

NAHT Board Meeting August 13, 2024

Present: Bernadette Rixner, Maggie Tinsman, George Belitsos, Tom Barr, Shirley Fineran, Linda Harrell, Lyna Debner, Mike Tupper, Kim Hilby, Jackie White, Stephanie Olson, Deanna Jensen-Valliere, Karl Schilling, John Chesser. Guest: Threase Harms

Minutes taken by John Chesser

1. Legislative report. Threase Harms noted that we do not currently have support from the chairs of the judiciary committees in the house and the senate, Holt and Dawson. In the past, they had been supporters. The department of public safety is influencing the committee chairs, and therefore in a sense we have gone backwards in support for Safe Harbor legislation. Without the legislative committee chairs on our side we are in a precarious situation. Tom Barr asked in the chat box what the objection to Safe Harbor is from the Department of Public Safety. Karl Schilling replied that DPS wants to have discretion when it comes to charging those trafficked with crimes such as the recruiting survivors might have done or dealing drugs or theft. Threase noted that we have an upcoming call with Sidney McCoy of Shared Hope International to strategize about legislation. Maggie noted that since it is an election year, it's a good time to try to influence legislators to support our proposal of a new \$1 million human trafficking victim assistance fund in the attorney general's office. George said that we should not drop Safe harbor from our legislative goals just because there is opposition, especially since 31 states already have safe harbor laws on the books. Shirley asked whether there is already a bill in process. Threase replied that since the session hasn't started yet there is no bill yet. Shirley said it's important to be specific so that we sound credible when we approach legislators to encourage them to enact our goals and asked whether we should be approaching just the members of appropriations committees or all legislators. Threase replied that this is the time for broad grassroots lobbying of all the legislators not just those on the appropriations committees. And when we lobby, it's important that legislators understand and agree with us not just in principle but also understand what policy and appropriations changes are necessary to get these issues across the finish line. Shirley noted that the title does not necessarily make it clear that the money in the proposed fund is exclusively for those organizations providing direct services to survivors. Threase replied that the bill can be written so that it's clear where the money is supposed to go. Karl said that we were compiling a wish list from survivor services organizations that would lay out the needs in detail. Teresa added that these organizations consistently tell her that staffing is the greatest funding need in survivor services. Based on the annual budget shared with her, Teresa said that 90% of the budgets of these organizations is for staff. John said that these budgets will show the need for funding for survivor services organizations, specifically the shortfall. Teresa added specific examples of this lack of funding, such as Lila Mae's House, chains interrupted and Friends of the family. Threase said that that specific information is what we need to use in approaching legislators. Threase noted that our zoom presentation to legislators is coming up and this is the kind of information that would be useful in that session. John noted that about 30 participants were registered for the session already. John agreed to send out the link again to all the board members for the legislator session. Every legislator, and every legislative candidate has already received the link, Threase said. And if we could send them the recording afterward, they would appreciate it. Shirley asked John to send a list of those

who had participated after the legislator zoom meeting so that board members could see whether their legislators had attended or not. John noted that there is no harm in letting many people listen to the legislator session since it would not be interactive but rather a one-way lecture format. Media plan. Threase noted that she had sent board members a media plan proposal. Threase is looking for people to be spokespersons to implement the media plan which includes arranging interviews with newspapers, radio stations, and television stations throughout the state. Likewise, there would be opinion pieces submitted to newspapers. The more energy we convey in our media outreach, the more energy will be communicated to the legislature. This is an important way for NAHT to tell the human trafficking story, particularly what the consequences are when there is no state funding for survivor services. It won't be easy to cut through all the media attention to the elections but we have to do our best. NAHT just needs to approve its legislative agenda so we can get started. George noted that the latest blog post reports on the latest human trafficking arrests in the state. Kim asked what Threase was looking for in terms of media relations: locally produced messages to local media or canned messages for us to use? Threase said we can go either way. She will be providing prepared material but is also ready to help craft local responses for local communities. George reminded the group about the 14 local anti-trafficking coalitions and their value in spreading the message and that we should not ignore them in this effort. The list of the 14 coalitions is on the website. John asked Threase to comment on the governor's announcement that she would direct \$5 million from pandemic relief funds to the Attorney General's office for crime victims. Threase said the big question this raises is whether the state will address the federal funding shortfall in the long run. We need to shame state government into taking seriously the problem of human trafficking in Iowa. We have to paint a picture of that the state of Iowa has to do better on human trafficking. John asked what NAHT should be doing with regard to Rep. Brian Lohse and his bill on human trafficking. Threase said that they had been in conversations with him about it and he would welcome our input when the time comes. John asked Threase if we should direct our efforts at any particular goal in this session, in other words, is there any low hanging fruit? Threase replied that we just have to decide what our priorities are and pursue them. George said that it's up to the legislative committee to set these priorities and their meeting is coming up soon.

