

NAHT November 12, 2024 Board Meeting Minutes

At 2:30p board chair John Chesser called the meeting to order.

Kim Hilby, Heather Brown and Lyna Debner were excused. Present were Maggie, John, George, Teresa, Stephanie, Chief Thein, Sr. Shirley, Linda, Deanna, Bernadette, Jackie, Karl, Tom and emeritus board member Shirley Reding.

Guest: ILEA HT trainer David Gonzalez. David joined the Academy staff after a 25 year career in law enforcement, including extensive experience investigating human trafficking cases throughout the state, assisting in both state and federal prosecutions. After retiring from the Iowa City Police Department, David worked with Hope for Justice and then was recruited by the Iowa Law Enforcement Academy. He is revamping the human trafficking curriculum and pushing for 16 training hours on human trafficking, hoping to make it a required subject, as well as training officers already on the job. He is adding an online portal for human trafficking training as well. In response to questions from the board regarding potential legislation on human trafficking, he said that Iowa needs more resources for victims, especially housing, and mandatory human trafficking training in public school curricula and healthcare settings. David has been advocating for this with legislators. He added that he could see both sides of the debate on Safe Harbor laws. George reminded the group that David had received an outstanding anti-Trafficking award in recent years due to his work on an Iowa case in which four of the five traffickers actually pled guilty, while the fifth was convicted at trial. He confirmed that his time is spent 95% on human trafficking and works on other issues only as he himself sees fit. He confirmed that Hope for Justice still has an employee working in Iowa, Devon Greiter, who was also an ILEA instructor and an ISU investigator.

Legislative report. In the absence of Threase Harms, John and Maggie updated the board on the legislative committee meeting of November 6. Threase had told the legislative committee that the next key event after the general election would be the selection of committee chairs in the legislature in early to mid December. Due to the defeat of Brad Zaun, there will be a new Senate Judiciary Committee chair, for example. Also Rep. Brian Lohse, who sponsored HT legislation last year, is in the mix to be house judiciary chair this session. If he succeeds, this would be a big plus for our agenda. The fiscal estimating committee for the first time in recent

years is projecting revenue under budget, requiring the use of the rainy day fund and making it difficult to ask for new funding such as the \$1 million we are requesting for trafficking survivors. On the other hand, we are receiving a warmer reception for our proposal from legislators now than we have in the past. Maggie, Teresa, Threase, John and Marielle will meet with AG Brenna Bird on November 21st to discuss the \$1million proposal. Another positive note is that Governor Reynolds did make a one-time appropriation of \$5 million of federal pandemic relief money to cover the shortfall in federal VOCA funds for victims of all crimes. Bernadette asked whether a request for exactly \$1 million might seem arbitrary to the legislature, like we didn't know how much might actually be needed. Teresa responded that the annual budgets vary among the eight Iowa survivor services facilities from \$280,000 per year to \$850,000 per year, so the rough average of annual budgets is about \$500,000. However, this varies according to what services each facility provides. For example, Dorothy's House recently started a program to assist survivors in crisis, providing immediate shelter and services. The demand was so great that it doubled their budget. Teresa said that the key takeaway from her conversations with all of these facilities is that it is difficult to raise money for staff salaries even though this is most of the cost of serving survivors. The founders of these facilities, such as Sister Shirley, are making huge sacrifices to keep them open and they shouldn't have to do this alone, without state support. Karl and Shirley said they thought we should stick to the \$1 million figure. John added that Maggie and Teresa have had pieces appear in the Des Moines Register and Quad Cities Times and that everyone on the board can ask for help with their own articles from Threase. Teresa noted that a correction was needed on the map of survivor services facilities on the reverse of our legislative agenda. She agreed to send a correction to John who could forward that to Advocacy Strategies for distribution.

Brittany Sowder. George noted that survivor Brittany Sowder has authored a book about her being sex trafficked at age 14 entitled *She Survived* and has offered to serve on the NAHT speaker bureau and on the board. Brittany has received several awards, including our outstanding anti-Trafficking service award as well as others. Brittany is doing a series of speaking engagements and book signings, and has also met with Attorney General Bird and several legislators.

Fundraising Committee. Tom noted that December 3 is Tuesday and we have a

goal of \$5,000. In addition, we're hoping to have 100% participation by the Board of Directors.

Nominations for Outstanding Anti-Trafficking Awards. George noted that we had six good nominees for the award and that the executive committee will review them and make a recommendation to the board for approval at the December board meeting. George said he would put together a summary of the bios of the six nominees to be distributed to the board before the December meeting.

October meeting minutes. George suggested that the balance in our checking account be included in the October minutes. With that amendment the October minutes were approved.

October treasurer's report. George noted that we had income of \$196.54. The expenses were high this month, \$6044.44, since we paid the second installment of our fees to Advocacy Strategies. From our certificate of deposit we have earned \$997. Beginning checking account balance was \$21,568.96. Ending checking account balance was \$15,721.06. Certificate of deposit ending balance was \$21,076.24.

4:00 The meeting was adjourned at 3:57 PM.