

N.J. Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired (CBVI)  
**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)**

Meeting Minutes – February 2, 2018  
Joseph Kohn Training Center - 130 Livingston Avenue - New Brunswick, NJ

**Voting Members Present:** Jennifer Armstrong-Ekelmann, Rick Fox, Jonathan Goodman, Susan Head, Zoraida Krell, Fran Leibner, Joan Leonard, Pat McKenna, Kelly Reymann, William Robinson, Evangelia Stone, Fr. James Warnke

**Absent:** Gary Altman, Lisa Killion-Smith, Dawn Monaco, Kris Tucker

**Ex Officio Present:** Amanda Gerson, Danielle Licari-Scorzelli

**Staff/Members of Public Present:** John Walsh, Dr. Bernice Davis, Carol Castellano, Joe Ruffalo

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The meeting was called to order at 9:30 a.m. by Fr. James Warnke, Chairperson. He announced that the meeting was being held in compliance with Section 105 of the Federal Rehabilitation Act 1973, as amended; also in compliance with the New Jersey Open Public Meeting Act, NJSA 10:4-6. Fr. Jim welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Approval of Meeting Minutes**

The meeting minutes of December 1, 2017, were reviewed. Fran Leibner noted there were a few typos that needed to be fixed; she will forward her edits to John and Chris.

A motion was made by Rick Fox, and seconded by Jonathan Goodman, to approve these minutes. All were in favor. The minutes were accepted and will be put into the permanent record of the SRC.

**Federal & State Update by John Walsh, Acting Executive Director:**

**State Level:**

A new administration began on the State level with the new Governor of the State of NJ, Phil Murphy. There have been several changes to leadership within the Department of Human Services, and also within the NJ Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired (CBVI). Starting at the Departmental level, we now have a new Acting Commissioner in Carole Johnson. Ms. Johnson was part of the Obama administration, part of the White House domestic policy council. Her level of expertise deals with public health. She has a Master's degree in government from the University of Virginia. She also has brought on board Andrea Katz, who is her Chief of Staff. Ms. Katz is an attorney by training, and has worked in various capacities for the democratic party, including Chief of Staff for Assemblywoman Huttle, from 2010-2015.

John explained, as often happens in changes of administration, it is a common occurrence that commissioner level and departmental level appointees, as well as divisional directors, are asked to submit a letter of resignation to the new governor. The new governor then makes a decision whether to accept that letter of resignation or not. However, in the 107-year history of CBVI there has never been a division level director let go, so everyone was shocked to learn that Dan Frye's letter of resignation was accepted. This occurred on the day before the Governor's inauguration, January 15.

John reported that, at present, he is serving as Acting Executive Director, and does not know what the long-term plans are for replacing Dan. John also noted that he has made it public he is retiring; finishing his 30-year tenure with CBVI at the end of February.

As CBVI is going through rather drastic changes right now, John commented that he asked Dr. Bernice Davis to be part of every meeting he is part of, and generally Amanda is with him as well, so that the transition of leadership at the Agency can occur. John promised to try and keep everyone as informed as possible during this time. He reported that Acting Commissioner Johnson is going to meet with CBVI's executive team on February 9, where she'll have the opportunity to talk a little bit about her vision for the Department, and also get to meet CBVI's leadership team. Then, a decision will need to be made upon John's departure as to who will be the new Acting Executive Director. John commented that the Commission certainly wants to make sure the leadership structure continues moving forward.

Executive Order (EO): John noted that the last update for the Executive Order, a statute for the SRC, was in 2000; so this will need to be updated. The Council will certainly get a look at it before it moves through the Governor's office. John noted he will send the members a copy of the current EO.

#### Federal Level:

As Congress and the President cannot come to an agreement in creating a budget, the deadline has been extended again, until Feb 8; there was a brief government shutdown for 3 days. Not sure what will come out of that continuing resolution or if a budget will be passed. If there is another federal shutdown, it will not impact services at the Commission; we have enough federal funds.

