**MassMATCH Advisory Council Meeting Minutes**

**April 5, 2017**

**Members in Attendance**: Kevin Hatch, Les Cory (phone), Peter Gefteas(by phone),Lisa Chiango(phone), Karen Janowski, Jonathan O’Dell, Lee Nettles, and Ann Shor

**Members Not in Attendance**: Linda Landry, Alexander Pooler, Tom Mercier, Randi Sargent

**Program Staff in Attendance:** Kobena Bonney, Tanya Bombard

**Representatives from Provider Agencies**: Dan Mayo, Cathy Bly, Keri Chamberlain, Karen Langley, Jennifer Baker, Tom Filiault and Eric Oddleifson

**Guest:** Eliza Anderson and Derek Chaves

**Introduction and Communication Protocol:** The meeting was chaired by Kevin Hatch who asked folks to remember to state their name when they spoke.

**Discussion and Approval of Minutes:** The December minutes were not approved due to lack of members in attendance

**Program and Committee Updates:**

***Program Updates*:** Kobena Bonney

MassMATCH was granted an award from the Reeve Foundation through the application they put in. The funding that will be received is for the Weight and Seating Independence Project (WSIP). That will provide accessible skills and Pressure Mapping Technology (PMT) for people in western and central Mass. MassMATCH is waiting to hear from the Foundation about a press release and other publicity efforts. There was a meeting held about this project with the partners and other organizations involved including AdLib in Pittsfield, Stavros in Amherst, Center for Living and Working in Worcester, UCP of Berkshire and Easter Seals of Massachusetts.

Tom Mercier will be leading the effort to create a How to Manual for the individuals to use when they are borrowing one of these assistive technology devices. Anyone who chooses to borrow one of these new items will need some type of instruction and everyone who is involved will try and make sure that everything is together and all lined up when the funding for this program is released.

**KAREN L**. asked, without the press announcement, does that mean no one can publicly advertise or do any outreach?

**KOBENA** responded that the original impression was that no announcement about the money could be made. The foundation might do a statement about who got awarded the funding. Before being able to make any purchases there needs to be contracts in place and the money in hand. MRC has done the paperwork and the signing that needs to take place and should be receiving the check from the foundation shortly. There's a new contract for both UCP of Berkshire and Easter Seals to run the ATRC. Part of it is having a contract that will authorize or enable MRC to release the money to the partners for them to be able to do the work.

**ANN** added because of the delay she believes that MRC and the partners involved can move forward and start implementing the program except for spending the money. The communication between MRC and the partners is okay but not to communicate beyond the identified partners until all documentation is received to see what language the partners have that they want to be using.

**SAL G.** thanked MRC for sharing the final draft that was submitted to the Foundation. He said it was outstanding and very impressive.

**ANN** said Eliza Anderson can claim the credit for the proposal. The grant has another interesting part, the evaluations, it will involve interviews with users and people that it has benefited. It will go beyond numbers and statistics that will be gathered. Eliza will be helping and will work with the partners to connect with consumers using the scales or PMT to do interviews with them. Some surveys, peer groups and focus groups will be done to get a broad range of input at the end of the project on how it benefited people.

**KOBENA** explained that Eliza is usually in the background and is a consultant to MassMATCH. She lives in Vermont and does the work for MassMATCH from her base in Vermont. She's responsible for the writing that goes into the literature MassMATCH puts out. He acknowledged her for the great work she does.

**KAREN L.** asked if there has been any thought on hiring somebody who would be a person with paralysis to go out and talk, go to organizations, and do some outreach to make sure that the project is successful?

**KOBENA** responded he agreed on what Karen stated. Someone to be the face for the project and not someone with a general disability but with paralysis. Someone to do the outreach from the area of the two regional areas, central and western Mass.

**KAREN JANOWSKI** asked if the WSIP is going to be limited to users in Massachusetts.

**KOBENA** stated there is no reason why someone from another state couldn’t come in to one of the agencies that will have this technology in place and use it. He added that a Request for Responses (RFR) went out for the AT Regional Centers. The applications from the two existing partners were approved and they will run the AT centers for another five years with the option to renew for another five years. Previously the central Mass area was part of UCP of Berkshire and eastern MA was covered by Easter Seals. As part of the RFR process MRC saw that it would make sense to have central MA be served by Easter Seals. In the new contract that is going to happen. Easter Seals also set up a new AT center based in Worcester.

