

Iowa NAHT Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Monday, July 10, 2017

2:30 pm - 4:00 pm Conference Call

Present on call: George Belitsos (Chair), Jan Beran, Liz Cox, Teresa Davidson, Joy Fopma, Taylor Houston, Brynne Howard, Jennie Kerger, Cathy O’Keeffe, Stephen O’Meara, Shirlee Reding, Bernadette Rixner, Maggie Tinsman

Absent: Joy Fopma, Suzanne Wright

Excused: Sr Shirley Fineran, Erin Schneider, Alissa Stoehr

Guests: Mike Staebell (Dickinson Law Firm), Katie Kuehn (Iowa Department of Public Safety)

Taking minutes: Margaret Epplin

Call to Order and Roll Call. Welcome guests

The meeting was called to order by Chair Belitsos who welcomed 2 invited guest presenters: Mike Staebell a Compliance Specialist in the Labor and Employment Section of Dickinson Law Firm in Des Moines, and Katie Kuehn a DPS intelligence analyst working on human trafficking.

Review today's agenda Rixner added re-authorization of the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2017. Tinsman requested a report on the OK 200 Bike Ride (a 200- mile bike ride from West Des Moines, IA to Okoboji, IA to raise funds and awareness to help support human traffic survivors in Nepal and Des Moines, IA.). Belitsos quickly reported that \$102,000 has been collected with money still coming in.

Presentation on labor trafficking in Iowa by Mike Staebell, Compliance Specialist, Dickinson Law Firm in Des Moines

Staebell retired from the U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division (WHD), in December 2015 after 33 years of enforcing various federal employment laws. That included 17 years of direct investigation experience, followed by 11 years supervising other investigators. In his final five years with the agency, he served as District Director for the states of Iowa and Nebraska.

After his retirement, he took a job with Dickinson Law firm as a Compliance Specialist to help clients understand and comply with the law.

In his former federal job, Staebell did not enforce trafficking prohibition regulations but responded to lots of labor issues, like pay, which do not raise level of trafficking, but are related. In the eyes of the Department of Labor, the act of recruiting a person for the purpose of involuntary labor is coercion and at times might be labeled as labor trafficking. Most of the time when he uncovered scenarios of involuntary labor or coercion, he turned further investigation over to the Department of Justice and Homeland Security.

Staebell shared examples of coercion or involuntary labor he or staff he supervises had personally experienced. For example, sometimes restaurants have many trafficked staff working, but these staff are paid tips only. The Department of Labor sometimes uncovers that the business tax return does not list all the workers, but many more are observed working in the restaurant. When investigated further, they learn that workers are asked to hand over immigrant paperwork, which gives the employer power over the employees and they can't leave. Investigators have watched the restaurant at the end of the work day and have seen a van pick up restaurant workers from the kitchen entry and drop them off at a motel. Many times workers are moved from city to city quickly so they don't get comfortable enough to complain to local authorities.

As an example of this, in 2015, the Department of Labor charged that The Mongolian Grill and King Buffet in Ames violated the Fair Labor Standards Act by not paying employees the minimum wage or overtime pay. The Department of Labor is seeking \$600,000 in back wages for 38 restaurant employees. The Mongolian Grill has been sold and King Buffet has closed. This case has not yet gone to trial. There is a similar case in Des Moines.

Another area of concern in the Midwest is fair pay for migrant farm workers. Again the employer asks the workers to turn over their immigrant paperwork. The employer provides transportation to and from the field, which allows the employer to take advantage of the workers and keep them in the fields for a long time. Often, the pay is much less than promised.

Another example was an egg processing plant in NW Iowa. The employer told workers that ICE was patrolling the road and the employer kept the employees locked in the plant overnight where employees slept on cardboard boxes. The employer told employees that they were keeping employees safe and would let them out when all was clear.

In many cases, complaints are filed with the Department of Labor by worker rights or advocacy groups, but often workers will not testify so the case can't go to court. The Department of Labor has worked with worker rights and advocacy groups to hold informational sessions on worker rights and to inform workers how to get these rights. Even though the Department of Labor reports violations to the US Attorney General, these cases don't get proper investigation as the US Attorney has many other cases which are considered more important.

Rixner relayed that an anonymous letter informed the City Council of Sioux City that restaurant employees were sleeping in the restaurant. The restaurant was informed that this was illegal, but no one was charged with a crime. She asked why law enforcement and prosecutors were not more aggressive.

Beran asked how family members figured in trafficking. Staebell said that the standard line is that "they are all our family," despite the fact that the worker and employer are not related. The Department of Labor doesn't get in the way of immediate family members (children, parents) working in a business, but anyone else is covered by minimum wage laws.

O'Meara gave an example of domestic servitude. For 5 years a nanny worked for 2 doctors 7 days a week, 80 hours per week, cleaning, nannying, and cooking. The employers restricted the nanny's movements, wouldn't let her leave, and monitored her mail and email. The nanny escaped and ran and the DOL was notified.

