

The **CAC meeting** was convened at the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services, Pittsburgh District Office located at 531 Penn Avenue on February 2, 2018, at 10:00 a.m.

In attendance Mike Zaken (GTCB), Sue Lichtenfels (President of PCB), and Emily Gindlesperger (parent, North Huntingdon Township), on the conference line, and all others in person at the office at 531 Penn Ave. Those at the office were, Joe Wassermann (GTCB), Barb Peterson (BVRSP), Shannon Austin (Administrator Pittsburgh BBVS office), Tom Burgunder (GTCB), Rich Fisher, Chris Hunsinger' (GTCB). Chris Hunsinger, secretary, was not able to list the nonattending members of the CAC because she didn't have the current list of official members.

Joe Wassermann co-chair called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00. Motion was made by Mike Zaken to accept the Nov 2017 CAC minutes, Rich Fisher seconded and the motion carried.

The first issue on the agenda was the STEM Event being held by BBVS March 23 at CMU. Shannon reported the plans for the event. Keynote speaker is Brett Humphrey from Microsoft in Seattle who spoke at the fall Vision Works seminar. Denna Lambert, from the Goddard Space Flight Center in Maryland, is the planned speaker during lunch from NASA.

On the agenda, there will be break-out sessions, the Fab Lab, from the Carnegie Science Center. They will be demonstrating hands on fabrication with their 3D Printer creating small items in sessions. Each session will last a couple of hours. Carnegie Library for the Blind will be doing Swell form graphics for students. There will be panel discussions with people in the STEM field. There will be local people - possibly from Google, and possible from Microsoft as well. Mike said he had spoken to someone from Google who said they planned on bringing people to the event.

There will be a session on Soft Skills, stressing things like how to dress for success, make-up, presenting yourself in an interview with a positive image, and other personal tips, Stephanae McCoy will be leading that discussion.

NavCog will be doing a session showing how their system works. That will be reserved for older high school students.

Registration is moving along, and it is hoped that when people choose events, the number of participants in each event will be balanced. PNC will be there as a possible employer. ALCOSAN will be there as well as a possible employer.

Chatham University with their environmental program and the farm that they use for teaching will be a possibility as well. Shannon is working with the business service rep at OVR to do a site evaluation of the Chatham Campus near Gibsonia, called, [Eden Hall Campus](#), for accessibility for visually impaired students. Perhaps summer programs there would be possible in the future since they do have programs for K through 12 students. This campus is green and recycles. STEM students not interested in plants could well be interested in other aspects of the campus. There is also use of Hydroponics at the campus both to sustain plants and create fertilizer with fish.

For the STEM event, there are still invitations pending for Space Camp and NFB, and Independent Science. The space for the event will be all along one hallway instead of being spread out. BBVS is still working on Signage for the event. GTCB had been at past STEM events with a table, not as a presenter. The Fab Lab contract allows for five additional days of Fab Lab usage so BBVS may use those days throughout the year for students and Intermediate Unit teachers. Chris Hunsinger asked if the Science Center

might think about having accessible programs for the Fab Lab at the Science Center if they have programs for another student. Shannon explained that OVR has a contract with Fab Lab for these special sessions with fewer students for longer times.

Mike and Chris, with a smile and laugh, offered their braille Calculus books for students to compare how math was taught so many years ago in college.

Joe asked if the BBVS office would be coming to the PCB statewide conference in October. Shannon gave it a thumb up and is planning already. She would like more input on the planning and room location side of the event at the Conference, and wants better signage. Tom Burgunder, as the chair of the Conference planning team, addressed PCB issues for the BBVS seminar in conjunction with the PCB Conference. A big advantage to having the BBVS employment seminar as a part of the Conference was that their food totals helped keep the conference food bill above the level which would otherwise cause PCB to have to pay a penalty. Tom proposed that we get started earlier with the hotel coordinator to locate the spaces for the different sessions so that things wouldn't be so spread out for people not familiar with the facility. Tom thought that there could be some planning together as early as March. Shannon hopes that we can coordinate programs that both her employment seminar people and PCB would be interested in so that people wouldn't miss out on presentations that might be helpful.