**ERIC** added that Easter Seals recently hired a program coordinator, Mr. Robert Belotta, who is coming from CLW. Eric said Easter Seals is looking forward to creating a partnership with MRC, some private donors and businesses, in the central Mass. area to create a center that is also a training center and will be available for entities like local colleges or Elder Services to have their staff trained there. He stated that will be wonderful opportunity to create a center that is a multiuse destination for the area to keep agencies interested in seeing this valuable resource and setting it up in a way that's a little different from the Boston center. The plan is to have section for technologies for aging in place and a section for emerging technologies that students at WPI created. They have met with the local colleges in the area to talk about how they can creatively work together. The new site will officially be opened by the end of summer. The state generously gave some money to get it started. They have a long list of AT to purchasing, but is interested in what the Council might recommend for devices.

**PETER** asked Kobena if the website taking that into account the new AT center when formatting the new website.

**KOBENA** responded with yes, the website will reflected the changes as well as other tools on the site that are also in the process of updating. The online device inventory, is relying on data from another source, and is in the process of updating.

Kobena mention two other items he wanted to go over. One was a conference he attended that was held in D.C. It was an annual conference for all the AT Act programs. This year there were two main issues discussed. One had to do with new administration and all the issues relating to budgets and funding the AT Act program. They talked about what is going to happen based on the budget and how that impacts the AT Act programs in the immediate future and also long‑term. The presentations that were given and the discussions, it seems in the immediate future the outlook is not going to be that bad. The money that is spent on AT Act programs is not that much and there is not much worry about the current fiscal year. The issue is about what happens going forward, and that people are essentially saying wait and see. There's some effort going on to get Congressmen and women to basically sign up to a Dear Colleague letter. This is where a Congressman or woman writes a letter to their colleagues and asks them to sign that letter basically promising to support whatever the particular project or expenses that this person has stood up and said I want to be associated. During that meeting, it was asked, of the essentially three main organizations or types of organizations, universities, private non-profits, and state agencies that run these AT Act programs around the country. State agencies, we are not allowed to get involved in lobbying Congress. Those who are able are doing that, and hopefully they are going to get enough support to sign. The hope is that there will be support in Congress that the money for the AT Act will be supported and won't be attached when the budget cuts come.

The other item talked about was the way data is collected and reported. ACL, the Administration for Community Living, a new agency managing the AT Act Grant, recently decided how they want the data recorded. Under the RSA, the Rehab Services Administration under the Department of Education, there was a database programs used to report activities. ACL decided they want to go in a different direction. The past year or two they've been working on coming up with a new system The conversation was about what the new system is, how it's going to work, some of the requirements that are going to asked. It's more of a process for reporting and some of the information they're going to require. The part for the partner providers, the data is going to be essentially the same.

He also mentioned the annual report. There is the user friendly version and the marketing report. The marketing report is very short, and the purpose of coming up with the marketing report is to have something that summarizes the achievements of the program that can easily be shared with anyone. Kobena asked everyone to take a look at it and give feedback on the report that was emailed.

**KAREN L.** said that it would be good to set time aside to go over and have a discussion of the report during the next council meeting.

**KOBENA** said next meeting they would devote time to go over the annual report and measure it against the Federal standards.

**KAREN J.** said Eliza did a great job including the success stories as testimonials and it is an effective addition to the marketing report.

**REquipment Update: Karen Langley; Jennifer Baker**

**KAREN** introduced Jennifer Baker, the new program director. Jenn came from NEAT in Connecticut where she helped to put together their DME Reuse program seven years ago. She's been helping to make sure all of the data is correct.

**JENN** continued with the REquipment update. She said she’s has been getting the data base cleaned up. She has categorized the older data correctly where there were a lot of inaccuracies. Once everything was put into the right category she ran the numbers and found everything went up, the reassigned values, the number of assigned equipment, the items posted and donors. They found a glitch in the database where the assignments defaulted to the Northeast region. Karen manually fixed a good share of those and it will reflect on the report. She said her and Karen were finalizing the reports and would send them out. Jennifer has meet with all the partners to see what works for them and what doesn’t. There were some changes made on how they work with the partners. Most of the outreach and the focus is on the eastern end of the state right now because that's where the needy demographic is. She found that the western end of the state is underserved. She plans on focusing in that region to get the numbers back up.

**KAREN** added at some events they have had the opportunity to meet with legislators, and meet Senator Harriette Chandler. The first thing the Senator said was "Where's this program that gives away the wheelchairs" and Karen raised her hand. The senator spent the next ten minutes asking questions and giving advice, the senator also invited REquipment to come on her radio show and they did. They made a good connection with the senator and plan to continue working with her. They also went to the State House for IL Education Day and spoke to the crowd. Roxy and Jen went around and gave postcards to every legislator and plan on following up. Jen went to Mass Recycling conference and had the opportunity to meet other people who do various forms of reuse and recycling.

