

## **Connections for Independent Living**

### **Board of Directors Regular Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, April 20, 2022 @10:00 a.m.** Hybrid via Zoom & in person

Attendance in the meeting:

President-Mary Jo Brockshus, Secretary-Elizabeth Mahoney, Treasurer-Lou Steinberg, Member-Kate Howell, Member-Erica Barraza, Member-Tony Gonzalez, Interpreting Director-Karen McCallah, Executive Director-Rochelle Miller, Finance and Admin. Manager-Carol Cochrane

President Brockshus called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m.

Treasurer Steinberg moved to approve the March 2022 board minutes with a correction of a spacing issue on page 3 in the second paragraph. Secretary Mahoney seconded. Vote taken. Motion passed unanimously.

#### **Financial Report**

The financial portion of the meeting began with Treasurer Steinberg stating that the financial reports are all in good shape. Connections received three submissions in response to the request for proposals (RFPs) sent out for the 2021, 2022 and 2023 fiscal year audits and 990s. He reported that the finance committee met last week and reviewed the financial statements and the RFP responses. The finance committee will follow up with the references supplied by the company with the lowest proposed fee and report back to the board. Income is up slightly and hopefully interpreting revenue improvements will offset any potential lowered amounts from state budget issues.

ED Miller reported that Connections received three new contracts for interpreting. One of the three requested a discount for services and we responded by offering a three to five percent discount. This reduction represents the maximum allowable amount to break even on department expenses.

Next ED Miller stated that Connections will receive \$140,000 from the federal government for the long haul COVID grant. This grant begins immediately and ends in September 2024, and funds are designated to wages in support of this health initiative. A temporary employee will be hired for the duration of the grant. The job description is complete and interviews for this position should commence in May. Some of the funding is carved out to cover administrative costs. A brief discussion of the grant ensued

covering the increase in amount and how other centers were planning to utilize the funding.

The financial portion of the meeting ended with a brief positive discussion of the accounts receivable report and the teamwork involved in keeping the aging at very acceptable levels.

### **Operations and Executive Director Report**

The discussion of the ED Report began with a focus on the social media section of the report. The board discussed the importance of sharing and/or liking media posts made by Connections in order to increase viewership and exposure.

The outreach group had two presentations in eastern counties during the last month - one in Phillips and the other in Washington. An issue concerning voting in a county not in our catchment area arose in the last few weeks. This resulted in requests for our team to write letters addressing the topic and the effect it could have on people living with disabilities.

HB 22-1031, known as the Right to Repair Bill, will allow users of wheelchairs and other mobility devices more freedom in market share when obtaining repairs for their devices. Brad Taylor, director of the transition department, testified yesterday in support of this bill. Connections wrote the support letter on behalf of ACCIL and the letter was signed by all 9 center Directors. It is currently scheduled for a vote later today. (Update - it passed along with a companion bill regarding Medicare billing expansion, and is awaiting the governor's signature.)

The cost of living adjustment (COLA) and funding for Centers for Independent Living was under discussion within the joint budget committee (JBC) at the legislative level but has been met with no interest or engagement. The 9 center Directors met with Joe Baria, CDLE Director, and although Mr. Baria claims to sympathize with our funding shortfalls, he has yet to advocate for its increase. At the federal level, the Association of Community Living (ACL) is supporting legislation that would have significant increases and a "permanent" funding of centers with the lobbying of Congressional approval.

ED Miller next introduced Interpreting Director Karen McCallah. Ms. McCallah began her presentation with a brief background of her interpreting experience and credentials. She moved from Georgia over three years ago and has fifteen years of legal and medical interpreting experience. In her off time Ms. McCallah volunteers at Hearts and Horses Equine Center.

Director McCallah explained that Connections has 54 independent interpreting contractors of which 12 have legal certifications, 9 are located out of state and 4 are deaf. She explained that deaf interpreters work in teams with a hearing interpreter and are able to provide a more effective interpreting experience as they understand the challenges of being deaf.

In the legal area of interpreting it is important for interpreters to be certified. Ms. McCallah serves on the state legal interpreting committee as the subcommittee chair. They are developing practice papers and standardization for agencies and interpreters. Legal staffed is not necessarily legal certified. Their task is to educate community interpreters on which jobs they should or should not perform. This protects the consumers rights in the legal environment.

Director McCallah is a major participant in the pilot program to provide interpreting for an emergency response plan. CMIST (Colorado Emergency Communication Plan) will provide on-site interpreters during an emergency for the media outlets. Connections is leading the way in this program as we have the biggest staff with the longest service in the state as compared to the two other independent living centers who provide interpreting services.

Quality interpreting is important. In medical, legal, and emergency situations it can be a matter of life or death. In Colorado there is a lack of 24/7 coverage for people in hospitals. VRI is not the same as one cannot see clearly what is happening at a patients' bedside. It is not equal access causing patients to fight for their right for interpreters.

One of our interpreters is pushing to support deaf advocacy legislation in Wyoming. Also in Wyoming, three of Connections interpreters provided interpreting services to a student who previously was unresponsive to the normally provided interpreting experience with a non-licensed provider. They were able to discover the student's communicative needs and adjusted their methods which in turn enabled the student to respond to in class questions correctly, something the student never before accomplished.

Next Ms. McCallah stated that her goal is to increase the interpreting contractor pool for Connections. There are not enough licensed interpreters, we need to increase the base to provide the coverage requested. To this end we are advertising on social media and we are becoming a VRI testing site by summer so we will have access to additional certified interpreters.

The board discussed with Director McCallah various aspects of the interpreting situation in the state of Colorado. Hopefully standard practice papers will enable people to obtain

the qualified interpreters they need for each situation through the education of those providing the service and those hiring interpreters. It must be consumer led. The board expressed their appreciation and thanks for Director McCallah's efforts

**Old Business**

Director Brockshus asked if all members completed the training webinar on IRLU. She stated that it took her 25 minutes, she achieved 100% and received the certificate. The *Clifton Strengths Training Class* is April 28th from 1:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m. The assessment for the Strengths Training should be completed before the April class.

As discussed in a prior board meeting, the grant for the entryway improvement was withdrawn. There are existing funds that were donated and are restricted to this project. Options for utilizing these funds include fixing the concrete that has buckled and installing a handrail leading up the walkway to the main entrance. A brief discussion ensued regarding the options. Treasurer Steinberg moved to utilize the restricted funds to do the repair work on the concrete and if any funds remain to install a handrail by the walkway. Secretary Mahoney seconded. Vote taken. Motion approved unanimously.

**New Business**

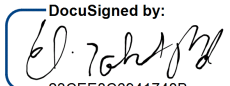
The board discussed changing the board meeting schedule for the current year. Various ideas were presented and debated. Member Howell made a motion to eliminate the July board meeting, altering the board's meeting calendar to 10 meetings per calendar year, effective immediately. Secretary Mahoney seconded. Vote taken. Motion carried unanimously.

The next Connections board meeting is scheduled for May 25, 2022. It will be a hybrid meeting, both in-person at the Connections office and on ZOOM.

The board adjourned at 11:40 a.m.

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

**APPROVED AT BOARD MEETING** held May 25, 2022

Affirmed by:   
23CEE8C6941748B  
Elizabeth Mahoney, Board Secretary

Date: 6/17/2022 | 11:31 AM PDT