Mike asked about whether PCB could make a presentation during the Employment Seminar talking about what the organization does. Shannon said that PCB could possibly have a vendor table at the Employment Seminar, and possibly give a short presentation. Joe Wassermann brought up the possibility of the BBVS seminar being on Thursday, and Shannon saw no problem if she knew early enough about it. The PCB contract might be an issue because it would change the structure of the hotel offer for exhibit rooms etc. Tom pointed out that one of the benefits that had been spoken of in 2017 was that students and even parents are not accustomed to seeing adult visually impaired people independently interacting on their own in an unfamiliar environment. They would be much less likely to have that interaction if the employment seminar were held on Thursday. Also, this venue might only be of interest to BBVS because they could indeed have their event co-located with a conference of a blindness organization. Joe had not realized that there had been so much positive experience because the groups were able to interact to some degree, even if it was just to observe people moving around using their mobility skills.

Shannon was not sure what kind of STEM event was being held in Philadelphia this year. Shannon just wanted to reiterate that she would like the two events, PCB Conference, and Employment Seminar to be coordinated enough so that people didn't step on each other's toes and visitors to both events could take something away from the other event if they wanted to.

Tom pointed out that last year's vision loss seminar may well not have been able to coordinate with BBVS even if we had emphasized that we wanted coordination because they didn't get their event together until very late in the planning time.

Mike pointed out that Thursday was brought up because there were so many things set up for Friday morning last year that perhaps Thursday could have been a solution.

Tom pointed out that as the lead for conference planning, he would be sure to coordinate the two events, and he thought that he had heard from Shannon that she would like to have her event at the same place as the PCB Conference on the Friday. Joe asked how many students and parents were at the BBVS Employment event. Shannon offered to get numbers for us. Joe also asked if there were direct mailings which could include some information about PCB. Shannon pointed out that most of the

communications were via email, but that she did put PCB information into that correspondence directing people to the PCB website and mentioning the conference on both the Save the date, and Registration information. She also put information about the scholarships for the PCB Conference in case people wanted to do both but might not be otherwise able to afford the conference.

We pointed out that PCB does electronic, hard copy braille, and print registration forms depending on what the member requests. BBVS did send out some paper invitations asking people to get in touch to register, but the bulk of their correspondence was email. Mike brought up the two-day workshop that was held with PNC last year. At the time of this CAC meeting, there had been no discussion of dates for their event. Last year the Innovation team of PNC was the sponsor of the event. They don't even know if it will be a two-day event or if it will only focus on employers. We pointed out that PNC will probably still want to do their event in October since that is Disability month, and that the Friday for our conference will be Oct. 19.

Next item on the agenda was the Staff report. 2017 was the year when the report changed from going from Oct. through Sept. to match the state fiscal year of July through June. That meant that goals and results would look different. The goal was 58 Rehabs for a year, but since the year now matched the fiscal year for the state of Pennsylvania, they only expected that the office would meet 70% of the goal. The office had 50 rehabs which was more like 88% of the total goal. ILOB, VRT, O&M and children's programs all met their goals. The office met its outreach and closure goals. Shannon has been focusing on Children and youth since she came to the office and focusing on getting them ready for employment. The changes that have come because of WIOA eliminating the homemaker cases, takes away 25% of the client closures.

This year the goal for rehabs is 82 The office is about half way there. They are still down one Social worker, one VRT and one O&M specialist. They are not able to fill those slots at the time of our meeting. The office has interviewed a business Service rep and has sent the recommendation forward, and Shannon hopes that she will be able to bring that person on board soon. She hopes to give that person information about her business contacts and have the person work with the OVR business service rep to do the business outreach that Shannon doesn't have the time to do. Hopefully, this new hire will be able to work with employers and assistive technology, job fairs, and activities outside of Allegheny County that are part of the BBVS office but not part of the OVR office in Pittsburgh. She thinks that this person will be able to work with the Business Service reps in other OVR offices that overlap with BBVS to share job leads and do outreach together. The VRT position that couldn't be filled because there were no applicants became the Business Service Rep position. Tom understood that the Fiscal service person that the office hired took a slot from the VRT slots. Shannon and Rich explained that the fiscal person Lori couldn't be brought on until the former fiscal person, who had been on extended leave, retired. That meant that the fiscal person was not taking either a VRT or O&M slot.

Shannon is still trying to look for additional staffing for the VRT or the O&M position either from rehired annuitants or from those they use under contract if the wait times get too long. There is no way to hire an intern since their positions are payed slots and there are no slots at all now in either O&M or VRT. Mike asked if BVRS could get a contract to provide O&M services. Shannon explained that there had been some conversations about that.

Joe added information about the new Executive Director at the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children who will not be able to assume her position until July 1 after the

current school year ends at Quaker Valley. Her name is Dr. Heidi Ondek, and she had interviewed very well. She feels comfortable working with disabled people. Dr. Carol Wooten has been the interim director at the school during the search.

