

## **Minutes for NAHT Board Meeting April 15, 2025**

Present: Tom Barr, George Belitsos, Chief Patricia Thein, Karl Schilling, Maggie Tinsman, Austin Stubbs, Linda Harrell, Teresa Davidson, Heather Brown, Brittany Sowder, John Chesser, Jackie White, Kim Hilby

Excused absences: Stephanie Olson, Bernadette Rixner, Lyna Debner, Sr. Shirley Fineran

Guests: Threase Harms, Noah Hackbart, Marielle Sweborg

### **New Board Member Austin Stubbs**

John introduced new board member Austin Stubbs, who shared his background and experience. Austin is the new Development Director for Dorothy's House, the survivor services organization in Des Moines founded by Kelley Markey.

### **Corrections to the March Minutes**

George clarified that Hy-Vee stores are helping by posting, not distributing, the current stickers in their bathrooms statewide. He also clarified a mistake on the budget display format and the wording regarding Hy-Vee's involvement with the stickers.

### **Legislative Report**

Threase discussed the unusual situation in the legislature, with many bills still alive yet not being passed and significant issues remaining unresolved. She observed that Governor Reynolds's announcement not to run again has already led to political maneuvering in the legislature. Threase suggests focusing on making human trafficking a key issue for gubernatorial candidates in the upcoming election. Threase also mentioned that the legislative leaders have not yet set a specific end date and that the legislature can continue to meet after per diems end on May 2. In recent years the session has extended a week or more beyond the end of per diem.

The Senate has released budget targets that are \$23 million less than the Governor's recommendations, while the House has not yet released their targets. Three pieces of legislation remain viable: HF649 on human trafficking services definitions, the joint resolution on child testimony from Attorney General Bird, and HF908, which is Rep. Lohse's comprehensive bill and our chief focus this session. Threase commented that Rep. Thompson's bill, which has several human provisions, is controversial because of its funding mechanism and is unlikely to go ahead this year. Threase recommends supporters contact legislators to advocate for \$1 million in funding for human trafficking in the justice budget and to push for HF908 to move through the House this session. She said that it is worthwhile to contact the minority members on the appropriate committees to urge them to support the million dollars and HF 908. She also recommended that board members contact their representatives towards them also to contact committee chairs about the million dollars. Threase predicted that HF908 will not make it through the Senate this session and that we should consider getting it through the House a victory in

itself.

Several board members expressed frustration with partisan politics impeding progress, particularly regarding the possibility that Rep. Brian Lohse's HF908 is being blocked due to his votes on the fentanyl and trans rights bills. The board also considered working directly with agencies during the interim period to make progress without impending legislation. They agreed to cancel the upcoming legislative committee meeting. Maggie emphasized the importance of continuing to discuss and advocate for important issues even when bills don't pass. Maggie announced a human trafficking symposium sponsored by AAUW on May 4th.

### **Secretary of State HT Sticker**

The board discussed a new human trafficking awareness sticker being developed by the Secretary of State's office. The Secretary of State's office now plans to produce their own anti-trafficking sticker, moving away from the initial idea of partnering with the NAHT on a joint sticker and instead working with several corporate sponsors, including Fareway and The Blue Campaign. The proposed sticker draft includes only the new DPS tip line number, omitting victim services numbers. Heather said that it would be better to have one comprehensive sticker that includes both law enforcement and victim services contact information and that the NAHT and SOS should collaborate on a single sticker design. Members discussed whether to push for a single statewide sticker or to try to ensure consistent information across multiple stickers. George, Teresa and John agreed to take the lead in communicating with the Secretary of State's office to address these concerns and explore the possibility of a unified approach.

### **Stacey Besch's Human Trafficking Presentations**

George expressed concerns about human trafficking presentations made by Stacey Besch across Iowa to audiences of adults, middle school students and high school students, an issue first brought to the board's attention in an email from Melody Stone. Specifically, George expressed worries about potential misinformation, controversial statements and age-appropriateness of the presentations. Brittany, Heather and Teresa, who know Stacey and are familiar with her presentations, explained that while some information may be inaccurate or politically charged, Stacey is reaching many people and is generally receptive to feedback and corrections. The board agreed that Stacey's efforts are raising awareness, though they suggested that other board members attend her presentations to evaluate firsthand and potentially provide guidance on improving accuracy. Chief Thein noted that she will appear on a panel discussion with Stacey in Decorah in May, saying that she thought it was best to participate as the police chief in her community.

### **NAHT 20th Anniversary Fundraising Plans**

Tom announced the upcoming 20th anniversary of NAHT and encouraged everyone to

participate in fundraising efforts. He emphasized the importance of the milestone and the need for funding to support their efforts. He also mentioned the possibility of recurring donations. George suggested adding Austin to the fundraising committee. John proposed rescheduling the Executive Committee meeting for May 6th.

### **Next steps**

- George, Teresa and John to follow up with Secretary of State's office regarding collaboration on a single statewide human trafficking awareness sticker.
- Marielle and Maggie to send out a note canceling the legislative committee meeting scheduled for Thursday.
- Marielle to resend the AAUW human trafficking symposium invitation to board members who didn't receive it.
- Austin to join fundraising committee.
- George to forward the treasurer's report email to John.
- John to add the March treasurer's report to next month's agenda.
- All board members to consider donating to NAHT's 20th anniversary fundraising campaign.
- All board members to share information about the 20th anniversary fundraising campaign on social media and with their networks.
- All board members to reach out to their legislators to support the \$1 million budget allocation for human trafficking and House File 908.

### **Meeting Chat**

14:29:49 From read.ai meeting notes to Everyone:

Noah added read.ai meeting notes to the meeting.

Read provides AI generated meeting summaries to make meetings more effective and efficient. View our Privacy Policy at <https://www.read.ai/pp>

Type "read stop" to disable, or "opt out" to delete meeting data.

14:32:35 From Chains Interrupted to Everyone:

WELCOME Austin!!

austinstubbs: 

14:36:41 From Brittany to Everyone:

Welcome!

austinstubbs: 

14:38:55 From Noah Hackbart to Everyone:

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=91&ba=hf649>

14:38:58 From Noah Hackbart to Everyone:

HF 649

14:39:59 From Noah Hackbart to Everyone:

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=91&ba=hjr9>

14:40:02 From Noah Hackbart to Everyone:

HJR 9

14:40:29 From Noah Hackbart to Everyone:

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=91&ba=hf908>

14:40:31 From Noah Hackbart to Everyone:

HF 908

14:46:06 From Noah Hackbart to Everyone:

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=91&ba=HF%201007>

14:46:17 From Noah Hackbart to Everyone:

HF 1007, formerly HSB 319

14:47:22 From kim hilby to Everyone:

I'm on hold with another call I have to take. I hope to join soon

14:51:07 From John Chesser to kim hilby (direct message):

OK

14:51:40 From Noah Hackbart to Everyone:

<https://www.legis.iowa.gov/committees/committee?groupID=678&ga=91>

14:51:55 From Noah Hackbart to Everyone:

Members of the Justice Systems Appropriations Subcommittee in both the House & Senate.

15:05:32 From jackie.white@ag.iowa.gov to Everyone:

Have to go. I have a training I have to drive to. Thank you!