O'Meara said that often sex trafficking is related to labor trafficking. He had one case in which a local hospital of a small population center had over 10 women for emergency pregnancy services. This was a red flag which indicated sex trafficking of migrant workers in the agricultural sector. Rixner asked O'Meara if babies are being harvested. In this case, children and mothers were taken to a local clinic so harvesting was not a consideration.

Beran asked if there is assistance for migrant workers if they are freed from trafficking, or are they on their own and vulnerable to further trafficking. Staebell said there is some help and that PROTEUS, an Iowa group working with migrant workers, provides a wide range of services to migrants. However, many times they are left to their own devices. Some victims need to be kept in the US, and not deported, so that they can testify against perpetrators, which might be difficult since the current administration is emphasizing deportation.

Belitsos thanked Staebell for his presentation and asked if he were willing to make further presentations at conferences. At the request of Belitsos, Staebell reported that he is also working on an NAHT blog posting, which goes to over 1,000 recipients.

May 30 and June 26 Executive Committee meetings reports and approval of Consent Agendas:

Belitsos thanked Board members who joined the last 2 Executive Committee conference calls. Tinsman asked that Consent Agenda item 4 (research of the Legislative Advisory Council) be expanded to include Vermont.

- Motion to approve the May 8 BOD meeting minutes.
- Motion to add a new goal to the Network Strategic Plan. The NAHT will encourage and assist local communities and coalitions to conduct HT awareness hotel/motel employee training in their area of Iowa. The Network will establish an Iowa Hotel/Motel Project Steering Committee. The NAHT will consult and

collaborate with the Nebraska Hotel/motel project for training of trainers and curriculum. The NAHT will place priority on starting training in Des Moines which has yet to conduct such a project.

- Motion to endorse the offer from LASTWatch, a coalition based in Marshalltown, to write a Human Trafficking Community Coalition Guide and to post it on the Iowa NAHT website. The guide will be proofed by the Executive Committee prior to posting.
- Motion to request that the Legislative Advisory Council research the Massachusetts SB295 bill **and Vermont bill** regarding the prevention of sexual abuse of children and youth. The LAC is asked to develop a strategy to recruit legislative advocates to introduce a bill in 2018 Iowa legislature.
- Motion to add a goal to the Network Strategic Plan to inform, encourage, and assist local coalitions and anti-human trafficking advocates to approach city councils (statewide) adopting massage business ordinances. Set a goal of 5 Iowa cities to adopt massage regulation ordinances between July 1 2017, and June 30 2018.
- Motion to reach out to Truckers Against Human Trafficking in order to become better informed of their work within Iowa and begin to collaborate. The trucker rep will be asked to meet with the Executive Committee on June 26. This collaboration goal will be added to the Network's strategic plan.
- Motion to select Jan Beran to represent the NAHT during the October 27 ISU Humanitarian Alumni Awards luncheon and to present Luis CdeBaca with the Network Outstanding Contribution award.
- Motion to authorize the chair to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the Nebraska Hotel/Motel project to conduct a training of trainers in fall 2017 in Des Moines and to adopt the Nebraska training curriculum and manual for use in Iowa.
- Motion to approve the report of the Treasurer. As of June 27, there was \$3,877 in checking and \$1,781 in savings.
- Motion to authorize the Chair to send a letter of support for a \$74,999 grant to the Thomas Lyle Williams Trust Fund as submitted by the Des Moines Salvation Army.
- Motion to change the name of the Network to the Iowa Network Against Human Trafficking **and Slavery** effective January 1, 2018. We will not be changing the name of our website because of confusion this could cause.

Tinsman **made motion** to accept the Consent Agenda with the addition of the "Vermont bill" to the research of the Legislative Advisory Committee (item 4). Beran **seconded**. **Motion carried** unanimously.

Discussion followed regarding the Network initiative to get massage business ordinance adopted by city councils across the state of Iowa. Belitsos wrote a "call to action" which was sent to the NAHT Board and 1,000 subscribers to the Network blog. Tinsman mentioned that she found it more effective in the Quad Cities to first approach the Police Chief and City Attorney about a massage business ordinance instead of first approaching the City Council. Belitsos reported that in Ames, a group including a local licensed massage therapist, approached the Police Chief and City Attorney about adopting a massage business ordinance. They then presented to the Ames City Council which passed a motion that directed staff to prepare an ordinance. As a guide, Belitsos used the City of Johnston massage business ordinance; Johnston is the only city with a massage business ordinance and it works well. . Belitsos will have a document prepared by the end of the week with talking points to use when presenting before a city council.