The United States Department of Labor and Department of Education have decided it is time to modify our combined State Plan, which we do in coordination with other partners of the Workforce Development system. Gary Altman, who is the Executive Director of the State Employment and Training Commission (SETC), and is part of this Council, could not make it today because of some of the issues we're dealing with to scramble and get the plan amended, ready for public comment, and submitted to the Departments of Education and Labor by March 15. We are making amendments to update our plan; putting in new data to update new realities that occurred over the last 2 years. It will be submitted to this body for review, and submitted to the public for review also. We are not making major amendments other than what we statutorily have to do. We have a very good working relationship with our partners in Labor and feel we are well situated in the Department of Human Services, and can certainly have a very positive working relationship with all components of the Workforce Development systems.

The transition report, issued by Governor Murphy's transition team regarding Human & Children Services, is a public document that a few SRC members had reviewed and expressed concern regarding the Commission. All members are encouraged to review and make their own judgements. Fr. Jim requested this document be forwarded to all the SRC members. The Commission was specifically mentioned (page 3); noting the fragmentation of services and how the Commission is providing similar employment services as the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, in a separate department. John explained that this is an advisory document; it is put

out by the transition team. However, it is disheartening to have CBVI described as something that is fragmented, duplicative, and would be better placed within a larger Department of Labor or Workforce Development system.

John assured the SRC that the CBVI team is pulling together to make sure operations continue; however, are tremendously sad by having Dan Frye let go. John reflected that the Agency experienced 4 years of tremendous leadership at CBVI. He commented that Dan is a transformative leader, and had a true vision of what he wanted to do with the Commission. He worked tirelessly to implement positive change that impacted our communities of blind, vision impaired, and deaf blind people in NJ. His leadership, vision, and sheer energy will absolutely be missed by the community. John commented that he is saddened; this was not the way he anticipated ending his 30-year career with CBVI, an agency he truly loved to work for. He also noted that he truly enjoyed working shoulder to shoulder with the SRC during his tenure. He commented that the Commission is moving on, and will continue to do the services tasked to do. He pointed out that the continued support of the SRC is more important now than ever. Fr. Jim commented that it has been a real joy and privilege working with John over the last 40 years. He thanked John for always being the person he could count on. Fr. Jim also commented on the leadership of Daniel Frye, who he thought was one of the more extraordinary executive directors he has known in his 40+ years of being involved with this Agency. Fr. Jim commented, while the Governor has the absolute legal right to accept Dan's resignation, that doesn't mean that it is right. After submitting his resignation, as is always the practice with a new administration, Dan received a form letter telling him he was being let go; not even personally addressed – it said Dear Sir/Madam, unsigned and instructing him to show up the next day in Trenton. Fr. Jim commented that you do not decapitate an agency without having someone else in place. He commented that this is a process that should not be allowed to be repeated. He recommended drafting a strong response from the SRC, to be addressed to the Governor and Acting Commission Johnson, protesting the process, indicating it is not acceptable.

Members of the public attending this meeting were invited to participate in the discussion.

Carol Castellano commented she completely agreed with Fr. Jim regarding the dismissal of Dan Frye. She also noted that she reviewed the transition report and believes the plan is to dismantle the Commission. In her years of activism this would be the third time this is being attempted. When she saw the names of the people on the transition committee she was concerned, as they were the same people on the 2006 committee; same recommendations then. Joe Ruffalo noted that dismantling state agencies has been done in other states, and over the years it has been proven that it just does not work. Carol also pointed out, as far as she was aware, no blind people were invited to be on this transition committee. Fr. Jim shared his concern that the SRC wasn't consulted on this matter either. Carol pointed out that if the Commission is dismantled, it would require changes in state statutes as the Commission came into existence via a statute. Carol commented that the reason she and Joe came to this meeting was to voice their concern, and see what kind of input the SRC could have to support their plan in preserving CBVI. Carol noted that she and Joe put together a document of talking points, which talks in simple, plain language about why the Commission should be preserved as a separate agency. This document will be shared with the SRC members. Carol commented that their plan will have to be an all-out effort, which will include all of the organizations for the blind; media attention, both in terms of letters and perhaps getting coverage on the issue; contacting the Governor, Acting Commissioner, and legislators. Last but not least, a protest in front of the State House will be organized. Zoraida asked about the approach taken in 2006 to prevent the dismantling. Carol noted that it was an all-out response then also. She said they showed up at hearings and won it that way. Carol noted that a lot of the talk in 2006 was about a single point of entry and everything had to be streamlined. The reality for blind people is that the CBVI is the single point of entry; the Commission is so much the opposite of fragmented; the services the Commission provides are not the same as