**UCP Updates: Sal Garozzo**

Dan Mayo, the director of assistive technology, is parting form UCP. Louise Norton, an internal candidate who has been with UCP since 2009, and comes from the field of occupational therapy will be taking Dan’s place as the director of AT services. She has a lot of experience working with people with disabilities, and helping them with their devices. UCP has incorporated into their staffing, Kelly Cote as an assistive technology assistant. Kelly has great technology support skills and she'll be starting the first week of May.

KEVIN and ANN thanked Dan for all the work that he’s done.

**Easter Seals Update: Cathy Bly and Eric Oddleifson**

From January to March they had about 40 different events, which included presentations at conferences, organizational visits, tours of the center, and presentations for groups. Easter Seals had 127 device loans for the quarter, most of those loans were for people with disabilities. The majority of the device trials decision‑making was individuals with disabilities and family members. The loan period was an average of 48 days. There were 273 devices loaned, and most of those devices were in the categories of daily living or computers and related. Performance measures, primary purpose was mostly education and community living. Out of 83, 54 said the loan met their needs. The satisfaction level was 88% highly satisfied. In the area of device demonstrations, there was a total of 19. The device demonstrations were mostly computer related and for family members and people with disabilities. Out of those demonstrations, 12 out of the 19 met their needs, and the rest were mostly have not made a decision but 100% satisfied.

Cathy also mentioned two events that Easter Seals is hosting, the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Assistive Technology Resource Fair and the low vision and blindness fair, on June 2nd, from 10:00 to 2:00, at 89 South Street, Nonprofit Building in Boston.

**KEVIN** asked if Easter Seals had any statistics whether or not after the loan period people go for the low‑interest grant or loan purchase. He said he thought it would be good to know for future AT trial centers.

**CATHY** said they don’t currently have the statistics on how many go to the financial loan programs. The only place it can be put in data is the area where, for referrals, it says do we refer people to.

**KOBENA** agreed the AT Loan program is in a better position to collect that data. Kobena suggested Eric and Lee find a way to ask that.

**ERIC** did an update on the alternative financing program or the AT Loan Program. This fiscal year, 18 loans approved at $250,000. Approval rate of 77%. 46% are traditional loans and 31% were guaranteed loans. In March of last year they had 15 loans approved at $265,000. There is some volatility there in terms of the actual dollar amount because vehicles are larger items and the rates at dealerships can be competitive compared to what Santander offers. Long‑term device program has received 83 applications, 44 of those loan applications had equipment ordered for a total of $14,343, and the remaining loan apps are on a wait list for purchasing. Most popular devices are hearing devices, computers and some mobility devices. The outreach approach has been steady and they continuing to reach out to parts of the state that is underserved. There is a lot of programs where Easter Seals can educate people in terms of getting equipment. Joan Cosentino is now the program manager, Leo stepped aside, to get out there and talk not just about alternative financing but the ATRC, the ATIL program from MRC.

**STAVROS update: Tom Filiault**

Stavros is the ILC for the Pioneer Valley which is Springfield, Northampton, Greenfield area. For years, Stavros just tried to assist people with getting some equipment through the donation program, which they call Home Sweet Home. Mostly hardware like wheelchairs and such get donated, sometimes lifts and shower chairs. Last year Stavros got together with the reuse program, to offer more equipment statewide with the five partners. A lot of people call up to make donations, but a lot are requests that are based in the Valley from being known as an equipment recycling center. In the last quarter, from January 1st through April 1st, they recycled 37 items back into the community. These items would cost new, around $30,000. They have sent letters to the editor for the Springfield Union, Greenfield recorders can and Northampton Gazette for people who might have equipment they want to donate and submit them with a tax donation letter. Tom said he gets calls from people all over the state who are interested in the reuse program so he refers them to the website. Between DME and Stavros together, they had 18 power chairs come in, get referred to go out, but just for Stavros, six power chairs went out to the Stavros consumer base and the other DME.

**KOBENA** went on to the next item on the agenda. Meeting locations, structure and Format. The last meeting there was a discussion about the length of the meeting, the content, et cetera. It was decided to keep the meeting at its current length. After the meeting an email went out asking for feedback. Information was brought up about the meeting location. It’s been difficult getting ASL interpreters when it's around the Metro West area. Because this information was brought to attention he asked, is it easier some other part of the state to host the meeting, should the meeting be moved to a different location? The meeting used to be held at different places before settling in at the Morse public library. Because of having difficulties with ASL interpreters the group should think about possibly moving the meeting location. Another option is to provide remote services for people if possible. In terms of the meeting location, MCDHH has not yet responded to what parts of the state would be easier to get interpreters. There is more information needed to make a decision. Another options out there aside from phone participation is the video option.