Presentation from the newly hired DPS intelligence analyst working on human trafficking (Katie Kuehn)

Kuehn introduced herself. She was recently hired by the DPS Office to Combat Human Trafficking. She is a graduate of Upper Iowa University and has worked for 6.5 years for the FBI in counter terrorism. Since being hired by the Iowa DPS, she has been learning what is needed in analytical support. Kuehn described her role at DPS.

Tinsman asked whom she is talking to in law enforcement and what she is telling them. Kuehl relayed that law enforcement officers have monthly meetings on the state and local levels and she is these attending meetings to let them know that there is a human trafficking analyst in the Division of Intelligence. After she gets a tip from Polaris, she looks for details related to the tip that might be helpful to law enforcement (e.g., phone numbers, owners of businesses/buildings, Facebook pages, etc.). She then prepares a package containing the tip and the supporting details for local law enforcement that are responsible to follow up the tip.

O'Keefe asked if Kuehn is responsible for collecting and summarizing the data of incidents involving human trafficking and what was the follow through? Kuehn answered that there is no current procedure for collecting this information, and DPS is working on a way to best track the numbers and summarize the tips. DPS does conduct regular follow up with law enforcement that received the tip to learn the result. Sometimes there is no follow up because some victims do not want law enforcement interaction or refuse to testify.

Houston asked if Kuehn feels supported, especially with the with state budget cuts. Kuehn responded that she feels very supported and the office has been funded for 2018.

O'Keefe asked if Kuehn would like to receive the information that comes in on their Iowa crisis line. Kuehn responded that she would definitely like to have the tips and asked O'Keefe to forward information to her.

Kuehn asked Belitsos to send Kuehn's contact information to the NAHT Board which he agreed to do.

Cox thinks consistency in charges is a challenge among county attorneys for human trafficking and sexual abuse cases. Is the Attorney General's office discussing consistency in procedures? Kuehn doesn't know and will reach out to Villongco. Kuehn relayed that the willingness for a prosecutor to take on a case changes from place to place. Rixner and Tinsman said that they keep being told that county attorneys do not want to take on trafficking cases unless they feel they are going to win them.

Kuehn does not have info that this is or isn't accurate. Any human trafficking prosecution is difficult if no victim will be a witness. Rixner said that some county attorneys do not have experience prosecuting human trafficking cases and, therefore, are reluctant to take the case. Tinsman recommended Kuehn attend county attorney conferences and present a session on how to prosecute human trafficking cases.

Belitsos reported that the Children's Justice Project has held human trafficking trainings for county attorneys and judges. Houston added that he found that prosecutors in Georgia did not know the actual code and didn't want to take human trafficking cases. There was a special prosecutor in Georgia who was successful in prosecuting human trafficking cases. This special prosecutor gave sessions on how to prosecute traffickers and broke down cases he had successfully prosecuted.

Belitsos added that NAHT was an advocate for creation of the DPS Office to Combat Human Trafficking, and the Network is grateful that the Commissioner maintained funding for Kuehn's position which will help get cases to courts and justice for victims and survivors. Belitsos will ask Kuehn to return in a couple of months to give an update on helping law enforcement, county attorneys, and prosecutors to bring forth human trafficking cases.

Report of the Research, Evaluation and Best Practice Standards Committee. Approval of grant funds for the committee summer research project and goal of 20 interviews by August 30 (Dr. Taylor Houston)

Houston reported that he received 2 different research grants: \$1,200 from Buena Vista College and \$1,560 from the McElroy fund. These grants will allow an intern and Houston to travel the state interviewing persons who provide human trafficking services to victims. Thus far, they have interviewed 6 individuals, 5 more interviews are scheduled, with 5 more in the scheduling process, a total of 16 so far. The intern is transcribing the interviews. People interviewed have provided additional contacts. Houston will send the survey to those they can't reach by the August 30 deadline.

Houston reported that there are usually four people who call in for the Research, Evaluation, and Best Practice Standards Committee meetings. Molly, Shirley, Cein, and himself. Molly is preparing a Google doc continuous literature review on best practices. There is limited literature on how to best provide different services and most of the literature is repetitive, with not much pre- post-test research. Cein is a new member of the Committee. He was an active member of the ISU Students Against Human Trafficking until he graduated last May and is now working for the Department of Corrections to standardize the legal code for collecting law enforcement data. Houston will work with Cein after Cein has collected quantitative data.

Houston reported the Research, Evaluation and Best Practice Standards Committee will schedule fewer conference call monthly meetings. Instead, Houston will contact individual committee members to get a report of their progress.

Belitsos complimented the committee for their work and asked Houston for examples of agencies or individuals they are interviewing. Houston is talking to those providing direct services, victims, law enforcement, administrative staff, and all who might interact with a survivor. Houston first reached out to direct service organizations involved in human trafficking services and asked “Who is that one person that you call (nurse, lawyer, etc.) and you trust, and who might not be connected with an organization?” Houston will use this information to create a general map of those across the state providing effective human trafficking victims services.

