



STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL

March 19, 2025

1:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

FULL SILC Meeting

IN-PERSON AND ZOOM

Members and Ex-Officios Attending: Chair Randy Pierce, First Vice-Chair Deborah Ritcey, Second Vice-Chair Ryan Witterschein, Secretary Sarah Sweeney (Remote), Member Krystal Chase, Member Jennifer Cook (Remote), Member Ryan Donnelly (Remote), Member Andrew Harmon, Member Robert Kallin (Remote), Member Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, and DSE Representative Scott Vittner

Staff: Jennifer Beaulieu (SILC Assistant)

Guests: Chase Eagleson (Member of the Public), Matthew Greenwood (Member of the Public), Brendan Madden (Member of the Public), and Amy Clark (Older Blind Program Representative)

Chair Randy Pierce called the SILC (Statewide Independent Living Council) meeting to order 1:03pm.

*Quorum was reached.

Approval of Minutes of 1/15 Full SILC Meeting

Randy Pierce asked for a motion on the minutes from January

***Second Vice-Chair Ryan Witterschein motioned**

Second: Jennifer Cook

Andrew Harmon asked if the motion needs to be amended if there are some suggested edits. Deborah Ritcey noted that she doesn't think Scott Vittner or Amy Clark should be listed as staff members in the minutes. She thinks Scott Vittner is a member and Amy Clark is a guest. Jennifer Beaulieu will edit the minutes to place Amy Clark under guests and Scott Vittner under ex-officios and members.

***Andrew Harmon moved that we accept the minutes as amended**

Second: Second Vice-Chair Ryan Witterschein

Jennifer Beaulieu mentioned that there were simple edits that needed to be made.

Chair Randy Pierce requested a new motion with the typos only and the material we just discussed on the nomenclature change

***Andrew Harmon made that motion again**

Second: Ryan Witterschein

Roll Call:

- 11 ayes

Discussion: Yes

All in Favor: Yes

Abstention: None

Motion Carried.

Randy Pierce asked that members send out any suggested edits or corrections to Jennifer Beaulieu in advance. Jennifer Beaulieu sends the minutes out roughly a week after the Full SILC meeting. That would be the best time to send out any suggested edits or corrections so we can include those revisions in the minutes we vote on.

Official Welcome of New Members

Randy Pierce formally welcomed Robert Kallin and Joshua Gehling to the NH SILC. He thanked them for joining the council. He appointed Joshua Gehling to the Advocacy Committee and Robert Kallin to the Membership Committee.

IL Perspective in Tumultuous Times

Randy Pierce mentioned he placed this into the agenda because he had several people reach out and ask for perspectives. This relates to perspectives on political matters. He noted that if there is something of note for that, whether it is through our Advocacy Committee or Full SILC, we might formalize a formal perspective on any policy that exists. He noted that otherwise that it's important that you are not representing the SILC with an opinion that has not been approved by the Full SILC. He noted that he wanted to provide an avenue of support if there is a policy that we should be aware of and considering a perspective on.

SILC Education

Randy Pierce noted his discussion with the Executive Committee to try to make our meetings a little more efficient, so there will be room to include an educational component.

Chuck Saia started by mentioning that the Governor's Commission on Disability (GCD) has a long-standing relationship with the SILC. He noted that the NH SILC's assistant is a state employee of the GCD. The GCD has a contract with the NH Department of Education to house the NH SILC's assistant. The GCD is a state agency within the executive branch. They were created pursuant to RSA 275-C. The Commission is made up of a cross section of individuals with disabilities, parents or guardians of individuals with disabilities, and direct service providers of those with disabilities. Sitting next to the Commission is an agency that mainly focuses on the Americans with Disabilities Act. They ensure that they are a resource for individuals that are navigating issues regarding the ADA. They are not an enforcement agency or investigatory agency, but they sit as a resource for individuals.

Chuck Saia discussed the various programs the GCD has. The GCD has programs such as the Telecommunications Equipment Assistance Program, Newsline for the Blind, and the ABLE plans. He highlighted the work of two of the GCD's staff: Leonora Thomas as their Accessibility Specialist and Louise McBride as their Research and Information Specialist. Lorrie Ripley talked about her work as the Ombudsman for the Client Assistance Program. For more information about the Client Assistance Program and the other programs GCD offers, go to their website.

