Maine Statewide Independent Living Council

Minutes March 2022

Members Present: Darcy Gentle (Chair), AIVR Program Director; Diane Frigon, Regional Manager, Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI); Stephanie Desrochers, Program Manager, Benefits Counseling Services, Maine Medical Center (BCS-MMC); Tom Newman, Executive Director, Alpha One (CIL); Samantha Fenderson, Assistant Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR); Jessica Cyr, Disability Advocate; Trish Thorsen (Member-at-Large), Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program (LTCOP).

Public Present: Julia Endicott (awaiting approval of membership), Disability Rights Maine (DRME); Julie Hovey, Independent Living Specialist, Alpha One; Katy Bizier, NeuroResource Facilitator, Brain Injury Association of America – Maine Chapter (BIAA-ME); Brendan Williams, Disability Advocate; Karen Mason, Associate Director, Office on Aging and Disability Services (OADS); Carole Martin; Kim Berry, Residential Services Coordinator, Shalom House.

Strategic Planning:

Carole Martin spoke about the benefits of strategic planning. Carole spoke about an organization’s mission and purpose. Strategic planning helps define what the organization’s priorities are. The plan serves as a guide moving forward. She has found that new members like having a plan and it makes them feel like they are making a difference. She has found that staff also like a plan because it gives them direction. Carole found that when she was first introduced to strategic planning, a major issue was follow through. As a planner, she ensures that there is a year plan in place when she completes her service in order for the organization to stay focused and accomplish goals. She has found that people like plans as it gives them ownership and they feel good about what has been accomplished. When a person is joining an organization, they often ponder what their goal is with the organization. A plan helps answer that question.

After Carole left the meeting, the Council discussed the idea of going ahead with strategic planning. Questions were: what is the Council trying to achieve with a strategic plan? What are the benefits? What will it help the Council do that is not already doing? The Council has the tools to plan on its own, but can the Council stay on target? What can the organization do to be more effective? Trish said sometimes the organization is trying to do everything in independent living, but the Council loses focus when trying to be all to everything and everyone. It would be nice to say that the Council will work on these “x” areas, for example. A plan can serve as a road map for what the Council wants to prioritize and accomplish. Carole did mention that possibility of doing a retreat in a four-hour block if the Council decides to pursue this option. Some Council members felt that would be beneficial. Cheryl will follow up with Carole to gather more information.

Acceptance of Minutes – January 2022:

There were no substantive corrections to the January minutes, but Stephanie said the document has spelling and grammar issues. Cheryl will correct this before posting them on the SILC website. The minutes were accepted with the corrections Stephanie noticed.

Financial Report:

A financial report was not done due to technical issues. Cheryl will get the spreadsheet to everyone.

How the CIL Helped Someone:

Julie Hovey relayed a story of an Alpha One consumer with autism who had a adaptive driver’s evaluation to see if he was able to drive safely.

Activity Tables:

Cheryl had set up the activity tables by month, forgetting the Council had decided to have one document for the entire year rather than twelve documents. Stephanie set this up in the OneDrive as the meeting was in progress.

Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Account Webinar:

Stephanie reported that the ABLE accounts webinar went well last month. There were some technical issues getting the CART synced with the video, but that issue has been resolved. Stephanie reported that the presentation portion of the webinar was 45 minutes and that 45 minutes were allotted for questions. They did not get to all of the questions live. Bangor Savings has gone through the questions and has made a FAQ document. When the PowerPoint, FAQ document and video is all available, a message will go out to attendees and interested parties. Maine SILC will post this on their website.

Public Service Announcements (PSAs):

Cheryl spoke of the work she has done with a mentor. On the subject of getting public awareness/notice out throughout the State, her mentor said that they do a PSA because media runs them for free. The Council talked about tv, radio, newspapers and local news flyers. Stephanie pointed out that PSAs are subject to space and time and may not always get on tv, radio or in newspapers so it may be hit or miss. Stephanie also mentioned online community calendars. Brendan Williams suggested social media. Maine SILC does not have a social media presence currently but hope to in the future. Cheryl asked for resources in drafting a PSA. Diane and Julie volunteered to ask in their organizations and get back to Cheryl/everyone.