DVR. Carol shared her contact information with everyone in case they had anything they wanted to speak to her about: [carolcastellano@verizon.net](mailto:carolcastellano@verizon.net) or [blindchildren@verizon.net](mailto:blindchildren@verizon.net)

Joe Ruffalo noted that when his organization, National Federation of the Blind (NFB), found out about this on January 15, NFB members were informed and he wrote a letter to the Governor. Phone calls to the Governor's office were made (approximately 150 that he was aware of). Joe reported that he called Carol Johnson himself, and talked for 10-12 minutes on the importance of the Commission, and at that time, about reinstating Dan Frye. He also forwarded Ms. Johnson a copy of the letter he had sent to the Governor. Joe noted that phone calls, emails, and letters help; every voice counts. He encouraged everyone that even though the SRC is drafting a letter, it doesn't mean that individuals can't write one too. Fr. Jim acknowledged that there are some members that may be constrained within the organizations they serve, but those who are not, this is the time to get active.

A suggestion was made that Facebook would be a great avenue for getting information out and letting people know the reasons why the Commission needs to stay intact. It was pointed out that the Association of Blind Athletes is very active; they have some great video; there are other consumer groups out there that have some great programs and great connections, as well as opportunities for some great sound and video bites.

Joan shared her feelings that people don't know very much about blind people; don't want to know; they think blind people are not really disabled. Her thought was that we have to let people know that blind people are unique and need necessary training. When a blind person is put into a group with people that have other disabilities they get lost in the shuffle.

Susan asked if CBVI had any examples from other states that have either consolidated agencies that have resulted in negative or poorer outcomes, or states that have separated blind and non-blind agencies and have more positive outcomes. It would be quite powerful to show that another state made a mistake by doing this. Another point she mentioned, in terms of, if it were to go to the legislators, it would be very impressive for a contingency of CBVI students to be involved. She described a group of students that came to an outreach program she attended a while back; she was so impressed with them, their ability to use the technology they had; they were going around to all the vendors and talked about their career goals and the transition services they were receiving. They were very powerful. Amanda noted that Texas is the most recent State; however, it may be too soon for them to have put out any public numbers on performance. John commented that it was a major shake-up for Texas as they had a very robust blindness agency. To the larger context, if you think back to 1998 when the Rehab Act became part of a larger Workforce Investment Act, prior to that the Rehabilitation Act was a stand-alone piece of legislation; in '98 decisions were made that services for individuals with disabilities would be part of a larger work force system, and under WIOA we are Title IV of a multi title act and the trend is a thought that consolidation of the workforce systems and the core partners should somehow occur. John commented that the spirit of the law is that all the core partners within the workforce system should work in a collaborative fashion (the one-stop centers, adult literacy, community colleges, which are a large part of the workforce system); do our consumers avail themselves of that – absolutely. It's not just one-stop centers though, its bigger than that, the Workforce Development System, the spirit of just taking an agency that's working and to move it into a larger entity - John commented he did not think it would produce the results we want.