Randy Pierce opened the floor up for questions. Council members asked questions about service animals in taxi and uber situations, about how much is allowed to be contributed to an ABLE account, and if GCD would handle inquiries about a landlord prohibiting a service animal handler to live at their apartment complex. Chuck Saia responded that a few years ago, there was an issue with a taxi denying services because of a service animal. The GCD called the taxi company and told them that if it is a service animal they must let them in. As an educational component, the GCD created a PSA about taxis and service animals which is on the GCD's website. Brendan Madden asked for a link to the PSA, so he include it on his website. On the inquiry question, Chuck Saia explained the process which GCD uses when they receive an inquiry such as having the inquirer fill out an ADA Information form or an Architectural Access Inquiry form. He noted that the GCD is more than happy to engage in a conversation with the landlord to see if the matter can be resolved and if the landlord is willing, we may sit down and tell them

they may have overlooked the ADA or the Fair Housing Act. They have a high success rate but if they are unable to resolve the issue, they may refer to another agency. Chuck Saia lastly responded that the annual contribution amount for ABLE plans is \$19,000 per year but if you are working, you can save an additional \$15,060 per year.

Randy Pierce asked both Lorrie Ripley and Chuck Saia what their perspectives on a primary role that the SILC should be serving. Randy Pierce noted that if they don't know the answer, that is part of what we are trying to do. We want all people to leave here knowing that answer. Chuck Saia lastly noted that if the SILC wants either him or Lorrie Ripley at a meeting to let them know and they will be there.

Committee Updates

Membership

Ryan Witterschein reported out for the Membership Committee. For appointment updates, Randy Pierce and himself are up for reappointment at the end of June. They discussed implementing a kind of standard operating procedure where those that are up for reappointment will be brought up two Full SILC meetings before the end of their term. The Membership Committee were able to review the results from the mentorship surveys and found mentors for the two newest members. Joshua Gehling pairs best with Andrew Harmon as a mentor and Robert Kallin pairs best with Sarah Sweeney as a mentor. The next step is to launch the mentorship program starting April. They are going to review the program effectiveness quarterly. There were questions on if new members are informed of the RSA 15-A requirement. Ryan Witterschein noted that the form is sent out with the orientation packet.

Lastly, Ryan Witterschein noted that there is a new online form that needs to be completed for reappointments/appointments. He tried the form out and one question that he stumbled upon was which statute you are applying under. He noted that we should let individuals know prior to them applying. Ryan Witterschein is going to research what statute the SILC falls under and place it with the orientation material.

Governance

Deborah Ritcey reported out for the Governance Committee. She noted that she sent out an email about the skills and experiences survey. The email was sent out on February 6th and included a word document and an excel document of the survey. She is asking for everybody to go back to that email, complete the survey, and send the completed survey back to her. They will compile all the responses together and then issue the data to this council. The information gathered could be used to assess where and what the additional funds could be used for.

Advocacy

Andrew Harmon reported out for the Advocacy Committee. He noted that they will be meeting next week. He noted that the focus of their last discussion was on trying to get a list of all the organizations that serve the different disability communities. A script was created to be used when we call 211 to gather information. He mentioned that he had a good discussion with Jonathan Belmont who agreed to come before the committee next week to discuss benefits counseling. Regarding Objective 5.1, he asked if Randy Pierce has heard anything from the NH Housing Authority. Randy Pierce noted that he hasn't heard from them since January 1. Lastly, Andrew Harmon noted that he found out that there are some proposed changes on the state level that is going to impact people who receive Medicaid. He noted that the Governor wants to impose a premium on people in the Medicaid expansion program. He believes there will be another budget hearing, and he will email the information to Jennifer Beaulieu for anybody that wants to go testify on a personal level.

Additional Funds

Randy Pierce noted that there are additional funds available. Scott Vittner mentioned how VR now has a new business manager, a position that VR has not had for years. VR is currently catching up on years of finances and discovered there are additional funds for the SILC. The first amount of funds is \$50,000 and needs to be spent or encumbered by June 30th of this year. The second amount of funds is \$30,000 that needs to be spent or encumbered by June 30th of next year. He is hoping now that VR has a business manager, we won't end up with quite a surplus of funds going forward. He lastly noted that VR's business manager would like to set up an overview of where everything is at, either at an Executive Committee meeting or a Full SILC meeting.

Randy Pierce noted that the Executive Committee met and came up with a list of five items they prioritized out of the ideas they've heard. Jennifer Beaulieu read off the list of five items. The five items listed in order was the following: (1) Marketing material; (2) Direct services; (3) Annual dinner/outreach event; (4) Training for SILC members; and (5) the Part B consumer satisfaction survey.