Joe had spoken with Shannon about the summer programs at the Hiram G Andrews center as a possible PCB Conference call for the future. At the end of February PCB will be having a PennDOT representative talking about Paratransit. PCB is interested in having a call about the transition programs done at the Hiram Andrews Center by OVR. Shannon explained that they are geared for students from 16 to 21 with an internal referral within OVR and BBVS not having any special adaptation for vision loss. She feels that since students with vision loss have so many programs specifically designed for people with vision loss, they might not well feel the need to go to the other programs at the Hiram Andrews center. There are summer programs at Overbrook, and the Junior and Senior Academy programs along with program referrals to BVRSP for their summer program.

The Hiram Andrews Center programs might work well for someone with low vision who is a visual learner, and that choice is there, but for the most part, BBVS believes that their programs work better for people with low vision than blindness.

Shannon talked about the Blind vending program (BEP) being overhauled with different kinds of training and bundling facilities so that a person could make a living in that business. That might be a topic for a conference call of PCB for the future.

Shannon is trying to get students into the BBVS programs earlier in their student career. We talked about ways to spend the money allocated for pre-employment development like making young people figure out how much money they can spend and how to interact with sales people as a step toward independence during the summer programs.

Chris pointed out that if PCB were to offer a conference call about what students can do for summer programs, we would have to develop a strategy to contact students and their parents because our organization doesn't reach many people in that demographic.

Joe asked about how many people use the Overbrook program, and if people from all over the state could use it. Shannon said she could get us usage figures for that program, and she didn't know how it compared with the summer academies that we have at Penn State for College bound students or the Junior Academy either. Shannon has the hope that all the possible summer programs for students with vision loss will be listed so that families and counselors can make better choices for children with their educational needs. Shannon said that even BBVS will have to think about jobs based on the labor market, and possible Apprenticeships, Technical school training, or just independent living skills during high school so that a person will be able to get a job out of high school.

Barb asked about numbers for students who stop going to college after a couple of semesters, and Shannon said she didn't know how recent the numbers were that she had, but that she ought to be able to locate some numbers. She said that there would be information about both successful and unsuccessful closures.

Joe then brought up the question of whether there was any information about the success rate of the students who do the Summer Academy once they go to college and possibly get jobs. He mentioned this because David DeNotaris told them during a meeting in August that there were no statistics that would demonstrate the effectiveness of the summer programs in helping students obtain future employment.

Shannon explained that each program may well have its records showing its success, but the system isn't set up to say combining high school, summer programs, college, and work, what is the success rate. Also, there is no agreement on what success would be in this case. The old measure of success was to place someone in a job that lasted 90 days, but WIOA is developing different measures of success as the data is collected. Shannon pointed out that WIOA is causing them to gather more than 100 additional data fields on any case. We may in the future be able to see if the pay that a person is getting at closure is comparable to the pay of all workers in the field, or if the training costs are justified by the pay being earned.

We discussed the pre-employment transition services money and whether it could be used by other programs if the services for the pre-employment couldn't spend all of it. They say that the fifteen percent must go to those services, so OVR may well not be able to move that money to help other parts of their programs.

Mike requested that we make White Cane day Oct. 12 since Oct 19 is the PCB Conference. He will check with Cindy Smith at BVRSP about the date since she coordinates their program for White Cane Day. Joe asked that we have better coordination for the totally blind individuals coming to White Cane Day from GTCB so that if they are attempting contact with the public, that they have sighted assistance. Tom pointed out that we didn't make a list of GTCB members who were going to participate in White Cane day ahead of time so that we could guarantee sighted guides.

Joe's final question had to do with any movement on the coordination between BBVS and the Office on Aging in Allegheny County so that we could refer older blind people to the Office on Aging for services since the older blind program has so little ability to spend money for independent living items. There has apparently been no movement on that front.

Joe told us that the next meeting would be May 4 and August 3 and Nov. 2 for this group.

Shannon brought up the possibility of having a joint CAC meeting with the upstairs part of OVR at one of the meetings this year. We may have to move the meeting to an evening because that is when that CAC meets. They meet at the Human Services Building at 1 Smithfield. That CAC usually meets every other month on a Tuesday evening from 6:00 to 8:00. Shannon will be taking our dates to Marcie Katona to work out a possible time for the combined meeting.

There was no old or new business that we had not already covered. Tom Burgunder moved for Adjournment. No second was made but the motion carried.

Respectfully submitted by Christine Hunsinger, Secretary.