Fr. Jim suggested a small group of SRC members be appointed to write a letter of distain and protest regarding the matter of Mr. Frye's dismissal. Jonathan Goodman made a motion and Zoraida Krell seconded it; all were in favor. Once the letter is written, it will be dispensed among committee members by e-mail for comments, editing, and approval. Then sent out as quickly as possible on behalf of the SRC.

Rick made another motion, for the SRC to draft a letter opposing any action that might result in the absorption of CBVI into another agency. William Robinson seconded this motion; all were in favor.

Jonathan commented that he agreed with today's discussion on these very important issues, and would be happy to work with a group in putting together these letters. William also volunteered to assist. Fr. Jim, Rick, Jonathan, and William will work together to draft these letters.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation Update, By Amanda Gerson:**

Amanda reassured members that everything is still moving forward; consumers getting awesome services; counselors and rest of staff still doing an amazing job, despite anxiety that has settled into the Agency since the announcement of Dan's departure.

Work continues on being in compliance with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and 911 reporting. Counselors did another wonderful job, error free, with the 911 report, 2 weeks ahead of the deadline. Due to the hard work of our counselors, supervisors, and our MIS team the data is all clean. We received recognition from our partners at LIBRA, noting CBVI has the lowest amount of errors when running reports that they've seen from other agencies. John added a kudos to CBVI counselors as well. John noted that employment outcomes are going up simultaneously. On top of all the reporting requirements and everything else we are asking our counselors to do, they are meeting that challenge as well.

Amanda reported that we are maintaining compliance in going out to the sheltered workshops to do the career counseling and outreach to individuals who are blind and vision impaired in those settings. As a result, have had 10-15 individuals who have said to us they are okay for now, but do want additional services, and want to look at getting competitive integrated employment. Kathy Eramo is our point-person for 511 compliance work and she's been going around statewide doing that outreach and facilitating referrals to have consumers reopen with the agency, whether that's in VR or just looking for Independent Living services. John explained that when we talk about the 511 work, this is really for people permitted by law to earn less than the federal minimum wage. The only population in this country who can earn less than minimum wage legally are people with disabilities. The new law under WIOA, without eliminating that standard, although there were plenty of voices that said it should be eliminated from the Fair Labor Standards Act, a separate piece of legislation, there was a compromise to say those people with disabilities, still in sheltered employment, earning less than minimum wage, have to be given the opportunity to seek competitive integrated employment. Good news about this, CBVI was ahead of the curve. Before WIOA, we had stopped referring people to sheltered workshops. So when we did a survey of all sheltered workshops throughout the state we found only about 152 individuals that were blind and vision impaired, deaf blind, still working at sub-minimum wage jobs. About 20% came back into the VR system, so they can try to seek competitive integrated employment; that is significant. The total number we have of people with disabilities, who are in sub minimum wage, is close to 7000 people across the spectrum, and only 152 of them were people that were blind/vision impaired/deaf blind. That's also true of employment outcomes. We had been working hard to make sure we close someone as a successful outcome; our numbers of homemakers were a small percentage of the entire number of successful outcomes. We were down to about 2-3% of our closures. There are other states where 50% of all their employment outcomes were homemakers. We have older blind services where we help individuals stay independent in their home, but we always make the point that when they go into the VR system, we should be moving everyone towards competitive integrated employment. Now the law says we are out of the transition period; no longer serving individuals that have homemaker or vocational goals that do not earn them a competitive wage. What we do now at the Commission, it's a soft hand-off to our Independent Living (IL) program. We've been getting more

into technology and assistive technology, with the Library Equal Access Program (LEAP); more support groups around Assistive Support Programs for Independence, Renewal & Education (ASPIRE). So again, it's that broader range of serving the blind community, where we don't have to refer them to another agency.

Amanda reported that CBVI continues to work on developing additional opportunities for our students and youths with disabilities. The agency is in preliminary talks to develop a new program to enable college students to get experience and develop soft skills, networking, interviewing skills. Hope to pilot something new this summer.

