

Disabilities Network of Eastern CT
19 Ohio Ave.
Norwich, CT 06360
June 13, 2023
5:30 PM - 7:00PM
Virtual meeting via Zoom
2023 Annual Meeting Minutes

On Screen:

K. Pellerin – President
S. Baecker – Vice President
E. Petrick - Board of Director
S. Heddle – Executive Director, DNEC

I. Call to Order: The meeting was called to order at 5:35 PM.

II. Public Comment: There were no public comments.

III. Approval of June 14, 2022 Annual meeting minutes:

A motion was made by S. Baecker to approve the Annual Meeting minutes of June 14, 2022, seconded by E Petrik. Minutes approved as written.

IV. Executive Director's Report

A detailed report from S. Heddle covered several issues: staffing, SILC/SPIL information, etc. Please see the attached report.

V. Nominating Committee report:

K. Pellerin, nominating committee chair, proposed and submitted the following open positions for 2023-2024: President, Vice President, Secretary

The chair opened the floor for nominations –the following nominations were made by the board of directors present:

Nominated

President – K. Pellerin
Vice President – E. Petrik
Secretary – S. Baecker

The proposed slate was accepted and the nominations were closed. A formal vote will be taken at the Sept. 12, 2023 meeting.

VI. President's Report:

- A. Reviewed the meeting schedule for the next year
- B. General discussion regarding plans for 2023-2024.

VI. New/Old Business:

- 1. A copy of the proposed and current by-laws, with all typos and other agreed-upon changes corrected, was prepared by K Pellerin and sent to all members of the board as well as S. Heddle, making it easier to read. One major area that continues to require attention is Article III

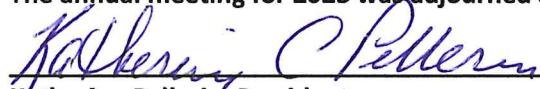
regarding membership. All directors will be sent a copy of the Articles of Corporation (A of C) to further assist in the discussion whether the new by-laws will include language for membership. The problem the board is facing is that the A of C, which should guide us as to whether there is a legal need to have such clause about membership, is very ambiguous. Also, the proposed by-laws from ProBono, who had our A of C at the time they worked on the packet stated there was no need to have the language as found in our current by-laws. Discussion of both sides of the issue continued until time ran out to make a decision one way or the other. All agreed to table this discussion until September, as the June 14 is our annual meeting.

2. Annual meeting with staff. The meeting will be held via zoom. Staff may be invited. However, as the board members will hopefully be joining the staff at the "Christmas "luncheon on May 23rd, then the annual meeting may consist of only S. Heddle and the current board members. It will be at this meeting that E. Petrik will be voted in as a member of the board of directors.
3. Review of the Board Expectation sheet. As this was reviewed and accepted at a former meeting, there was no further discussion needed.

VII: Other Business:

K. Pellerin brought up the need for an evaluation to be completed on S. Heddle. She will explore the paper work required and will contact board members to assist with the process. The actual evaluation will be completed following the annual meeting so that E. Petrik can be included in the process.

The annual meeting for 2023 was adjourned at 6:15 PM.



Katherine Pellerin, President

06/13/2023 Executive Director's Report – Sharon J. Heddle

State Budget – I have not seen the actual budget yet to confirm this information myself – The last email from our lobbyist, John Larkin, said it included an increase of \$1M for the Independent Living Centers. This would be \$200,000 per center.

We have an open house at the DNEC office on Wednesday 6/28/2023 from 8am – 11am in collaboration with Sr. Resources. We should have a flyer sent out later this week. I will be sending a few personal invitations to some key people so if you have anyone you would like me to send one to, please let me know this week. Senator Osten, Norwich City Council members such as Sing – Swaranjit Khalsa.

We received a surprise from Aging and Disability Services – they had trouble with their accounting go back for a while, they don't want to give us the details, and we received a COLA of \$14,742 and an adjustment payment of \$7,856. The COLA is to be passed on to the employees. I did an adjustment back in January when I did my analysis of the cost of living in our area and what other jobs were paying. I had increased our starting rate to \$19-\$20 per hour and increased everyone accordingly. This came to over \$14,742 so we have met our obligation for a COLA.

My plan for the money is to make working condition improvements over the next few months. I want to hire someone to paint our offices a nice pleasing color, get some floor lamps, possibly new desks, decorative items for our office walls, new curtains. I want to make the office a beautiful place for the staff to work.

Paint with Pam brought in \$290 – it was so nice of Pam to do this for us. Everyone who attended had a lot of fun. Normally I look for something different to do in December to show the staff how much we appreciate them, and I think this year I might have Pam come and do painting with us in the office and have one of the restaurants do some food. I think it is something everyone would enjoy.

Oh, we had quite the fiasco with the Votability Presentation with the Secretary of the State's Office and Center of the Blind. We had been asked by the Secretary of the State's Office to participate. This was to be held on Tuesday, 5/30/2023 and was canceled on Monday, 5/29/2023.

This all had to do with interpreters for DNEC's deaf staff. We requested the interpreter on 5/3/2023. I followed up the following day to be sure they got the request. I checked in on Thursday, 5/25/2023 to be sure everything was in place.

Well, it wasn't. I had to tell them that without the two required interpreters for events over two hours, DNEC would not be attending. With that, Gretchen Knauff who is the SILC President, an attorney, and who was bringing the accessible equipment as a representative for RevUp and Debra Dorfman an Attorney and Executive Director at DRCT, both said if there are no interpreters they were pulling out as well. Then they both began quoting the laws and suggesting the event be postponed, informing them they were violating the ADA laws, then saying it could result in a lawsuit, and finally Deborah Dorfman said

As both Attorney Knauf and I have explained in our respective emails, should you proceed with the event without the interpreters, the Secretary of State's office will be in violation of Title II of the ADA and other federal and state antidiscrimination laws.

Again, I urge the Secretary of State to reconsider her position. If she does not, Disability Rights Connecticut will consider filing a federal complaint against the Secretary of State's office.

They canceled the event. Over 30 emails flew back and forth over 3 days. The Secretary of the State's office came back and said it wasn't their event anyway – which is funny.

SOTS called me to invite me

SOTS told me this was one of ten in a series they would hold across the state

SOTS created the flyer

SOTS had their phone number and email to register and request interpreter

SOTS intern sent out an email to non-profits in the area that they were having this event

SOTS created and sent out the agenda

SOTS emailed Brynn asking if she could interpret – for free

SOTS was doing all the communication about the event

When presented with DRCT filing a complaint – they said not their event and had Wendy Lusk at Center of the Blind cancel the event.