

Meeting Minutes

Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking Board of Directors

July 12th, 2022

Present: Dr. George Belitsos, John Chesser, Thomas Barr, Jessica Hagin (proxy for Ruth Buckels), Bernadette Rixner, Linda Harrell, Shirlee Reding, Sister Shirley Fineran

Excused Absence: Ruth Eley, Maggie Tinsman, Alyse Hardin, Lyna Debner

Absent: MacKenzie Bills and Alka Khanolkar

Guests: Jared Arbegast (Iowa DOT, Motor Vehicle Sergeant), Carol Olson (Representative of Senator Grassley), Gretchen Brown-Waech (Attorney General's Office, Human Trafficking Coordinator), Chelsea Hoyer (Advocacy Strategies, Public Affairs Coordinator), Aaron Seydell (Technology Consultant)

Minutes Compiled by: Isabelle Elwood (Technology Consultant)

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

Belitsos declared a quorum at 2:30 pm. Guests introduced themselves: Olson is Senator Grassley's State Director out of the Des Moines office, Brown-Waech is the Human Trafficking Coordinator for the Office of the Attorney General of Iowa, Hoyer works for Advocacy Strategies as the Public Affairs Coordinator, Arbegast is a sergeant with the Iowa Motor Vehicle Enforcement and the Truckers Against Trafficking lead, Elwood and Seydell are two of the NAHT's technology consultants.

II. Update on anti-trafficking DOT and Truckers Against Trafficking Freedom Truck at Iowa State Fair. (Jared Arbegast)

Belitsos began by welcoming Arbegast to his first meeting with the NAHT Board of Directors. Arbegast is giving updates in place of Chief David Lorenzen who was promoted at the DOT. He explained his interest in awareness and training on human trafficking. Arbegast leads a human trafficking training team of six or seven individuals from across the State of Iowa. He also works closely with the Truckers Against Trafficking (TAT) team. They do industry outreach, presentations for different companies, and various other projects. Over the last ten years, TAT has worked with larger trucking companies to incorporate a 30-minute human trafficking presentation into new driver training. On a national level, 49 states have adopted the Iowa DOT Motor Vehicle Enforcement (MVE) model.

The Freedom Drivers Project that has the Freedom Truck will be at the Iowa State Fair. The trailer will also be at the Walcott Jamboree from July 14th to July 16th. Secretary of State Paul Pate will be at the event on one of the days to spread awareness on the Iowa Businesses Against Trafficking program. Arbegast's team has also collaborated with the Division of Criminal Investigation and their Office Combat Human Trafficking.

Arbegast discussed how his team has a national grant to help pay for projects. Recently, the DOT MVE partnered with Bucket Media to create five billboards regarding human trafficking. In the next upcoming weeks, they will be displayed across major cities in Iowa. One slogan is

“Recognize and Report,” and on the billboard, a QR code will direct people to an informational video on human trafficking. The DOT, MVE, and TAT are all represented on the billboards.

Arbegast is working on getting the Freedom Truck at a fundraising event for the survivor service agency, Wings of Refuge. His team would participate in the fundraiser and help promote awareness and education on awareness of human trafficking. Arbegast stated that it is important for people to know that human trafficking occurs even in their own backyard.

A year ago, Arbegast did a presentation in Brett, Iowa, for the Winnebago RV group. Arbegast and his team are now trying to form a coalition with RV groups and companies selling RVs. This will reach a different audience about human trafficking awareness, education, and outreach. Travelers and truckers see different parts of the country and mix with the public. The more eyes and ears there are, and the more education people receive will boost reporting suspicious activities. Arbegast hopes to help the RV coalition get started, and then they make it their own.

Arbegast reported that he hopes to launch an anti-trafficking coalition with the Iowa casinos in September. DCI agents will be placed in each casino to educate workers on what to look for and how to report human trafficking. The bus industry is another group that his team is connecting with. Specifically, Arbegast and Lorenzen are focusing on public transit systems. The Department of Education and the DOT have now trained all school bus drivers across the state.

Arbegast stated that he is fortunate to be a part of an agency that is so proactive in the fight to end human trafficking. He said it is nice to see people learn more as his team reaches out to people and spreads human trafficking education. They are not necessarily leading all projects but helping with, participating in, and forming partnerships.

