

NAHT Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Monday, November 14, 2016

Conference Call, 2:30 to 4:00 pm

Present on call George Belitsos, Jan Beran (3 pm), Ruth Buckels, Liz Cox, Teresa Davidson, Steve Eckley, Shirley Fineran (3 pm), Ann Naffier, Stephen O'Meara, Shirlee Reding, Bernadette Rixner, Maggie Tinsman

Resigned Emily Devine

Excused Cathy O'Keeffe

Absent Gail Sheridan-Lucht

Guests Taylor Houston (Mt Mercy University), Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds, Roxanne Ryan (Attorney General's Office), Margaret Epplin (Technology Consultant)

1. **Call to order and Introduction of Guests.** Belitsos called the meeting to order at 2:35 p.m. and introduced guest Taylor Houston. Lt. Governor Kim Reynolds and Roxanne Ryan will join the call at 3 p.m.
2. **Review agenda.** The agenda was reviewed and approved. Since Villongco was unable to attend today's meeting, she will report on Minnesota Safe Houses at the December NAHT Board conference call.
3. **Priorities for 2017 legislative session.**

- a. Review and approve 2017 legislative proposal from Tinsman for an amendment to the Rape Shield law.

The current Iowa Rape Shield Law doesn't protect victims of human trafficking. Tinsman recommends adding victims of human trafficking to the Iowa Rape Shield law. Tinsman spoke with Shared Hope International, an international group dedicated to bringing an end to sex trafficking. As recommended by Shared Hope, Tinsman contacted states which have a Rape Shield law in place. Tinsman feels that a change in the Iowa Rape Shield law would receive support from the legislature and the Supreme Court. Tinsman also thinks that the change in the Rape Shield Law might foster more cooperation from victims of sexual abuse, since the Rape Shield Law would prevent the sex trafficking survivors' sexual history from being used in court.

Houston pointed out that this change is needed, but is a band-aid for a larger problem, which the Safe Harbor Law would address. He also pointed out that the Shared Hope criteria for grading states is based on legislation. Some states have laws, and receive high marks from Shared Hope, but the laws aren't enforced. Tinsman stated that the Safe Harbor Law will require much more collaboration and the proposed change to the Iowa Rape Shield law would be a start.

Cox recommended that the words "human trafficking" be included in the motion.

Tinsman **made a motion** to add an expansion of the Rape Shield Law to include Human Trafficking victims/survivors as a 2017 legislative priority for the NAHT. O'Meara **seconded**. **Motion carried unanimously.**

Eckley stated that the Iowa State Bar Association would support the NAHT legislative agenda.

Board members also discussed various legislators who might sponsor the expansion of the Iowa Rape Shield Law. Some suggestions were Jim Carney, Kevin Kinney, and Senator Jack Whitver. Tinsman will contact state legislators to find bipartisan co-sponsors of the legislation.

Belitsos recommended contacting organizations (e.g., Iowa State Bar Association, agencies with sexual abuse programs, etc.) to receive endorsement. Tinsman and Belitsos asked Board members to talk to local legislators about the recommended change in the Rape Shield Law as well as Erin's Law.

- b. Continue consideration of an Iowa Safe Harbor Law.

Houston recommended the Board shelve work on the Safe Harbor Law for now and work on passage of Tinsman's proposal to expand the Iowa Rape Shield law. If the amendment to the Rape Shield Law is passed, Houston has several professors who have looked at what happens after a Rape Shield Law is passed, and the Board could examine their work to identify possible implementation problems. Training on sex trafficking will need to be done by the Bar Association. A law on the books does not mean it is always used and sometimes courts work around a new law. The NAHT Board needs to keep informed

and vigilant. Tinsman stated that the Attorney General law enforcement anti-trafficking trainings should include this change.

O'Meara agreed with Houston and noted problems with the Safe Harbor Law in Nebraska, especially that juvenile victims sometimes re-enter human trafficking. Tinsman asked if there is any way to protect child victims and not prosecute them as delinquent. Why can't shelter facilities be locked so that victims cannot leave and return to trafficking? Belitsos answered that federal law will not allow juvenile status offenders to be in lock up. The Safe Harbor Law would provide that the victims/survivors be considered CINA, which places them under the federal law (known as the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention law) as status offenders.

Houston shared that it took Georgia time to get funding after a Safe Harbor Law was passed. It is a long process to get the law passed and then get funding for the care and rehab of survivors.

Tinsman asked that, once the Safe Harbor Law is funded, what prevents youth from running away? Houston answered that there is no law to prevent them from leaving. Some states have safe houses which are a better alternative than the juvenile justice system. At least in these houses they are more likely to be called "survivors" rather than "criminals."

Villongco will report on Minnesota Safe Houses on the December conference call.