Summer programs all coming along great. There are a good number of referrals for College Prep and Work Skills Prep. A wait list is anticipated for Work Skills, and numbers are positive for the College Prep program. Life 101 planning coming along; applications going out shortly for freshman/sophomores.

Amanda reported that the Employment, Development, Guidance, and Engagement (EDGE) program is as vibrant as ever; just went rock climbing! EDGE students will be volunteering in Student Hands-on Alternatives Reinforcement Project (SHARP) this year.

John commented that the spirit of WIOA is to have agencies do the full-court press with young adults and students with disabilities; to get them ready for the world of work; not to start focusing on careers when they graduate, but focus at a younger age. We talked about the Commission transitioning at age 10, but because the way the law is structured it has to be based on what the state is doing; the state Administration Code is age 14. One of our long-range goals was to begin transition younger so we could get better outcomes. Our hope is for VR services to be just the icing on the cake, and not having to do a lot of remedial work.

Amanda commented that Eva Scott, Director of Blindness Education, has done a great job in moving SHARP forward. It is having successful years under her leadership. She is ensuring Teachers of the Visually Impaired get more training, support, and encouragement to focus not only on academic access, but the whole expanded core curriculum, which gives students the necessary pre-vocational skills, pre-employment skills to be able to address going to work and exploring opportunities for internships, etc.. Last year was the first year EDGE students interned with SHARP and they are so excited to have them back. Patrick commented that there is much interest in the internship opportunities. Candidates must have a resume; they have to interview. Jonathan commented he has been involved in EDGE as a mentor for the last 3 years, and has seen the difference in the students he's worked with. Amanda commented that she is a true believer that there is so much more in our transition programs that are intangible and unmeasurable, in terms of social peer and adult mentor impact on our students; increased comfort in self advocacy; increased sense of self-worth and acceptance, as a lot are battling to accept vision impairment and what it will mean for them as an adult. Rick commented that he has vivid memories of his childhood and the lack of this sort of role modeling. It is very important in the education of blind children. Fr. Jim commented that he was 22 year's old when he first met a visually impaired adult. He noted that CBVI staff make it possible for people like him to have a life - no one should forget that.

YES program (Youth Employment Solutions): Amanda noted that Kelly chaperones this program. It is for students who have additional disabilities. A support specialist takes them through the discovery process; a person-centered assessment that looks at strengths/interests, and helps them develop a portfolio. A person-centered plan brings everyone to the table to talk about what the next steps are. The VR counselor, parents, and any other community supports, they have to make sure everyone is on same page. A social worker can be brought in, if they need help applying for DDD services. Typically for this group, we had 1 or 2 who got jobs over the course of a couple of years, out of the 50 we looked at. 15 students are in this program now;

