

October 10 2023 NAHT Board Meeting Minutes

Present: John Chesser, Alyse Hardin, George Belitsos, Maggie Tinsman, Deanna Jensen, Lyna Debner, Stephanie Olson, Shirley Fineran, Mike Tupper and Linda Harell

Excused Absence: Thomas Barr and Bernadette Rixner

Absent: Jessica Hagin

Guests: Elizabeth Phan (Technology Consultant), Gretchen Brown-Waech (Attorney General's Office), Threase Harms (Advocacy Strategies)

I. Call to order and attendance

The meeting was called to order at 2:34 p.m. by Chesser, NAHT chair.

II. Consent Agenda September 12th minutes, Treasurer reports (John):

Chesser asked if there was discussion or any amendments to the September 12th Board meeting minutes or the treasurer's report. Belitsos reported that he has moved \$20,000 out of savings into an 8-month CD with an interest rate of 5.25% which will yield between \$700 to \$800 on the maturity date of 06/02/2024.

There was no further discussion and Chesser moved to approve both the meeting minutes and the treasurer's report. Tinsman seconded the motion. **Both the minutes and the treasurer's report were approved unanimously.**

III. Proposal to rescind the 2024 legislative agenda and add \$10,000 to the 2023 NAHT expense budget and approval of 2024 MOU with Advocacy Strategies

Chesser introduced the discussion about amending the board-approved 2024 Legislative agenda. He proposed changing the three priorities to only two. He also mentioned that the NAHT needs to consider expanding the current MOU with Advocacy Strategies from \$5,000 to \$15,000 since they have been spending a considerable amount of time on Safe Harbor, securing human trafficking funding, and the Interim Study Committee.

Chesser and Tinsman met with Advocacy Strategies and wrote a revised 2024 legislative agenda and Chesser wanted to hold a formal vote to rescind last month's legislative agenda and adopt the new one.

Tinsman motioned to rescind that legislative agenda as approved at the September 12th Board meeting and to approve the following legislative priorities.

1. Increase Victim Services Funding

NAHT requests the Iowa Legislature to allocate an additional \$5M in Justice System Appropriations for Victim Services and to amend the victim service budget line item to include human trafficking homicide, and other violent crimes. Currently, \$5M is allocated to victim services.

2. Human Trafficking Interim Study Committee Recommendation

NAHT supports the implementation of appropriate safe harbor implementation recommendations made by the **2023 Human Trafficking Interim Study Committee**.

NAHT Policy Statements on Other Issues

- NAHT supports the enactment of an expungement process of criminal records of survivors of human trafficking who were compelled or forced to commit illegal acts. This would include vacatur legislation to reverse the actual adjudication or finding of guilt.
- NAHT supports adopting legislation requiring schools to provide child sex abuse awareness and prevention for students, parents, and school employees as requested by Prevent Child Abuse Iowa.
- NAHT supports adopting legislation to require safe filter technology to prevent cell phones and tablets from accessing or displaying material that is harmful to minors.

Hearing no further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

Chesser next requested that the Board approve the addition of \$10,000 to the 2023 Advocacy Budget. This will compensate them for additional time for legislative advocacy and not lobbying. There was considerable discussion about the 3-year history of the NAHT subcontracts with Advocacy Strategy.

Belitsos made the motion to add \$10,000 to the 2023 NAHT subcontract with Advocacy Strategies for a new total of \$15,000. Fineran seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

As NAHT Treasurer, Belitsos noted that he will submit an amended 2023 expenses budget for board approval at the November board meeting. Harms thanked the board for the additional \$10,000 and noted that they have done work for \$5,000 each for the previous two years and mentioned that they continued to provide lots of additional advocacy time, especially trying to figure out the Safe Harbor legislation and putting together the Interim Study Committee work. They hosted many meetings with legislators as well as facilitated meetings with the NAHT board members. She also mentioned that she is extremely passionate about the work that they are doing on behalf of the NAHT.

Belitsos mentioned that the other organization that was providing \$5,000 for legislative advocacy was Hope for Justice. They opened offices in Iowa a few years ago and they still have a staff of three working in Iowa. They are an anti-trafficking international group that provides prevention, education, and intervention. Harms mentioned that Tinsman and the NAHT Legislative Action Committee are considered the face of NAHT at the State Capital Building. Belitsos said it is important to acknowledge Tinsman's work to improve human trafficking public policy.

Chesser next requested approval of the 2024 MOU with Legislative Strategies. This MOU is for \$10,000 which is \$5,000 more than the original contract for 2023. Chesser asked if there were any other questions or comments. Belitos mentioned that this will be in the 2024 NAHT budget. Tinsman raised the question of making the payment later than January 2024. Belitsos agreed with Tinsman.