Request for Help – Diane Frigon:

Diane said DBVI is looking for volunteers to make check-in calls to consumers who are older with no family close by in order to provide support to them. This is not a DBVI service and Diane said DBVI would not be able to keep a case open just for these calls but due to social isolation, DBVI would like volunteers to do check-in calls. DBVI has tried several avenues to get volunteers but have not been successful. If anyone in attendance has ideas for places that DBVI can call to get volunteers, please let Diane know.

Committee Updates:

Membership/Outreach Committee: Sam, Lee and Jess met to go over orientation materials and develop a process when recruiting new members. When Maine SILC hears someone is interested in learning more about the Council:

* a brochure about Maine SILC will be mailed to that person and a date will be set to speak with the individual.
* A Council member/SILC Executive Director will go over the SILC presentation PowerPoint and get a good idea of what the individual’s interests are in order to see if they are a fit on the Council and possibly where they can be utilized (i.e. membership/outreach committee, etc.). There will also be a SILC website review.
* The time commitment requirement will be reviewed.
* They will be invited to join a SILC meeting.
* The Executive Director will follow-up with the individuals after the meeting.
* If interested in joining SILC, the application process will be reviewed.

The Membership/Outreach committee felt is was important to have the meeting schedule on the Home page of the SILC website. They also felt it would be beneficial to have a list of what seats need to be filled on the OneDrive/website. The membership committee also felt that the flyer should be updated to list accomplishments.

Designated State Entity (DSE) Committee: Members of SILC, Alpha One, Department of Labor and the Office of Aging and Disability Services met. This committee is tasked with exploring the effectiveness of the current DSE (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation) versus the potential effectiveness of the Office on Aging and Disability Services would have as the DSE. Things discussed were what is the mission and vision of DVR and OADS? Karen Mason from OADS did report that as of now, they do not have the resources to take on this role. Because this is an exploratory committee, it will proceed with its task. Eric Dibner and Nicole Rooney will meet to discuss what the time obligations and responsibilities are as the DSE. Sam pointed out that if/when the decision is made to have OADS as the DSE, the transition will not be swift. Most likely it will take at least two years.

Bylaw Committee: Darcy and Cheryl met to go over the bylaws of Maine SILC. There are recommendations of changes that brings the bylaws in alignment with WIOA amendments. When Darcy has a chance to do her final review, the bylaws will be posted to the SILC OneDrive and members will be notified. Maine SILC’s bylaws require a 21-day notice before which changes can be voted

Moving Maine Network: Jessica reported that she has attended two Moving Maine Network meetings. She reported that monies are coming in for transportation opportunities. She wondered if Maine SILC would want to write a letter in support of using some of these funds in a specific way, such as rail, transit, active transportation or aviation. Jess wondered how Maine SILC can collaborate with others on legislative support. As a group, the Council’s voice is stronger than individually.

Adaptive Driver Evaluations: Julie reported that driver evaluations have resumed. The van that needed repair is now available but this is not a long-term solution as the van has a lot of mileage on it and is older. There was discussion about the vans that the Massachusetts’s Vocational Rehabilitation has acquired. They are not available to other states per the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). Sam did contact other states who are in a similar boat as Maine is in right now. There has been talk about states banning together and pleading their case to RSA in order to be allowed to use the Massachusetts’s vans. Another approach may be to have these state’s pool their resources and share a van for adaptive driver evaluations.

Announcements: Next meeting: April 27th.

Public Comment: None.

Adjourned: 12;15pm.

Maine SILC Action Items:

Cheryl will follow up with Carole Martin to get more information about the strategic plan process.

Cheryl will correct the spelling and grammar in the January 2022 minutes and then get them posted to the SILC website.

Cheryl will get the financial statement out to Council members as soon as possible.

Council members/attendees to add their activities to the activity tables on the OneDrive.

Diane and Julie to work with their organizations to see if any resources for PSA’s are available. They will let Cheryl/Everyone know what they find out.

Membership committee to update flyer to list SILC accomplishments.

Cheryl will get a list of what seats are available on the OneDrive.

Council members/attendees to get in touch with Diane if they know of an organization that could help recruit volunteers to do check in calls with DBVI consumers.