One final project Arbegast reported on was that 2,500 DOT employees are completing mandatory TAT training. They are a quarter of the way since starting in March. There are 30 to 50 people in a room. Keeping the group somewhat small allows people to interact more in person to strengthen their education.

Belitsos opened it up for questions or comments. Belitsos wanted to add that the NAHT gave recognition to the Department of Education and the DOT for training 6,000 bus drivers on identifying human trafficking. He also explained that the NAHT has recently been in contact with an RV group who will be putting up rescue stickers. Belitsos asked Arbegast to send a written progress report for the NAHT blog post/newsletter.

Rixner introduced herself and asked how much it costs to bring in the Freedom Truck. Arbegast responded that there is zero expense. It is a 501c3 group, so they have tractor-trailer companies that supply power units and funding. Rixner was interested in coordinating with Arbegast in the future to book the trailer for Sioux City.

Rixner asked to be updated on progress across Iowa. Specifically, the locations of the casinos that will receive virtual training and the locations of the five billboards. Arbegast explained that there is no official date for the training within the casinos. Arbegast listed the locations for the billboards: Waterloo-Cedar Falls, Des Moines, Council Bluffs, Davenport, and Cedar Rapids. Rixner wanted to clarify these items to prevent the crossover of groups spreading awareness.

Belitsos thanked Arbegast for his progress report and commitment to the fight against human trafficking. He will be asked to return in six months.

III. Update on human trafficking federal legislation pending in the U.S. Congress. (Carol Olson)

Olson is the State Director and head of Senator Grassley's Iowa Office. Olson began by discussing the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) that was passed and signed. Senator Grassley voted for that. Olson understands that human trafficking is not only a women's issue. However, the VAWA encompasses many crimes for which women are the target, human trafficking is on the list of offenses covered by the act.

Additionally, Senator Grassley and Senator Feinstein are working on reauthorizing the Trafficking Victims Prevention and Protection Reauthorization Act of 2022 (S3949). This piece of legislation was originally passed 20 years ago. Now the bill is being geared up to be hotline meaning it will be featured in the office of the majority leader. The majority leader will then put that legislation out for consideration of unanimous consent passage.

Olson gave a brief overview of what is included in the S3949 bill. The bill will provide grants to states for providing programs for dual-status children. A collaborative program will identify at-risk children involved in both the child welfare and juvenile justice systems and help prevent their trafficking. The bill would also create education and employment services for survivors of human trafficking to gain more support in their unique situation. This program is drafted to allow youth to remain in those services for up to 5 years.

Another program is Transitioning Youth for those transitioning out of foster care and often not ready to embrace adulthood financially and emotionally. These young people are at higher risk of becoming trafficked. This program offers transitional housing to help bridge that gap and keep them safe and secure. Olson and Senator Grassley are optimistic about the passing of these bills.

Olson stated that from Abergast's report, you could see human trafficking is everywhere. A federal training program now requires all federal employees to be trained on identifying, finding, and reporting human trafficking. Child and labor trafficking are included. Online human trafficking is the next area to focus on as screen time has increased since the pandemic.

Belitsos informed Olson that Hagin works for YSS and received a federal human trafficking grant for their transitioning youth program. Hagin responded that a grand opening happened last week for one of the homes and that eight survivors are being served.

Barr thanked Olson for the update and the work Senator Grassley does for violence against women, trafficking survivors, foster care, and Internet exposure. He then asked Olson why more is not being done to stop the flow of immigrants across the southern border.

IV. 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 June 14th meeting minutes of the NAHT Board of Directors.
- b. Motion to approve the May and June Acting Treasurer Report

Belitsos asked if anyone needed to discuss the consent agenda further or remove an item. There was no opposition. **The Consent Agenda passed unanimously.**

Before proceeding, Belitsos informed the Board about the income drop since last year around the same time. He explained Katie Kyker, Chair of the Fundraising Committee, had to resign due to a new job that prevented her from attending Board meetings. Belitsos sent Kyker a thank you letter for her service. Belitsos asked if anyone would be interested in becoming the next chair. No one showed interest.

Rixner clarified that the chairs of a committee must be board members, but the committee can be composed of non-board members with expertise in the area covered.