Belitsos motioned to approve the 2024 MOU with Advocacy Strategies to be paid in two installments of \$5,000 by April 30, 2024, with the total contract paid in full by November 15, 2024. Fineran seconded the motion. The motion was approved.

IV. Hardin's resignation and appointment of interim V-chair and NAHT representative to the Interim Study Committee

Hardin announced that she would be resigning from the board because of the state funding cuts. She will be a contract specialist for the U.S. Army. Her schedule will not allow her to continue being Vice-Chair nor to represent the NAHT on the Interim Study Committee. She has also resigned from her job with Braking Trafficking within Family Resources. She mentioned she appreciates her time serving on the Board and the Board members.

Chesser expressed thanks and gratitude. Tinsmans complimented her talent on the board. Olsen expressed that Hardin should keep in touch. Fineran is sorry that the funding has threatened Hardin's Braking Traffic work. Belitsos emphasized that Hardin's survivor's service position is stressful and to add the uncertainty of the funding future is more than what many can take. He wishes Hardin the best in her new career.

Chesser mentioned that the NAHT needs to fill several positions; vice president, four vacant board seats, and a representative on the Interim Study Committee. Chesser mentioned that he would like to nominate Fineran to take over Hardin's interim position until the regular officer election which is every January. **It was a consensus that Fineran will serve as an interim Vice-Chair until January 31, 2024.**

Fineran talked about the deadline for Interim Study Committee recommendations is December 2023. Tinsman brought up concerns about the representative of NAHT. Fineran mentions Kelly Markey as a candidate. Belitsos proposed Teresa Davidson as a candidate because of her extensive experience. Belitsos mentions that her Chains Interrupted agency is moving to serve minors and youth on both prevention and treatment. She has a lot of knowledge of working with young people and has also served on the National Presidential Appointed Human Trafficking Advocacy Board and worked very hard on the national level for three years and has a good idea of what is happening nationwide. Hardin expressed that Davidson is a good recommendation. **It was consensus that Chesser approach Davidson first and Markey second.**

Chesser brought up his concern about who the NAHT should recommend to represent survivors. Fineran and Hardin express concerns about a survivor serving on the Interim Committee as this could cause them more harm. Belitsos mentioned that the NAHT had recommended to the legislature that survivors be represented. After considerable discussion, Brown-Waech discloses that she is a survivor and is willing to serve on the Interim Study Committee. **There was consensus that Chesser recommended Brown-Waech to represent survivors on the Study Committee.** Tinsman emphasizes that this needs to be done today.

V. Interim Study Committee Update

Harms acknowledged the Legislative Advocacy Committee's involvement with the legislators. Tisman has talked to the governor and the attorney general to emphasize the need for a 5 million dollar increase. She will be talking to the attorney general again about the budget. Fineran emphasizes the frustration that nothing had happened after she had spoken to the governor twice with the governor promising more financial aid. Tinsman will continue outreach about this NAHT legislative priority.

Brown-Waech discussed that if you don't provide these services to the survivors, they cannot become productive members of society. Harms mentioned that she spent the last few weeks finding additional research on domestic violence and human trafficking and Iowa is one of the only 15 states that allocates state resources to the victim's services. Harms has met with a lot of legislators such as Representative Lohse and he has been very responsive. He's also co-chairing the Interim Study Committee. He's trying to work with legislators to find a time for the Interim Study Committee to meet. The Legislative Services Bureau is also assisting him. They will spend a whole day outlining the problem once they pick a day, however, they were shooting for mid-October. Chelsea and Harms also had an opportunity to speak to John Gish. They have a letter drafted to push hard on the Governor's Office. Fineran expressed that domestic violence and human trafficking are two different things.

Harms expressed that none of the victim services state dollars are being used for human trafficking. Instead of asking for a victim service increase, we might ask for a \$5M allocation for human trafficking. There is no state allocation to fight human trafficking and we are asking to invest in human trafficking for the first time. Belitsos proposed that we include support for internet protection and trafficking education/prevention into the \$5M request. As well as including funding for Safe Harbor since this will probably be a recommendation of the Interim Committee.

Brown-Welch made a point that we don't have state allocations specifically for human trafficking. John Gish has a proposal to change that code and it is important to talk to him. Brown-Welch agrees with the 5 million allocation request. Part of the problem of federal funding is that it has been cut and is uncertain.

VI. Day on the Hill and Nominations for Outstanding Anti-trafficking Service Awards.

There was no time to discuss this agenda item. Belitsos reported that there has only been one nomination for the 2024 Outstanding Service Awards which is very low compared to past years. He urged board members to submit nominations. He also called board members attention to the January 11, 2024, Save the Date Flyer in the board email.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:03 pm