

NAHT Board Meeting Minutes February 11, 2025

Present: George, Bernadette, Sr. Shirley, Maggie, Stephanie, John, Karl, Teresa, Tricia

Excused absences: Brittany, Kim, Jackie, Heather, Linda, Tom

Attendance: Teresa Davidson informed the board that board member Heather Brown was undergoing surgery during the board meeting due to a persistent infection.

John rearranged the agenda so that Threase Harms could possibly join the meeting toward the end.

Minutes. The January minutes were approved unanimously without amendment.

January Treasurers Report. George said that the monthly budget was almost balanced at \$1,619.56 of deposits and \$1,625.23 of expenses. He thanked two board members, John and Linda, for donating during the past month. George added that expenses were more than usual in January because of our event at the capitol. Beginning checking account balance was \$21,974.50 and ending balance was \$21,968.83. Savings account balance was \$7,438.14 and CD balance was \$21,274.40.

National secretaries of state meeting in DC. Teresa Davidson updated the board on her trip to Washington on January 29 at the invitation of Secretary of State Paul Pate to participate in a panel discussion explaining how other states could implement a businesses against trafficking program like the one we have in Iowa (IBAT). The event was a joint session with the Blue Campaign.

Jarod Earl Anderson trial. Teresa Davidson informed the board that she had assisted in the prosecution of Anderson by the Linn County Attorney and the Iowa Attorney General's office in a trial that began January 28 and ended in February 8. After only 90 minutes of deliberation, Anderson was convicted on all five counts of human trafficking and related crimes. She noted that he was the first person convicted under the 2023 law drafted by Rep. Mark Thompson that reclassified child sex trafficking as a Class A felony. Teresa added that there are more people involved in the Anderson case and that further prosecutions are possible. The defendant took the stand and in his defense offered several implausible rebuttals of the prosecution's case. The prosecution, however, had compelling evidence from phone records and hotel surveillance videos to convince the jury of his guilt. Teresa praised lead prosecutor Nicole Leonard of the Attorney General's office, calling her a "rockstar." Teresa said that she would not have added or subtracted anything from Leonard's closing statement to the jury. Although sentencing will not take place till April 1, the judge told Anderson that because of the classification of the crime he was facing life in prison without parole. Anderson's co-defendant Tana Torres testified against him as did the victim. The defense attorney took several actions to intimidate the victim on the stand, including requesting that the judge move a computer screen which had partially shielded the victim from a view of the defendant. The victims was so upset by this that the judge had to pause the trial so that the victim could go to the bathroom and vomit. Teresa noted that this incident underlined the need for a change and Iowa law to overturn the recent Iowa Supreme Court decision disallowing the use of video testimony in trials and depositions. Teresa observed

that at one point in the trial the word ‘venture’ became a concern as it was unclear whether a venture could consist of simply the trafficker and buyer. Leonard’s argument that this is the meaning of the law convinced the judge, thereby which Teresa suggested established a precedent for future cases. Bernadette noted that her local police up until now have interpreted the word venture to mean that there must be at least two traffickers for there to be a crime of human trafficking. George suggested that the prosecution deserved an outstanding anti-trafficking award.

Iowa State University human trafficking panel. George updated the board on the human trafficking panel held in the Iowa State University Memorial Union on January 27. The panel featured board members Heather Brown and Brittany Sowder as well as two mental health therapists. George praised Heather and Brittany for doing a fantastic job on the panel. Brittany introduced her new book *She Survived* to the audience. The book is available on Amazon. Although the event was videotaped, the video is accessible only to Iowa State University students.

Southern Iowa coalition update. George noted that Brittany Sowder had founded a new coalition for southern Iowa which will incorporate the existing coalition operating in Ottumwa. Teresa Davidson noted that the new coalition in Polk County, the child sexual exploitation (CSEC) task force that we added to our list of coalitions last month, has initiated pilot screenings to identify human trafficking victims based on the screening tool that would be mandated by Rep. Lohse’s bill. John suggested that the Polk County CSEC might be another candidate for an outstanding human trafficking award. John also mentioned that he had nominated for the award the leaders of Project LIVE, a CDC-funded research project in the Des Moines Public schools, spearhead by Professor Katie Edwards of the University of Michigan and our board member Stephanie Olson of the Set Me Free Project.

Legislative update. Since Threase was not able to join, Noah joined John in giving an overview of legislative activities during the past month including the recent NAHT Legislative Committee meeting. The AG has introduced an Iowa constitutional amendment that she described to us in our meeting with her last fall that would overturn a decision by the Iowa Supreme Court banning video testimony in depositions and trials. Rep. Lohse’s bill also pursues the same result through ordinary legislation. Teresa noted that the recent trial of Jarod Anderson was a perfect example of how the defense in a criminal trial can intimidate the witness when video testimony is not allowed. Teresa said she is convinced that if the victim had not returned from her trip to the bathroom that the trial would've turned out differently. Karl noted the Iowa Supreme Court decision on this issue was so vague that it's hard to know what is allowed and not allowed at trial. John suggested that the Anderson trial would be a good framework for an editorial piece on this issue. George reminded the board that the legislative committee had endorsed this bill and recommended that the overall board do likewise. Stephanie made a motion that the Iowa NAHT support the constitutional amendment proposed by the Attorney General. The motion in past unanimously. Noah told the board that AG Bird had presented her budget to the appropriations committee. The AG specifically mentioned her proposal of an annual \$1 million appropriation for human trafficking victim services. Bernadette asked whether the \$1 million is included in the Lohse bill. John said no, it is an appropriation so it will appear only when the appropriation bills are formulated in both houses of the legislature. Noah noted that this \$1 million appropriation

proposal is also contained in Gov. Reynolds's budget. George suggested that the board endorse SF 66 and SF 67. John replied that he would certainly do so as soon as he had read them. Karl added that SF 66 is the constitutional amendment mentioned earlier while SF 67 has to do with increasing the statute of limitations for sexual assault victim prosecution. Teresa told the board that our discussion of safe harbor legislation on January 15 with the legislative committee members had resulted in a request from Rep. Holt to propose language on safe harbor legislation; Teresa was working to prepare and relay this language through Threase Harms. Bernadette asked for an explanation of the Lohse bill. John said he would send it in its current form to all board members, although it does not even have a bill number yet. The bill consists of several provisions including first of all a requirement that state agencies and other stakeholders concerned with human trafficking conduct an annual meeting over a five year period to formulate legislation on human trafficking. Other provisions include mandatory screening for human trafficking using an acceptable validated screening tool, as mentioned earlier by Teresa, as well as a requirement that the DHHS formulate a plan for survivor services including agreements with other states for cases in which a survivor needs to be sent from one state to another for recovery. The final provision is a \$750,000 appropriation to be used to form a joint human trafficking task force between the AG and DPS. Teresa Davidson added that the Lohse bill also includes language to correct a loophole in Iowa Code section 710A in which the use of the word "services" creates the possibility that a third party would be needed to constitute the crime of human trafficking of a minor. The change amounts to striking 13 words from the definition. She added that Iowa Code section 725.1 also needs an update since it refers to a minor as a prostitute. This is inconsistent with other Iowa laws. George noted that the legislative committee had endorsed this bill and recommended that the board do likewise. Karl Schilling moved that the NAHT endorse Rep. Lohse's bill. The motion passed unanimously. The board adjourned at 3:30 PM.