

## Meeting Minutes

### Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking Board of Directors

August 9th, 2022

**Present:** Dr. George Belitsos, John Chessser, Thomas Barr, Jessica Hagin (proxy for Ruth Buckels), Alyse Hardin, Lyna Debner, Bernadette Rixner, Alka Khanolkar, Sister Shirley Fineran, Linda Harrell

**Excused Absence:** Thomas Barr, Ruth Eley

**Absent:** MacKenzie Bills

**Minutes Compiled by:** Maddie Judas (Technology Consultant)

#### I. Call to order. Introduction of guests. (Belitsos)

Belitsos declared a quorum at 2:33 pm. Belitsos asked the NAHT's technology consultant, Maddie Judas, to introduce herself. Judas noted that she is an Iowa State student majoring in Advertising with a minor in Psychology and explained that she would be taking the minutes for this meeting.

#### II. Review and approval of Consent Agenda. Reminder: **If you wish to remove any motion from the consent agenda for additional information or debate, you may do so. No second is required. (Belitsos)**

- a. Motion to approve July 12th meeting minutes of the NAHT Board of Directors. (see attached)
- b. Motion to approve the July Treasurer Report. (see attached)
- c. Motion to authorize the Chair to order 1000 more rescue stickers to be paid for by a donation from Rotary District 6000. The estimated cost is \$200

Belitsos amended motion C and informed the board that he had three new requests for more rescue stickers by three Rotary clubs connected with the District 6000 Prevention of Human Trafficking Action Team. Belitsos requested approval to order 2,500 more English language stickers instead of 1,000, upping the cost to \$340. Belitsos noted on the Treasurer's report that there is a donation from Rotary District 6000, which would cover the \$340 cost.

Belitsos also added that he would like to add a motion D, which is a request from the Johnson County Coalition Against Trafficking in which the new president would like to be reimbursed for the purchase of a display tablecloth. She used her credit card and asked for reimbursement of \$221. Belitsos informed the board that several years ago, the Network received an \$8000 grant from 100+ women that the network subcontracted to the coalition because there needed to be anti-trafficking work done in Iowa City.

Regarding the July Treasury Report, Tinsman asked why the network needed three technology consultants and a webmaster. Belitsos explained that the three technology consultants are Iowa State students who are only working part-time and that it would be very hard to find just one person to work half-time. He added that they are paid by the hour and help with the network's meeting minutes, financial reports, correspondence, agendas, blog posts/newsletters, and donor letters and records. Belitsos stated that we had had these technology consultants for the last five years, and he could not carry out the job as chair without the consultants. Belitsos said he will be passing the consultants onto Chesser when he becomes chair in 2023.

Belitsos asked if there were any other questions or concerns regarding the consent agenda. There was no opposition. **The consent agenda as amended was passed unanimously.**

### **III. Review proposed board meeting guidelines and policy for survivor inclusion (Belitsos)**

#### Meeting Guidelines

Belitsos noted that he wrote these proposed guidelines right after several board members resigned due to conflicts operating as a unified board. He proposed setting guidelines regarding respect, ensuring everyone feels heard, and overall communication for the future as Chesser will become the new chair in a few months, and Belitsos felt that it was important to have guard rails for controversial issues. Tinsman asked how the board would use these ground rules and discuss them. Belitsos suggested sending them out in every board meeting packet, and if someone violates a ground rule, anyone can say, for example, "let's take a step back." Belitsos then noted that he developed these ground rules using notes he took during four board meeting special sessions led by Bills.

Rixner noted that the ground rules didn't seem vitally important as these rules should be obvious, but since they aren't, the board should have them as a policy. Belitsos then read a few of the most important ground rules.

Fineran noted that she thought the ground rules were unnecessary as they are rules for any board. Hardin agreed with Fineran, stating that the rules were repetitive and unnecessary and that they would need to be condensed if we were to use them. Additionally, Chesser noted that maybe the rules that Bills laid down were mainly necessary for those four sessions as they followed immediately after resignations.

Harrell then expressed that the ground rules were needed at one time but that the board is in a different place right now, and we can handle ourselves appropriately. Khanolkar additionally noted that the ground rules could be used as a reference in case the board needs it.