another 5 who are scheduled to start; 15 students in the past 18 months are currently in employment. 21-24-year old's targeting youth with disabilities, post school youth with disabilities, who have the most significant disabilities. These are students who are on the autistic spectrum who have other intellectual and developmental disabilities; sometimes other physical disabilities, and really do have unique support needs to be able to help them seek competitive integrated employment. It is a great program. Starting to talk about how we are going to expand and replicate this model in the future. John pointed out that the YES Program is a collaboration. Again, the Commission alone can't achieve the mission; it's our community partners, our advisory boards. The more we do things in a collaborative way the more we have a collective impact. The College of NJ (TCNJ) has taken the leadership, finding a new innovative way to find supports for these individuals that have complex support needs; believing in them that they can achieve competitive integrated employment. Under the new rules a child has to be eligible for SSI and Medicaid because they are using Medicaid waiver dollars. So if you can't navigate, we have somebody to help them navigate that system. We know from evidence based practices that you have better outcomes when you spend time on the front end; not to poke/prod that student, but to learn about what they want to do and the student learns themselves. We tend to talk more now about discovery than about assessment; we are learning about the student and the student is learning about what we can provide. We do believe in the theory that it takes a village; the more we work with partners and set up that structure to have a collective impact, the chances are better that we are going to make a difference. A question was raised as to how many hours a client works before they lose their job coach. Amanda noted that it is entirely individualized. For adults we can supply up to 2 years of intensive job coaching and even extend, if the individual is making progress towards the job coach being able to fade out to extended services, long-term follow along. For our youth with disabilities we can actually provide up to 4 years, until age 24, and/or until a long term support. John commented that the best coach goes in and says, how do I arrange for myself to no longer be needed; also knowing where's the point of support that they need to provide in the future. It may just be calling the supervisor once a month to ask how things are going; may be stopping by twice a month to let the supervisor know they are still there; or to meet with the worker to see how they are doing. Sometimes it's not always the work that's an issue, it's navigating break time, social time at lunch, or other soft skill issues. A job coach is there to provide that support to continue to move forward. We can also bring the job coach back in if someone only works 1-2 days a week; then later on wants to work full-time. That's why we want to make sure the supports are there. The Commission does a piece, as well as TCNJ and DDD; we can support these individuals in a collective way. Rick asked if it is hard to find businesses that will consider dealing with people with multiple disabilities. Amanda noted that it can be challenging, but the customized employment approach isn't only customized from the way services are approached for the consumer; it's also customized in the way we approach the business. They go into a business saying, I want to learn more about you and your business; I want to see how we can help you as a business be more productive and fulfill any unmet needs. They ask what kind of things aren't getting done, but need to. They customize that into a job that meets the skills and interest of the person looking for the job. Kelly noted that it's building a relationship to establish trust. Some have started off as internships, and the way we pitch that, it's like a long term interview for the employer, and for the consumer to make a choice if this is a match for them and their interests. The YES specialist's goal is a job developer.

Rehabilitation Services Administration: An introductory phone call took place to discuss CBVI's federal onsite monitoring (slotted to occur end of August). Will begin getting data, policies, and procedures together in order to prepare; anticipate needing to complete revisions to Administrative Code 10:95, bringing it into compliance with WIOA. Fr. Jim commented that this isn't a good thing to be happening without a permanent Executive Director. Amanda commented that although she knew we would be undertaking this project, she did anticipate having the support and knowledge of John and Dan, who have lifelong knowledge of the law. John reminded Amanda that she has his contact information. Fr. Jim suggested that the SRC consider formally requesting this be put off for a year. John noted that he spoke to Terry Martin, from RSA, leading the monitoring team. They are aware that not only is our Division Director gone, and Deputy leaving soon, but also the general agency,

DVRS, also lost Alice Hunnicutt; she was let go as well, and 2 of their assistant director positions are vacant. He understood, but also noted that monitoring is not punitive or an audit; it is required under Section 107 of the law to periodically monitor; looking at our data from 2015 to 2017. In addition, they have a 5-year period to do every state in the union and they are in year 2. Fr. Jim suggested this issue be put on the agenda for the next meeting, making a decision on whether or not it would be helpful to put this off for a year. John noted that the SRC, as mandated by WIOA and appointed by the Governor, is here to advise and provide information to our federal partners. Rick asked John to send him the relevant parts of WIOA that deal with the SRC, so he can understand the implementing legislation and purpose of the SRC as stated in that legislation. John noted he would send Rick the section of the code of federal regulations that gives the actual requirements of the SRC. Amanda reported that a follow-up call with RSA is scheduled to go over CBVI's transition policy handbook; they asked us to add in a couple of small items. Overall, they were happy with what we have thus far.

### **Recognition of Outgoing Membership:**

John explained that because of the statute and state executive order, members are allowed to serve for 2 consecutive terms, and not allowed to come back into the body after that. John recognized the following members and the importance of the work they've done during their 2 terms: Fran Leibner, Zoraida Krell, and Fr. James Warnke. John recognized them as key partners; he commented that he valued working shoulder to shoulder with them, moving CBVI forward to help individuals who are blind, vision impaired, and deaf blind live the life they want to live and to pursue the dreams they want to pursue. John noted that CBVI greatly appreciates the service they provided. Certificates of appreciation were presented to Fran and Zoraida. Fr. Jim was presented with a plaque, acknowledging his service as the SRC Chairperson. Zoraida, Fran, and Fr. Jim thanked everyone; they noted that it has been their privilege to be a member of such a passionate, dynamic Council.

