

Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)

Legislative and Public Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

March 20, 2023

Attendance

Members Present

Amy Porterfield, Chair
Bob Kresmer
Ed House
John McCann
Ted Chittenden
Donald Porterfield

Members Absent

Guests Present

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Minutes

Call to Order and Introductions

Amy Porterfield, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:06 pm. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

Approval of February 6, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Bob Kresmer motioned to table the approval of the February 6, 2023 minutes. Ted Chittenden seconded the motion. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

Legislative Updates

Amy Porterfield stated that SB 1402 was introduced as a striker bill with language that would require the Arizona State Schools of the Deaf and Blind (ASDB) to serve students

with all disabilities and not specialize in blind, visually impaired and deafblind students. She stated the bill moved quickly through the Legislature despite the outpouring from the community against the bill. Ms. Porterfield stated the bill was read on the Senate floor, although the bill had been removed and was assigned to an ad hoc committee. Amy Porterfield stated that HB 2456 was a bill typically heard every 10 years, but had moved to 8 years as a Sunset audit of ASDB. Amy Porterfield stated the bill had moved to the Governor Committee with the potential that the bill could be amended. Amy Porterfield stated the bill had not been heard yet and the fear was that ASDB could potentially close for good. She noted the bill was controlled by the President of the Senate, and she was unsure regarding the next steps. Amy Porterfield stated she was trying to schedule a meeting with the Governor's Liaison to identify where the Governor stands on the issue in order to move forward. Bob Kresmer stated he sent a letter to the Governor and Education Committee to encourage members not to support an amendment to the bill.

Amy Porterfield stated the committee had also advocated for an increase in funding for the Independent Living Blind (ILB) program and noted that the bill had not moved. She stated that she and Bob Kresmer met with the Department of Economic Security (DES) Director, who was supportive of the funding being added to the budget and would provide services to individuals under 55 as well. Amy Porterfield stated that it was a great meeting, and the Director indicated that she would like to meet regularly with council members to improve services to blind and visually impaired individuals. Bob Kresmer noted that he learned the Legislature does not approve of the funds for full Federal match, and that it was closer to 20%. He noted that the council would continue to work with Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and DES to pull down full Federal match. Donald Porterfield stated one possibility was that the Governor could add the additional ILB funding to the budget, although it could be for one year, or ongoing. Amy Porterfield stated the committee had also discussed Braille re-certification and Braille teacher certification, although that bill had been pulled by a community supported by lobbyists. Ms. Porterfield noted the committee had also discussed the need to update the Braille code to UEB, although there had been no communication from lobbyists regarding that bill.

Ted Chittenden inquired whether there was an update regarding the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) contract with Fort Huachuca. Bob Kresmer stated that it was still with the law firm, which was working with Federal staff to identify whether the issue was due to overbidding. Mr. Kresmer noted that he had not heard from ASDB regarding the recent bills, although he would reach out to Ms. Reichman for an update. Ed House stated the committee had discussed the need for budget information from RSA to understand the match funds. He noted that he would send some potential questions to Ms. Porterfield for a conversation with RSA. Amy Porterfield stated that she could draft

a letter to RSA requesting that information and could then share the data with the committee. Amy Porterfield stated that all of the bills were currently in flux, although she would likely know more after her meeting with the Governor's Liaison regarding the ILB budget increase and the bills affecting ASDB. She noted that after that meeting, the committee could meet again to discuss the next steps.

Agenda and Date for Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Legislative and Public Policy Committee is TBD. Agenda items are as follows:

- Legislative Updates

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Public Comment

A call to the public was made with no response forthcoming.

Adjournment of Meeting

Bob Kresmer moved to adjourn the meeting. Ted Chittenden seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 1:33 pm.