Belitsos asked Fineran to make a motion. Fineran noted that the proposed board guidelines were unnecessary as they are common sense and should be used only as a reference. Hardin seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

#### Proposed policy for survivor inclusion

Tinsman began the discussion about a policy for survivor inclusion by noting that the NAHT does need a policy but that the proposed document that Belitsos authored is too long and repetitive. Tinsman then read off a proposed revision that she worked on, reading, “We the members of the NAHT board of directors believe that human trafficking survivors have value regardless and beyond what has happened to them. Survivors of violence against their personhood are resilient and can become and often already are leaders in the fight to end human trafficking. The network recognizes that it takes tremendous strength and skill to survive abuse, violence, and exploitation. Resourcefulness, creativity, and resilience are part of survivorship. Survivors often have expertise that goes far beyond what happened to them. The network board of directors recognizes that survivors have solutions and meaningful insights, and those that have not experienced abuse and exploitation simply do not have. Developing policies and programs without survivor inclusion can sometimes dismiss and tokenize survivors. This practice can be harmful to victims and survivors. Survivors have a right to privacy and to decline to share any part of their lived experience or expertise without consequence, including the consequence of limiting opportunities to participate in the network board or limiting opportunities to be compensated. All network board members should receive training on what it means to be survivor-informed and trauma-sensitive.”

Rixner also proposed shortening Belitsos’s survivor inclusion policy, reading, “The Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking recognizes that survivors are resilient. We also recognize that people with this lived experience can and will become leaders in the fight against human trafficking. We further acknowledge that being trauma-sensitive and survivor-informed caused the NAHT to include survivors when RAGAS policy decisions are being made and when goals and strategic plans are being written. The NAHT recognizes that survivors have solutions and meaningful insights that those who have not experienced abuse and exploitation simply do not have. Developing policies and programs without survivors’ input can sometimes dismiss, tokenize, and harm survivors. Survivors are the experts in their “lived experience” and have valuable insights into the support necessary to navigate healing and change. Pressuring or limiting survivors to roles selected for them could be demeaning or even harmful to victims and survivors and should be avoided. Survivors have a right to privacy and to decline to share any part of their “lived experience” or expertise without consequence, including the consequence of limiting opportunities to participate in the NAHT Board or limiting opportunities to be compensated. Capturing or utilizing survival stories without the expressed consent of the survivor or benefiting from the use of the survival story or expertise without equitable compensation is an exploitive practice that can be harmful to victims and survivors. Survivors should be able to choose whether or not to be compensated for their services on the NAHT board. Any exploitation, tokenization, or typecasting of survivors can be harmful and contrary to best practice standards and trauma-responsive care. All NAHT Board members should receive training on what it means to be “survivor-informed” and “trauma-sensitive.”

Rixner then asked what RAGAS means, and Belitsos stated Rotary Action Group Against Slavery. Chesser noted that RAGAS is an international board where Belitsos serves as vice-chair and also wrote and presented a similar survivor inclusion for that board.

He then added that he consulted with many sources, including Nebraska’s Anti-Trafficking Network, who sent him a copy of their policy.

Hardin asked if survivors had a right not to identify as a survivor if they don't want to and suggested that this be added to the policy as well. . Belitsos responded, saying it would be absolutely fine if the survivor wanted to share with us or not whether they are a survivor. She also asked that the wording be changed to read that all NAHT board members "will be" trained

rather than "should be" trained on what it means to be survivor-informed and trauma-sensitive. Belitsos responded that the change was agreeable to him.

Fineran noted that she thinks the policy is unnecessary but that being upfront with the survivor about the sensitivity will be helpful. She stated that much of what this policy is saying is common sense and that a written policy can become more cumbersome for the board.

Harrell noted that if a survivor chooses to be on the board, it is up to them how much they want to reveal. Rixner responded by saying if we want someone who represents a survivor, they need to acknowledge that they are a survivor and that their role is to give the board input. She also noted that we would not want to force anybody to reveal anything, but if there is a designation in the position for a survivor, then that person should be comfortable acknowledging that they are a survivor. Chesser then noted that if we do not want to force anybody to reveal anything, but there is also a designated position for a survivor, those contradict each other.

Belitsos asked for those who have not yet spoken to add their opinion on the inclusion policy. Hagin noted that it would be essential to have a written policy to work with survivors and ensure they can share what they want and that the board is fully trained in working with survivors. Debner noted that she agreed with Rixner and said that if they feel comfortable with becoming a part of the board, they will most likely be comfortable sharing their story.

Hardin additionally noted that she has survivors on staff that are not labeled as survivors. Instead, they choose when they want to say they are a survivor and disclose the information they want. She then noted that if a survivor wants to be on the board, they must be in a decently good and healthy spot in their life.

Tinsman added that she had changed her mind after hearing Rixner and Hardin's discussion on the need for a policy. She added that the board doesn't need a written inclusion policy but needs

a survivor on the board who would be comfortable talking about what would help the fight against human trafficking. Rixner responded by saying that before we even have a survivor on the board, we need to have the training that has been discussed.

Hardin then added that we could also still be a survivor-informed board without having a survivor on the board.