2. June minutes. There are corrections in amendments that have not yet been incorporated in the minutes. We will correct the minutes and bring them back at the September meeting for approval. Karl offered to send to John and abbreviated version of Roberts rules of order that clarifies whether one needs to actually have a vote on the minutes and other related items. John, thank Karl and ask Tim yes to send that document to him.
3. Annual budget. John has not yet added a revenue projection to George's expenditure projection for the annual budget. That will be completed for a future board meeting.
4. Treasurers report. George completed June and July treasurers reports. George noted we had only one donation in the month of July. George noted \$765 interest payment from the CD that we have. George moved approval of the treasurers report. Tom Barr seconded the motion and both Treasures reports were approved unanimously.
5. New fundraising committee chair, Tom Barr. John thanked Tom for assuming the role of fundraising chair. John also invited other board members to join the fundraising committee.

6. Suggested volunteer activities. John noted that helping trafficking survivors directly is difficult for ordinary volunteers. Many people contact the NAHT offering to volunteer. George developed a list of suggested activities for volunteers to undertake to assist in the fight against human trafficking and sent it to board members.
7. Offer of student internship to NAHT. Kim Hilby referred one of her students to the NAHT with an offer of internship. How should we respond to this generous offer? Tom asked if the student had computer skills. George suggested that an intern could apply for grants from the casinos in Iowa that give grants for charitable organizations. Media relations would be another task that an intern might be able to do, John added. Whatever task would be useful, they would have to be things that could be finished within one semester George added. Kim reminded the board that interns need to document a consistent number of work hours per week to fulfill the requirements of the internship.
8. Upcoming events. John noted that we have an upcoming zoom event designed for those who would like to volunteer in the area of public policy. We are calling this advocacy training to distinguish it from the legislator presentation. We could add the volunteer suggestions to the advertisement for the advocacy training. Bernadette suggested that we always follow up personally to any offer of volunteering and not just send a list of ideas. John said he doesn't want to remove the personal element, but to help people zero in on what contribution they might want to make.
9. Pieper Lewis letter. George asked if there had been any response to the joint letter with Shared Hope International about the Pieper Lewis arrest warrant situation. George and Maggie proposed that John contact the Director of the department of corrections directly about the case. Teresa replied that she had been in constant contact with polk county attorney Kim Graham about the case. Teresa added that she does not know where Pieper is now and that she is very worried about her. Pieper communicated with Teresa even for a time after she removed her tracking device. Then she stopped responding.
10. Hotel Motel video. Teresa requested that we put on the agenda for next month that DPS has told Teresa that our hotel-motel video is out of date and needs to be updated. Stephanie offered the Set Me Free hotel-motel video as material to use to update our NAHT video. Teresa said she was surprised by this. John and George said had not received anything from DPS about the video. She said she would check back and report on this at the next meeting.
11. Heather Brown. George reminded the group of the upcoming executive committee meeting and that Heather Brown had offered to return to the board. He also noted that Mike Tupper is retiring at the end of the year and that we should take up his recommendation for another law enforcement member.
12. Meeting adjourned at 4pm.