Belitsos asked Houston if he had interviews that represented all parts of Iowa: Houston replied that he has made contacts in the Central, northern, and eastern parts of Iowa. He has had more difficulty finding people to interview in western and southern Iowa and hopes to find contact in Lamoni and Graceland College.

Houston reported that someone in the Attorney General’s Office has been collecting data and working with a private firm to put together a report. Houston has reached out to see if he is repeating what they are doing. Belitsos said that his guess is that the AG’s office is conducting an ongoing needs study. They are first identifying all the resources for rescue, rehabilitation, and therapy through state funds, and will identify unmet needs. They will release a statewide unmet needs report.

Report of the Hotel/Motel Project Steering Committee and meeting Monday, July 17 with Stephen O’Meara 3:00-4:30 pm at Plymouth Church in Des Moines (Shirlee Reding and Dr. George)

Belitsos thanked Reding for chairing the Committee and for O’Meara’s willingness to partner with the NAHT. He encouraged Board members to attend the July 17 meeting and will send out a reminder.

Outcome of June 26 discussion with Truckers Against Human Trafficking (THAT) rep from DOT, David Lorenzen (all who attended)

Lorenzen, a representative of Truckers Against Human Trafficking, works for the DOT, and was a special guest speaker at the June 26 Executive Committee meeting. The Executive Committee was impressed with the passion with which Truckers Against Human Trafficking in Iowa are going about their projects and hopes that NAHT can collaborate with them. Belitsos reported that Truckers Against Human Trafficking in Iowa has a training curriculum for drivers which is a national model adopted by other states. They will have a display on the concourse of the State Fair on the first day of the fair. Belitsos has sent info about Truckers against Human Trafficking to the NAHT Board and will relay additional information he receives from Lorenzen about the State Fair display. Belitsos would like to more closely collaborate with THAT and will invite Lorenzen to participate in a future Board meeting.

Startup of Legislative Advisory Council (Liz Cox and Cathy O’Keeffe)

Cox reported that she has a summer intern who is working on advocacy. O’Keeffe gave a public thank you to Liz’s intern.

Cox and O’Keeffe will organize the first meeting of this Council to research what NAHT should bring to the legislature next year and how we can have a coordinated voice.

Cox participated in a Vermont Child Abuse Prevention Initiative conference call and learned a lot about preventing human trafficking in other states. Tinsman asked if Cox is looking at both Vermont and Massachusetts. Cox replied, yes, and Ohio, too.

Cox elaborated that in Vermont, all cases of sexual abuse and human trafficking go to the Department of Human Services, and the same investigation is done for all cases. This eliminates the county attorney and law enforcement inconsistencies. Cox wonders if Iowa could move this way. It would be a big shift and would take several years to make the structure change.

Tinsman likes the structure of one department in the state doing all the sexual abuse work so all cases would be funneled to one place. Tinsman noted that many departments in Iowa are doing investigations, especially Department of Education is doing their own. The Iowa system is very fragmented and inconsistent.

Rixner asked if NAHT is dropping its advocacy for Erin’s Law. Cox replied, no. However, what we learned from the last legislative session is that what we have been supporting was not met with success in the legislature. We need a coordinated voice bringing the message to legislators through grass roots efforts. We need to be thoughtful about what we want and what we say before we go back to the legislature.

Belitsos commended Cox and O’Keeffe for taking on the leadership of the Council and for calling the first meeting.

Rixner shared an email with a request from the staff of Senator Grassley in which he asked that the NAHT Board endorse the changes to the federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2017. NAHT Board members asked if anything was being removed. Rixner said the changes include adding more training for federal agencies and extending grants which will expire in 2018 to the 2020s. Tinsman and Rixner said that the support for changes to this bill is bipartisan and very much supported by Grassley. Belitsos said that he has read the additions and they are in line with the goals of the NAHT Board, including additional language for the expansion of prevention and education.

Rixner **made a motion** that the NAHT Board authorize Belitsos to send a letter endorsing the changes and additions to Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2017. Tinsman **seconded**. **Motion carried** unanimously.

Progress report on the series of 2.5 day intensive training “Multi-Disciplinary Response to Trafficking” Impact of 26% funding cut to Victim Services (Celine Villongco, Human Trafficking Coordinator) No report as Villongco was not present.

Upcoming Meeting Reminder (See 2017 Meeting Dates, attached) Next Executive Committee meeting is Monday, July 31, 2:30-4:00 Next Board of Directors meeting is Monday, September 11, 2:30-4:00. (conference call)

The August NAHT Board meeting has been cancelled and the next full Board meeting will be September 11. All NAHT Board members are welcome to join the Executive Committee conference calls on July 31 and August 28. Tinsman will be on vacation for July 31 and October 30 Executive Committee meetings.