Maine Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

Minutes

August 25, 2021

Members Present: Darcy Gentle (Chair), 121 Vocational Rehabilitation Program; Patricia Thorsen (Member-At-Large), Long Term Care Ombudsmen Program (LTCOP); Lee Glynn, Person with a Disability, Acquired Brain Injury Advisory Council (ABIAC); Tom Newman, Executive Director, Alpha One (CIL); Samantha Fenderson, Assistant Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).

Members Absent: Diane Frigon, Regional Director, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI); Jessica Cyr, Person with a Disability; Stephanie Desrochers, Program Manager, Benefit Counseling Services at Maine Medical Center (BCS-MMC).

Members of Public Present: Julia Endicott, Disability Advocate, Disability Rights Maine (DRME); Rachel Dyer, Associate Director, Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC); Julie Hovey, Independent Living Specialist, Alpha One; Keenan Weischedel, Disability Advocate, Disability Rights Maine (DRME).

Acceptance of Minutes: The acceptance of the June minutes were tabled until September as not everyone had a chance to review the minutes.

Financial Reports:

The budget and incurred expenses were distributed prior to the meeting. No questions were asked.

The proposed budget for FY22 was distributed. There were several changes. For line item SRC Board Meetings, Tom shared he has spoken with the Department of Labor’s Assistant Attorney General and she said it was okay for Maine SILC to continue virtual meetings. While this is not binding, it is guidance. Therefore, this line item was reduced from $1,500 to $1,000. This will ensure Maine SILC has statewide representation. For line item SILC Conference/Trainings, it was discussed that there is a high probability that conferences would remain virtual or a hybrid based on the COVID-19 Delta variant. This line item was reduced from #3,000 to $1,500. The line item Annual Training was also modified. Again, due to COVID-19, Maine SILC anticipates continuing to hold its annual training virtually. This line item was reduced from $1,500 to 1,000. The line item for Equipment was also modified. Although Maine SILC has a new Executive Director and has her own laptop, the Council felt it was important to have a computer specifically for SILC business. The Council also felt that equipment like desks or lamps may be warranted. This line item was increased from $500 to $2,000. The Council felt the other line items were appropriate. A motion was made by Trish, and seconded by Tom, to accept these changes. The motion passed to accept the proposed budget. Eric Dibner will be notified by the end of the week.

Executive Director – Housekeeping:

In a new position, Cheryl asked to go over a few items.

The Council agreed the passwords to all accounts be changed with a list of all username and passwords to go to the new Chair.

The Council thought it was best to get a new credit card. The current card is in the name of former Executive Director.

The Council agreed that the P O Box be transferred to the Waterville Post Office where Cheryl lives since the current P O Box is in Portland.

The Council felt the new Executive Director have computer equipment that is tailored to her needs. Cheryl will work with an agency that can clean computers data out and possibly trade the older computer for a new one. A backup of data from the older computer will be done before cleaning the data and sensitive information up. Rachel offered to get the contact information of such an agency to Cheryl.

The Council agreed the Chair will be added to the Zoom account.

Annual Training:

The Council decided to host its annual training virtually again this year.

Efforts to present on the topic of transportation were discussed. Cheryl reached out to the New Hampshire, Vermont, and Montana SILCs to see what work each state similar to Maine in terms of rural geography is doing. Only one SILC responded but they are having their quarterly meeting at the same time of Maine SILC’s annual training. Some clarifications were offered that Maine SILC would be interested in learning what initiatives Maine Department of Transportation (DOT) is working on and how Maine ILC can ensure people with disabilities are contributing to the conversation. Cheryl knows someone who works at DOT so she will contact them for guidance on how to engage DOT in our annual training. Jessica Cyr has already reached out to members of the Moving Maine Network and they have agreed to be part of the transportation conversation at the annual training.

State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) presentation: Cheryl contacted Ann McDaniel, who is the Executive Director of the West Virginia SILC and trainer at Independent Living Research Utilization (ILRU), to see if she would do a presentation on the purpose and process of the SPIL. She is not available but referred Cheryl to Jeremy Morris. Jeremy is the Executive Director of Ohio’s SILC. He would be happy to give a presentation at the annua training.

State Rehabilitation Councils (SRC) and Developmental Disabilities Council (DD Council): Diane had suggested at the June meeting that perhaps we could invite both SRCs and the DD Council to talk about common goals and objective and how we can all work together to meet those goals. Unfortunately, this is not possible for the annual training in September but will take place at the October SILC meeting.

On behalf of Alpha One, Julie said they would do a half hour presentation on the services Alpha One provides.

The tentative agenda for the annual training is September is:

9:30 – 10:00 Alpha One Presentation

10:00 – 10:45 SPIL Presentation

11:00 – 11:45 Transportation Initiatives

11:45 – 1:00 Break

1:00 – 3:00 Business Meeting

Various Emails:

Cheryl had forwarded two emails to Council members. One was from Jennifer Tennican, promoting her film “Hearts of Glass”. Vertical Harvest farming is a new concept. It’s hydroponic farming in urban communities by building vertical greenhouses. They work with local communities and welcome employees from underserved populations, such as those on the Autism spectrum or who have Down’s Syndrome, but their reach is all underserved populations. This is competitive integrated employment. Interestingly, Vertical Harvest is building a greenhouse in Westbrook, Maine. Cheryl will reach out to Jennifer to discuss her work with other SILCs and to see how we can work with her promoting Maine SILC’s mission.

The second email was from Jessica Phillips. The Council decided not to post the resources from Jessica on their Resource page on the website.

Announcements:

Lee said the ABIAC has asked for a SILC presentation. Cheryl will do this. Target date is September 20th. Lee said ABIAC is talking about reducing the number of full Council meetings as most of the work is done in subcommittees. Full Council meetings will be more of a report out by subcommittees.

Julia shared that DRME is hosting an event for people with disabilities for the Maine Shared Community Health Needs Assessment (MSCHNA). This event is being held on September 16th. For more information, contact Julia. DRME has hired a bunch of disability advocates for different programs. Julia reported the Moving Maine Network is seeking feedback from individuals about transportation and how they get where they need to go. Any input is welcome. They are asking for feedback from individuals in order to help inform the work of Moving Maine Network and to help reach goals to improve mobility for all users. Julia will send the link to Chery who will share this with the Council.

Rachel reported the DD Council is winding down from their State Plan and will be getting ready for a new State Plan.

Samantha reported that most of the DVR staff is back in the office at least part-time. Applications for services is still below average but the number is starting to creep up. DVR expects more applications when extended unemployment benefits end at the end of September. Sam shared DVR has a number of vacancies. They are hoping to fill these as soon as possible.

Darcy reported the 121 VR Program recently held a virtual cultural diversity session. There were some technical difficulties so they plan to offer another session. The 121 VR Program is still virtual due to upticks in COVID19 cases and are not open to the public.

Tom reported that the Designated State Entity committee will meet after Labor Day.

Julie reported Alpha One has done twenty-two evaluations since March. This is a lot.

Adjournment: f2:00pm.