Amanda reviewed upcoming reappointments: Jennifer Armstrong and Gary Altman. Amanda is waiting to hear back from Dawn Monaco as to whether or not she would like to seek reappointment.

Amanda reviewed the new appointments being submitted for approval: Ida Behreini, Clarke King, and Alice Eaddy.

### **Sub-Committees**

Resource Fair: Rick commented that this committee will be on hold; taking a back seat to present issues.

John commented that the feedback and recommendations from the Evaluation and Policy Committee was greatly appreciated. It made CBVI policies better and more robust. He commented that the committee made good recommendations about looking at our system technology services. Moving forward, the Agency will be looking at those reports as we create new goals and objectives; those are valuable pieces of evaluation data. Also, well positioning us (going back to our monitoring) that we have very solid data to present over our Comprehensive Needs Assessment.

Resource Committee: Danielle noted that the resource list was recently updated; she will re-circulate it. She welcomed any additional suggestions/ideas being sent to her attention.

SRC Annual Report: Amanda reported that the report was submitted to the Commissioner's office and the RSA by the deadline of December 31, 2017. The Commissioner's office will let us know of any final edits and changes. DHS Public Relations office then assists us in putting together the printed report, which will get circulated and put on the CBVI website. Amanda commented that there are a number of awesome stories and spotlights that really represent a wide range of consumers we serve.

### **Old/New Business:**

Fr. Jim reported this would be his last meeting; his 2-terms have come to an end. He reflected on his past 4 years of service, and commented that he was sorry to be leaving at this particular juncture. He pointed out the importance of the Chairperson at this very crucial time. He opened up nominations by nominating the current Vice-Chair, Rick Fox. He commented that Rick is one of the hardest working, conscientious, and most level-headed person he knows. Fr. Jim opened the floor for any other nominations; there were none. Zoraida seconded Fr. Jim's nomination and agreed that Rick would be a great candidate, particularly with his knowledge of legislation, his NFB experience, his sound and level headedness, and his knowledge of technology. All were in favor of the nomination of Rick Fox as the next SRC Chairperson. Rick commented that it moved him deeply to hear the words being said about him; to know the Council has confidence in him. He noted he would work with Fr. Jim until his term is up. He commented that he will also work closely with all of the members to give him the help and support that the chairperson needs in holding him accountable.

Fran shared information she was made aware of on a taskforce being formed for the study of state policy regarding hearing impairment; it's being called the NJ Hearing Impairment Taskforce (approved January 8). Some of the things they will be looking at: accessibility and effectiveness of medical testing; accessibility of hearing aids and assistive technologies for individuals who have a hearing impairment; accessibility and effectiveness of rehabilitation services; and the possibility of hearing aids being covered by insurance. Given that some CBVI clients may also have some hearing impairment, she thought the Commission may want to provide some input/be in the loop. John thanked Fran for this information. He commented that he has a meeting with Chris Lee, who is in charge of Legislative Affairs at DHS, and will bring this up as an issue that CBVI should be involved. Fr. Jim noted that he would like to entertain a motion that the SRC request this taskforce include representation from an agency that serves deaf-blind individuals. Jonathan made a motion to voice the SRC's concern on taskforce representation, and Zoraida seconded this motion; all were in favor.

### **Adjournment**

A motion was made by Rick Fox, and seconded by Zoraida Krell, to adjourn the meeting; all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 p.m.

The next SRC meeting is scheduled for Friday, April 20, 2018.

Respectfully Submitted,



Christine Cooper  
CBVI – Administrative Assistant