a.m.

Attendance in the Meeting:

President-Mary Jo Brockshus, Secretary-Elizabeth Mahoney, Member-Kate Howell, Member-Lou Steinberg, Member-Erica Barraza, Executive Director-Rochelle Miller, Director of Communications-Richard Rhinehart, Executive Associate-Carol Cochrane

President Brockshus called the meeting to order at 11:06 a.m.

Director Steinberg motioned to approve the minutes of the April 28, 2021 Board of Directors meeting and Director Howell seconded. Vote taken. Motion approved unanimously.

A discussion ensued regarding the previously emailed COVID-19 vaccination policy. At the conclusion of the conversation, Director Steinberg motioned to approve the COVID-19 vaccination policy and Secretary Mahoney seconded. Vote taken. Motion approved unanimously.

Director of Communications (DC) Rhinehart began his presentation with the announcement that Connections is a proud recipient of a \$25,000 grant from the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation. This grant is for a one-year time period. It will enable Connections to provide those dealing with paralysis the opportunity to connect with friends in varying activities such as photography, gaming, or genealogy. The offerings will be presented in different blocks through the upcoming year. The first step in fulfilling this opportunity is to hire a part-time person to direct the program, with guidance from staff, within the next few weeks.

DC Rhinehart next explained that Connections has begun utilizing Google analytics to identify and reach potential consumers of our services. Google provides non-profits with \$10,000 per month in "Google Dollars" to spend on this google marketing and advertising, with some limitations. The hope is to gain a better understanding of what types of advertising drives people to Connections offerings and utilizing this information to increase our consumer base. The initial monetary investment was \$96 of our funds to run tests while our Google AdGrants was being approved. We selected the American Sign Language (ASL) program as the first of our services for active marketing. Other programs of Connections will be selected in the future.

Connections increased advertising through on site presentations, traditional news media and social/digital media. Independent Living Services (ILS) Director Fulenwider gave a presentation to Unite Colorado last week. His presentation was well received and the attendees appeared to be intrigued and had meaningful questions. The Greeley

Tribune had two articles on Connections within the past month. A contractor is assisting us in social media presentation in order to achieve wider digital views and followings.

Executive Director (ED) Miller stated that Connections believes that in these times it is important to get our name and services known in the community in order to reach people. Additionally, we are members of the Chambers of Commerce in the seven counties we service, which in turn provide more publicity and acceptance of our offerings. The information we are gaining is not only utilized by us, but we are sharing general analytics with entities such as the newly formed Technology Broadband Services Committee from Gov. Polis' office, thus enabling the entire state to benefit from the information we gather. CD Rhinehart left the meeting at 11:37 a.m.

Financial Report

Executive Director Miller began the financial presentation by highlighting the big spike in income from the PPP Loan on the Financial Dashboard. She stated that we should have all the information to file the forgiveness paperwork for the PPP loan by the end of June or beginning of July. April actuals are close to the budgeted numbers. The slight increase in expenses over income is due to the COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic funding not coming in until the 2nd or 3rd week of May. The rest of the April expenses are on track. Expenses in June will go down as one of our directors is leaving May 26, 2021 and ED Miller does not intend to replace this position for the time being. Additionally, some staff will reduce to 36 hours for the summer. As the CARES Act funding is fully expended, the work from home reimbursement will reduce to half the current amount in June. President Brockshus inquired as to the large dollar amount in supplies. ED Miller responded that much of that was ink and paper while working from home. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which is over Section 8 housing, requires that paperwork be submitted to them in color, not black and white. They still require a large amount of paperwork even though most of Connections own files are now digital.

The P&L Statement is usually negative as there is always an amount of funding that trends \$70,000 - \$75,000 in arrears due to the billing and payment process of the Colorado Division of Labor and Employment (CDLE). Grants from the federal government may not come in when expected, but they are guaranteed and there is little to no worry of not receiving this funding.

The BDO audit is on track. It is delayed slightly as one person who needs to perform the overall review is ill. We are expecting to receive the hard copy in early June.

The CDLE monitoring review is another entire audit. Connections is pushing back on some of the requests as they are not staying in their "lane" with specific inquiries to State General Funds. It is the responsibility of the state to monitor the handling of

CDLE funds, but they have no privilege to request other areas of finances with no cause. The additional use of these resources will likely cause an extra \$5,000 or more in accounting expenses. Having just undergone an outside audit, going outside their scope would essentially be an unnecessary duplication of efforts. The CDLE digital audit begins June 14, 2021 with the prepared by client (PBC) items digitally supplied the week of June 7, 2021. The board engaged in a short discussion and suggested that if the CDLE monitors do not stay in their lane, we bill them for extra accounting cost reimbursement. ED Miller stated that it is not just the monetary issue, it is a privacy issue as well.

We will be able to access a new \$17,000+ grant soon. The grant is titled The Expanding Disability Network Access To COVID-19 Vaccine. This is part 2 of the vaccine resistance funding. There is a potential opportunity to receive additional funding from the state center on aging for these same services, expected grant opportunity is an additional \$16,000. A full project plan has been written for these grant funds and can be expanded if the additional funding becomes a reality.