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

Chesser reported on the committee's meeting. They reviewed the bylaws. After reviewing them, the committee decided they would like to draft some amendments to the bylaws to give more flexibility in choosing board members. Instead of strictly focusing on regional coalitions, the Ad Hoc Board Search Committee would like to include more representation of law enforcement, state agencies, and nonprofit organizations and add cultural diversity as a factor. Chesser expressed that this amendment would help gather a group of board members with good judgment and strategic thinkers. More effectiveness and flexibility is also possible when appointing new members.

At the request of the Ad Hoc Committee, Belitsos reported to the board that he informed the four candidates that have offered to serve on the board and sent their resumes that the NAHT is slowing down the process of appointing new board members. Chesser added that the board should make sure to communicate with coalitions in Iowa for future recruiting. Chesser stated that going forward Rixner and he would use a more flexible criteria to recruit board members and would write up some official amendments to the bylaws.

Belitsos read the bylaw description of the types of Board volunteers to the Board. The bylaws read as follows, "The board should also consider members representing law enforcement, attorneys, major anti-human trafficking provider agencies, child welfare, victim services, the faith community, survivors of trafficking, educators, healthcare providers, and concerned citizens." He commented that the committee should not see these examples as the only prospects to be considered.

VI. Review and approve/amend the proposed 2022-23 NAHT Budget.

Belitsos reported that he asked Seydell to prepare the 2022-23 budget proposal. Belitsos explained that Seydell's technology consultant contract has been expanded to include treasurer duties, such as preparation of the monthly financial report.

Seydell discussed how the budget was prepared. Seydell took the monthly average of those numbers for each budget item, multiplied that number by 12, and totaled that up from each item in a spreadsheet. For example, Seydell looked at the payments for Lara Marsh, the webmaster. He took the average amount paid to Marsh so far in 2022, got the monthly average, and then multiplied it by 12 to determine the cost of that budget item.

Belitsos said there is also a one-page report on the sources of income for last year. He explained that Tinsman reviewed and approved the budget after requesting some changes. Belitsos asked for further discussion or questions. Hearing none, he called for a vote to approve or deny the 2022-23 budget proposal. Chesser seconded the motion.

The 2022-23 NAHT Budget passed unanimously.

VII. Report on plans (date, location, and program) for the September Board retreat. (Chesser and Bills)

Chesser began by asking Belitsos due to Bill's unavailability if he should continue on by himself. Belitsos asked if anyone would offer to assist Chesser in planning the retreat. Brown-Waech offered to share information on facilities that are great for staff retreats. Belitsos reiterated that they are looking for a free location since there is no rent money in the budget. There will be a paid retreat lunch for board members which is in the budget.

Chesser said he will create a poll to ask members about which dates in September would possibly work for them. Belitsos added that libraries are a potential option since they can be free to use. Belitsos asked one last time for a member to assist Chesser in planning, but no one raised their hand. He then asked Chesser not only to plan the retreat but to lead the retreat as the chair-elect.

VIII. Review proposed changes to the NAHT Bylaws.

Article I, Name and Purpose, Section 2, Structure, Purpose, Composition, v, and Methods Hagin formed the motion to change the sentence from, "The Iowa NAHT will advocate for the growth of intervention, rescue, and best practice survivor recovery services" to "*The Iowa NAHT will advocate for support for survivors.*" Sister Fineran seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Rixner formed the motion to change the sentence from, "In addition, the organization coordinates the public and private response to end trafficking in all forms" to "*In addition, the organization supports the public and private response to end trafficking in all forms.*" Sister Fineran seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Article II, Membership, Section I, Membership

Chesser formed the motion to change the sentence from "The active board members should include at least one representative from each regional human trafficking coalition within Iowa" to "*The active board members should invite one representative from each regional human trafficking coalition within Iowa.*" Rixner seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

Article III, Tax Exemption, Section 3, Use and disposition of funds

Hagin formed the motion to change the sentence from "Board members may be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses such as travel or printing but will not be paid for time" to add "*Board members may be reimbursed for out-of-pocket expenses such as travel or printing but will not be paid for time with the exception of survivors of human trafficking who may be paid for their time to serve on the board.*" Sister Fineran seconded the motion. **The motion passed unanimously.**

The bylaws will continue to be reviewed and changed at the next board meeting.

IX. Review proposed board meeting guidelines and policy for survivor inclusion. (Belitsos)

This item was moved to the next board meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 pm.

Next Board Meeting: Tuesday, August 9th, 2:30 - 4:00 pm

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