- c. Erin's Law. Greg Heartsill, Iowa legislator, will sponsor Erin's Law and, hopefully, will join the December NAHT Board conference call.

4. Review October 31 Executive Committee Meeting Report and Approve Consent Agenda.

Tinsman asked that item c be removed from the Consent Agenda.

- a. Motion to approve October 10th meeting minutes of the NAHT Board of Directors
- b. Motion to authorize the chair to spend up to \$350 for a 3 panel folding IASN table top display for use at conferences and events.
- ~~c. Motion to invite Celine Villongco, Human Trafficking Coordinator for Attorney General's office to sit in on all NAHT Board meetings and to receive agendas meeting notices and minutes.~~
- d. Motion to not accept the offer to resign from the Board Gail Sheridan-Lucht because of her job change from the Department of Labor to a new position as an Administrative Law Judge for the Department of Corrections.
- e. Motion to call for the election of officers at the Monday December 12th Board of Director's meeting.
- f. Motion to approve the 10/31/16 report of the Board Treasurer, Jan Beran. On this date there was \$3,509 in checking and \$3,780 in savings. These balances include last month's withdrawal of \$4,000 to Chains Interrupted to fund the November 17 Regional Human Trafficking conference in Cedar Rapids. The balance does not include a \$500 PayPal donation from an individual who attended a speaking engagement conducted by the board chair

Executive Committee **motion** to accept the Consent Agenda with Item C removed. **Motion carried.**

Item c removed from Consent Agenda by Tinsman: "Motion to invite Celine Villongco, Human Trafficking Coordinator for Attorney General's office, to sit in on all NAHT Board meetings and to receive agendas meeting notices and minutes."

Tinsman suggested that Villongco be asked to be an NAHT Board member. Belitsos relayed that Villongco felt that the NAHT conference call provided the most information she has received to be informed about her position.

The **Committee motion** from the Consent Agenda was modified to add "...and invite her to join the Board if she feels this is appropriate." O'Meara **abstained**. **Motion carried.**

Belitsos will ask Villongco to join the Board, as appropriate. He reminded the Board that there are four openings on the Board, and he asked all members for nominations. Three of the openings are newly created (from 15 to 18 members) by a recent change in the By Laws. Yesterday, Devine sent Belitsos a resignation

letter due to health concerns. The Board needs representation from Southern Iowa, and O'Meara will recommend some possible members in January after he does the training in Red Oak. Hopefully two of the four new members will be from Southern Iowa. The Board will vote on officers at the December meeting.

5. Discussion with Iowa Lt Governor Kim Reynolds.

Iowa Lt Governor Kim Reynolds along with Roxanne Ryan joined the call. Belitsos briefly described the work of the NAHT Board and informed Reynolds that the Board just passed a motion to advocate for a change in the Iowa Rape Shield Law to include victims/survivors of human trafficking. Also, legislator Greg Heartsill is sponsoring a bill to pass Erin's Law, and the Network supports this bill. Belitsos asked Reynolds for her support of these bills and also to push for continued funding for the Department of Public Safety's Office to Combat Human Trafficking. Belitsos recognized and emphasized Reynolds' value as an advocate in the fight to end human and labor trafficking in Iowa. Belitsos invited Reynolds to serve as an honorary NAHT Board member.

Reynolds asked that information be sent to her office explaining what being an honorary board member would mean. She also asked that the NAHT legislative proposals be sent to her aide Austin so that they can go over them. She gave her support of the Human Trafficking Awareness Day on the Hill and offered to set up a press conference for the Governor to issue a proclamation. Belitsos also asked Reynolds to ask the Governor to include mention of human trafficking in his State of the State address.

The NAHT Board thanked Reynolds for her support and told her that her high profile support would be very helpful. O'Meara added that, from his experience in Nebraska, statewide coordination from the Governor's Office and Attorney General's Office is critical in the fight against human trafficking.

Tinsman said that more training is needed for prosecutors to inform them that young victims/survivors should not be charged with delinquency. This information should be emphasized to the Bar Association and Iowa Law Enforcement Academy. Sometimes Academy trainings are for new officers and not for existing officers.

Ryan explained that a training plan to fight human trafficking is being implemented through the Attorney General's Crime Victim Assistance Division. These trainings will emphasize the intelligence component and will start with trainings for law enforcement followed by trainings for prosecutors and investigators at the local level. A training for county attorneys is planned for Fall 2017. Reynolds said these trainings will be very comprehensive and coordinated. Belitsos said that the Children's Justice Conference held last December 2015 was very good, and the members of the Iowa Supreme Court were in attendance.