Connections is on track to completely draw down our State General Funds and Part B for the current fiscal year, which ends June 30, 2021.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is looking to rent space from Connections as the department will no longer have their own offices. We are looking at options of staffing the office in order to provide this assistance.

The Part C funding drawdown is on target to be completed by September 30, 2021.

The SEEKS Grant should be billing out more in June.

Operations and Executive Director Report

Connections has 455 active consumers with 768 services delivered. The ILS staff is currently cleaning up the consumer database (called MiCIL) of our core services.

The Connections 2nd vaccine clinic served 94 people. It went very well. We will not be holding another vaccine clinic. However, if someone in the disabled community needs transportation to any of the Sunrise Medical 7 area clinics or to The Ranch in order to receive a vaccine and reaches out to us, we will transport them if possible.

Four people were dropped from the Section 8 voucher list - 2 were no longer eligible, 1 transferred, and 1 died. Connections is scheduled to receive 15 to 20 vouchers in June. A discussion developed concerning the reasons people may not be able to utilize their section 8 voucher. Reasons mentioned include the lack of affordable housing, lack of accessible housing and inability to find housing which accommodates specific needs.

The three often quoted reasons are accessible, affordable, and equitable. The main area of difficulty in our region tends to be accessibility.

The Transitions Department has four people currently in the process of possibly transitioning from congregate care facilities to independent living. One person is having difficulty finding a unit with a roll-in shower,

Interpreting clients are up slightly in April. However, they are trending much higher in May. This is partly due to graduations and more people scheduling doctor's appointments. Director Steinberg inquired about how we might, while waiting for payment resolution, fill up the interpreting spots previously given to UNC. ED Miller responded that we expect by July to have the School of Mines, Pinnacol, and the State Rural Services on board. Also discussed was the status of payment by UNC of the past due amount. ED Miller stated that our attorney had a discussion with their attorney and it appears that progress is being made and there should be a resolution soon. ED Miller then discussed the reasons that Director of Interpreting Augenstein is resigning effective May 25, 2021. The main issue is that she desires to interpret and appreciates the one-on-one aspect of her training. The administrative piece is not where she wishes to spend her professional life. ED Miller stated that Ms. Augenstein was the main reason the Interpreting program existed and grew to such great heights in her years in this role, she will be missed, but we do get to hang on to her for special projects and as an independent contractor. The VRI room is now complete and operational. Look for the wonderful demo video coming to Connections social media.

Executive Director Miller stated that in the next newsletter, we will include a survey for all of our consumers. They will answer eight to ten questions concerning technology, access to broadband, coming back to the building and other topics including those required by CDLE to be asked on an annual basis. The survey also went out digitally (email) to anyone we had an email for, so far we have about a 5% return rate.

Finally, Connections formed a committee to address the return to the office and in person services. Their first report is due to ED Miller by the end of May.

New Business

ED Miller stated that Connections will operate under summer hours from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The work week will end at noon on Fridays during this time period. Hourly staff will have the option of working 36 hours during the week or elongating their work days from Monday through Thursday to arrive at 40 hours. This change is being implemented to provide staff with a much needed stress reduction and should be viewed as a reprieve not a punishment. Director Barazza left the meeting at 12:30.

President Brockshus inquired as to what the percent of pay increase is in next year's budget. ED Miller responded that there is a 2% COLA and from 0% to 2% performance based increase for each employee.

President Brockshus stated that a new Chamber Ambassador shared that nonprofits are a main target of hackers and inquired as to the protections Connections has in this area. ED Miller responded that ILS Director Fulenwider has a weekly tech training with staff.

ED Miller then shared that ILS Director Fulenwider and she are working on a new organizational chart that should be completed by the next board meeting. The preliminary chart shows the switch from a waterfall presentation to one that is more agile and emphasizes communication.

Old Business

The nominations committee will meet Thursday June 10 at 9:00 A.M. to discuss the frequency and time of meetings as well as next steps in recruiting.

The finance committee will contact the Merrill Lynch representative for an update.

The building committee reported that Dane and Dylan Roche of Roche Construction have agreed to join the building task force. A discussion ensued regarding the 35th anniversary of Connections and the opportunity to utilize the event to fundraise for needed building modifications. It was agreed that potential names of invitees should be gathered by the end of June. Potential dates were discussed for this fundraising kickoff event. They include the September days of the Friday Fest as well as the Chamber After Hours events in September. The conversation then turned to the possibility of applying for funds from the city block grant program and other local investors and developers.

The next board meeting is on June 23, 2021.

Director Steinberg moved to adjourn the meeting. Secretary Mahoney seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

The Board adjourned at 12:49p.m.

Respectfully submitted, done to the best of my belief and ability, by Carol Cochrane.

APPROVED AT BOARD MEETING held June 23, 2021

DocuSigned by: 
Affirmed by: Elizabeth Mahoney, Board Secretary Date: 8/17/2021 | 12:10 PM PDT