Jennifer Cook was wondering if it is possible to direct some of that money into something like mentorship of the people on the council. She thinks it would be great to put something in mentorship so people can build up skills within our own council. Randy Pierce noted that mentorship would fall under training for SILC members.

***Jennifer Cook motioned of \$25,000 specific to training**

Second: Andrew Harmon

Ryan Witterschein noted that he thinks it's a lot of money dedicated to that especially since we're still working on the skills matrix and the mentorship surveys. He thinks that we should try to utilize the resources that we currently have before we spend a dedicated large sum of money towards resources. Deborah Ritcey noted that she thinks that it should be a smaller amount such as \$5,000. Discussion ensued.

***Jennifer Cook modified the motion to \$10,000.**

Second: Andrew Harmon

Roll Call:

- 11 Nays

Discussion: Yes

All in Favor: No **Abstention:** None

Motion Failed.

***First Vice Chair Deborah Ritcey made a motion to spend of that \$50,00, \$40,000 on direct services and \$10,000 on marketing.**

Second: Krystal Chase

Roll Call:

- 2 Nays
- 9 Ayes

Discussion: Yes

All in Favor: No **Abstention:** None

Motion Carried.

Andrew Harmon noted that he thinks that Jennifer Cook had a good idea and that we should spend some of that funding on training, just not the amount that she thought of originally. He was wondering if it is possible to modify that for maybe \$2,000 or \$1,000 on training. Deborah Ritcey noted that she isn't going to modify her amendment but mentioned that the \$30,000 is still available to spend.

Randy Pierce noted that the \$30,000 will be discussed at the next Full SILC meeting.

Later, Krystal Chase had a question about the \$40,000 for direct services. She was wondering what the best way was to go about accessing that funding. Scott Vittner noted that the funding will be allocated based on the percentages that was awarded during the RFP process. Randy Pierce asked what is a reasonable timeframe would be to get the percentages out to the vendors. Scott Vittner noted that he thinks they would have a good idea in the middle of next week. Randy Pierce noted that what he would like to create an ad hoc committee that will come up with a proposal on how to spend that \$10,000 that was allotted for marketing. The proposal would go before the Council at the next Full SILC Meeting. Deborah Ritcey, Andrew Harmon, Sarah Sweeney, and Jennifer Cook volunteered to be on that committee. Randy Pierce noted that he will send a meeting invite to those four people next week.

Other Business

Randy Pierce noted that he is going to follow up with anybody who hasn't done their RSA 15-A forms. He asked everybody to get it done by the next meeting. He asked for people to fill out the mentorship survey if they haven't already.

Deborah Ritcey reported that GSIL will be issuing an RFP in the next three weeks for a community needs assessment for people living with disabilities statewide. She would encourage as GSIL puts that RFP out that there is a lot of information that we'll gain that will also help with our SPIL. Andrew Harmon commented that the Lakes Region Planning Commission are doing a current needs assessment study as part of the coordinated plan work. Joshua Gehling mentioned that the Institute of Disability (IOD), as a part of their work, are collecting data from people who are receiving services on ways in which they would like to access their community more.

Brendan Madden asked if the SILC is involved with any of the chambers of commerce because that would be a good way to get the word out about the council. Randy Pierce noted that they aren't as an organization but several of us are likely members of a chamber or two. Deborah Ritcey noted the idea of going to something like the BIA (Business and Industry Association) to see if they are willing to allow the council into their cities and towns to talk about what we do or attend events.

Isadora Rodriguez--Legendre announced that the NH Council on Developmental Disabilities is hosting a virtual listening session on behalf of the NH Judicial branch which has an inclusion committee. The inclusion committee is interested in hearing about the lived experiences of people who have had encounters with the judicial system. It's a great opportunity for them to get information on how to better train court staff, security guards, and judges on the accessibility needs of the disability community. The listening session is on Monday, March 31st from 4-5:30pm. She will send the information to Jennifer Beaulieu so that she can send it out to everybody.

Adjournment

***First Vice Chair Deborah Ritcey made a motion to adjourn.**

Second: Second Vice-Chair Ryan Witterschein

Roll Call:

- 11 Ayes

Discussion: None

All in Favor: Yes **Abstention:** None

Motion Carried.

Meeting adjourned at 2:26pm

Minutes Recorded by Jennifer Beaulieu

Contact Information of this Meeting's Presentations (NH GCD):

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