Hagin noted that survivors would not speak unless they felt comfortable and stressed the need for a written policy informing the survivor that we have been trained and will treat you appropriately. Hagin then noted that if we want a survivor to come to the board, we need a policy that states what we are expecting, what we are looking for, and that they do not need to share if they don't want to. Finran and Hardin agreed. Hardin responded, saying that the policy must be very specific and that we must get trained. Fineran asked Hagin if she could write a clearer

explanation to give the survivor of their role on the board instead of the survivor inclusion policy. Hagin agreed to do so.

Belitsos asked someone to make a motion to table the survivor inclusion proposal and asked Hagin, Rixner, and Hardin to work on a new policy they would support. Chesser noted that he would make a motion, but defining the relationship between this organization and survivors needs more attention. Rixner asked if the board should instead make a motion to receive trauma-sensitive and survivor-informed training before a policy is developed. Hardin agreed.

**Chesser made a motion to table the survivor inclusion policy on including a survivor on the board indefinitely.** He explained that we need a new initiative to appoint a committee to study the larger issue of including a survivor on the board. **Tinsman seconded the motion.** Belitsos asked if there was any further discussion. Hardin added that the board would figure out how much to compensate the survivor. Belitsos responded by reminding the board that a bylaw change had been board approved, and if a survivor wishes to be compensated for their service, that would now be allowed. Hardin then noted that the board would need to figure out how much we would compensate for a survivor. Belitsos noted that it was proposed to be \$20 an hour, but that is not a fixed figure in the bylaws yet. Belitsos called for a vote on the Chesser motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

**Tinsman motioned that the entire NAHT board must undergo training on what it means to be a survivor-informed trauma-sensitive person.** Belitsos asked if those who have already undergone training should not have to do so again. Hardin proposed that the entire board undergoes the same training so everyone is on the same page. **Khanolkar seconded Tinsman's motion. The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **IV. Report from the Ad Hoc Board Search Committee (Chesser, Hardin, and Rixner)**

Chesser reported on the committee meetings. They reviewed the list of prospective board members and decided to recommend that they needed a more clear idea of what the NAHT is trying to do, not as stated in the mission. Chesser explained in terms of committee assignments, specific goals, strategies, and tactics; the board needs to narrow down on its most important works and committees.

Rixner noted that the board needs to answer, If there was not an NAHT, what would the human trafficking effort in Iowa be missing? Rixner asked everyone to think of responses to discuss at the next meeting.

Chesser noted that the Board Search Committee would not invite anyone new onto the board until after the next meeting in September. Rixner agreed and stated that we need to discuss what we expect from new board members and what they want to bring before allowing them on the board. Tinsman agreed with Rixner. Hardin noted that we must assess the qualifications to be invited onto the board.

Chesser gave an example about having a young person on the board and how the NAHT would work with that. Rixner noted that the board had a young person on the board at one point, but there wasn't an avenue to let her get involved.

Belitsos noted that there are several qualified people interested in serving on the board. They have turned in their resume and a cover letter describing their past human trafficking experience and what they will contribute. The search committee should not keep these prospective board members waiting and that other boards will take these individuals.

Belitsos stated that he would move this discussion and review of proposed changes to committees to the top of the September agenda. Discussing which of the seven committees we need to terminate and which are most important to continue will tell us what we need to look for in future board members.

#### **V. Report on plans (Date, location, and program) for the September board retreat (Chesser)**

Chesser began by discussing the plan of having a board retreat in September. He and Bills were to determine a September date, venue, and agenda for the retreat. He noted that Bills got tied up at work, so there was no progress on plans for a board retreat. However, he suggested having the trauma-informed training be the priority for the board instead of the board retreat as it is more important.

**Chesser motioned to postpone plans for a board retreat and instead make plans to have survivor-informed and trauma-sensitive training. Rixner seconded the motion.** Belitsos called for discussion and asked if Chesser could plan and arrange the training. Chesser agreed but stated that he is open to suggestions from people who know more about the training than he does. Hardin agreed to help Chesser with the training. Hearing no further discussion, Belitsos called for a vote. **The motion passed unanimously.**

#### **VI. Proposed NAHT breakout session during the October 10-11 Crime Victim Assistance Division Conference (Belitsos)**

Due to time constraints, this item will be carried over into next month.

#### **VII. Progress report from Legislation Advocacy Committee on the composition of Child Safe Harbor and discuss workgroup (Tinsman)**

Tinsman reported that she is determined to get a safe harbor bill to the governor's desk in 2023. The Network Against Human Trafficking is organizing an interim work group to gather input from those working with trafficked youth and the Department of Public Instruction. The groups will strategize how to best implement safe harbor legislation.

#### **VIII. Review proposed changes to the list of 7 standing committees in the proposed NAHT Bylaws**

Top of agenda for next board meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:05 pm.

Next Board Meeting: Tuesday, September 13th, 2:30-4:00 pm

**Our vision for the future: “An  
Iowa without human trafficking  
and modern slavery.”**

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