Tinsman stated that last year the Network pressed for a change in Iowa law that names child trafficking as a form of child abuse. The offender can be either a parent or noncustodial. Belitsos stated that he would like to see county attorneys make these child survivors CINA instead of delinquents. This code change took place two years ago, but is not widely utilized. Ryan relayed that a recent conference of county attorneys encouraged that juvenile victims of sex trafficking be processed as CINA instead of charging them with a crime. Belitsos informed the Board that AMP youth sent letters to every county attorney in Iowa asking the attorneys to consider these young people as victims and name them CINA instead of delinquents.

Final preparations for the November 17 Cedar Rapids conference *Human Trafficking: Not in Our Town*

Davidson reported that, to date, there are 165 registered attendees representing several important segments: 5 Cedar Rapids Police Department, 15 DHS workers, 6 Iowa Workforce staff who fight labor trafficking. A local medical clinic is closing for the day and bringing the entire staff of 9. Villongco is coming. CEUs for nurses and social workers, and certificates of attendance will be provided. There will be a variety of displays. There are several sponsors including the NAHT. The local paper has published an article. Davidson briefly reviewed the schedule which includes a keynote by O'Meara. Belitsos commended Davidson for organizing this regional conference, and he looks forward to attending.

Davidson also reported on the Shared Hope International conference which she recently attended. There were over 700 participants from around the world. Davidson has the ability to download any session and will share with the NAHT Board.

6. Update on 41 trafficking arrests in eastern Nebraska and western Iowa

O'Meara reported that this was a three-day nationwide FBI human trafficking operation called Operation Cross Country. 15 women and 26 men connected to human trafficking were arrested in the eastern Nebraska/Mills County Iowa area. O'Meara does not know if minor victims were recovered in this bust. In his experience, the number of women referenced would reflect that some prostitutes were also arrested.

Tinsman asked if the 15 women arrested were victims or pimps and if law enforcement considered that these women might have been forced into prostitution, meaning sex trafficking. O'Meara stated that the most recent statistic is that 70% of prostitutes from Iowa and 72% from Nebraska want out of that business.

Reynolds and Ryan left the conference call.

7. Update on prostitution charge and court action and the closing of two Asian massage parlors in Ames.

Belitsos shared that two massage parlors were closed in Ames this spring, one at the mall and one downtown. Three arrests were made, two women for prostitution and one man for sexual assault. The former NAHT Board chair Teresa Downing had visited the massage parlor and was convinced women were being trafficked. This was reported to local law enforcement. The women were Chinese and on visitor visas.

Belitsos spoke with the Story County Attorney about dropping the prostitution charges. Belitsos was told that the women wouldn't testify against the trafficker, so sending them to prison was the only way to keep them out of the hands of traffickers. Belitsos asked the County Attorney to let him speak at the conviction hearing to appeal to the judge to send them to a safe house instead of prison. While all this was going on, the County Attorney, Steve Holmes, resigned for unknown reasons. The Assistant Story County Attorney got the prostitution charge dropped and the women placed on probation. The Asian male abuser plea bargained and received two years in prison. He was suspected to be involved as a trafficker, but was put in prison for sexual assault.

Yesterday, Rood from the *Des Moines Register* asked Belitsos for information on Chinese sex trafficking and told Belitsos that there have also been problems at Chinese massage parlors in Des Moines. Belitsos also referred Rood to *Villongco, O'Meara, and the Story County Assistant County Attorney*. Rood's *Des Moines Register* story will be published this Thursday.

8. Brainstorm on the formation of an Advisory Council, Legislation and Public Policy Committee and Fundraising Committee.

These three committees are in the By Laws but have not been initiated. Board members asked for explanation of the duties of these committees. Belitsos foresees that an Advisory Council could meet by conference call, perhaps quarterly, and talk about issues (e.g., Safe Harbor Law) in more depth than the NAHT Board has time for. They could have consultants and experts on their quarterly calls. An NAHT Board members would chair and then present the results of their meeting at NAHT Board meetings. Belitsos asked for three volunteers to serve as the three chairs.

The Legislation and Public Policy Committee could coordinate participation on the Day on the Hill, hold press conferences, call legislators, and ask advocates around the state to call their legislators.

The Fundraising Committee was started but came to halt when Teresa Downing left. Belitsos stated that this needs to be re-activated. He would like a solicitation letter to go out in December to Network allies and Board members requesting donations.

9. Other items.

Beran asked Belitsos for review of the recent sex trafficking lecture at ISU. Belitsos stated that this was a very good presentation and over 300 attended. Belitsos has written up the lecture in his NAHT blog and will send it out very soon.

10. Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 4 p.m.

Next Board meeting Monday December 12, 2:30 to 4 p.m. Executive Committee November 28 2:30-4:00 pm.

Respectfully submitted, Margaret Epplin