**LEE** said Western Mass and the Pioneer Valley have difficulty getting interpreters. He doesn’t rely on the MCDHH but makes use of interpreter referrals available to for him in Vermont and sometimes New York.

**KOBENA** said because MassMATCH is part of a state agency the requirements are to use MCDHH. MassMATCH has to follow the state's policies. He added there are other video services out there that would allow flexibility.

**KAREN L.** stated that normally there is a rep. of M.O.D and the council members should ask them what the best response is since they are responsible for ADA related questions. She mentioned it might be a good idea to talk to them about the possibility of getting around some of the rules in order to meet the accommodation. This meeting should be looked at as a state agency that has a responsibility. She believes the meeting should not be held if accommodations can’t be met for everyone involved.

**JONATHAN** said that the council members are supposed to understand AT better than anything else, that's what they are there for. They should see if it’s possible to implement remote accessibility in general. He has participated in events with a remote CART link.

**KOBENA** said the main issue the meeting has not been held remotely is because the state issues computers and doesn’t allow installation of anything on them. He went through that process and was authorized to install Skype at one point. Then it was decided that it does not matter the need it’s no longer aloud. MRC has the infrastructure in place for video conferences through various MRC offices. There are five sites within the state where folks can gather there and do video conferencing. He said he would rather use a non‑state control system which will allow more flexibility.

**ANN** followed up with saying interpreters have to come from a statewide list. She said that having a talk with MOD to get together and figure out how to deal with those issues to be able to provide and make these meetings fully accessible. There is also the option of having one of the providers act as the host for meeting. They have a lot more flexibility in how they can do things.

**PETER** also mentioned professors using the online approach for all the students to participate in an online session and on the screen there is a box with each student and the professor is on the larger screen and you can see him or her that way. They allowed a student to participate either by being shown on the screen or calling in by telephone and having a caricature of a person.

**KEVIN** asked if he wanted to reach out and advocate, who he would go to.

**KOBENA** replied the Commissioner would be the person.

**LEE** asked if using staff interpreters from MRC or MCDHH was on option. He also mentioned that there are a lot of uncertified interpreters and they don’t do appropriate business to stare clear of them. Try to use other options like remote CART and remote VIDEO. Always ask what works best for the person you are getting the services for because everyone is different and may have different preferences.

**KOBENA** asked if a couple of people who are either interested or have expertise to share were interested in joining a group to make it possible to have the meetings remotely. Hopefully this group will have something to either implement by next meeting or at least to demonstrate by then. The group will consist of Kobena, Jonathan, Cathy Bly and Lee.

**JONATHAN** said he is happy to participate but they should include Lisa Chiango. He also added that the issue is going to get more complicated not less once the fiscal consolidation goes forward between MRC, MCB and MCDHH.

**ANN** mentioned that MRC doesn’t always find out if an interpreter will be available until a few day before each meeting. But if a member was to make their own arrangements through their organization with a private interpreter service, that the state cannot contract with, they could get reimbursed for those expenses.

**KOBENA** added to Ann’s comment saying the state will not pay someone if they don't have a vendor code. He also said anyone interested in getting one he would send the forms that are needed to be registered and obtain the vendor code.

***New England Index –* Derek Chaves, guest speaker**

The INDEX program is at the Eunice Kennedy Shriver Center of the UMASS medical school, formerly Commonwealth Medicine. Kobena contacted him about redoing the MassMATCH website. Index is funded by MRC and specializes in information and referral for people with disabilities. Index developed disabilityinfo.org which is its flagship product. Index plans on increasing the accessibility of the MassMATCH website as well as redevelop it. Since the site was developed the standards have been risen in the Section 508 Refresh or WCAG 2. MassMATCH will be brought into the 21st century and meet these standards.

Organizations such as MRC go to INDEX for specific website development. Index is about producing positive user experiences with outcomes for the people who use the product. Index designs, develops and hosts everything that it creates. In five years index plans to have thousands of people served with disabilities. That lines up exactly with MassMATCH, providing resources about assistive technology and helping the website perform and do its job.

The data from Index is updated annually because when data isn’t updated properly it becomes useless. Index wants to make sure that users get the most up‑to‑date, fresh data set as possible. Index has a small, diverse team with a diverse skill set that allows them to move really fast. The people at Index collect a few requirements up front from the client, do some design work and come back and ask what's next, what needs to be added or done. Index uses its agile methodology to collect requirements and iterate until they have it right. The people at Index put the extra emphasis on testing and accessibility testing. Index also does functional testing and user acceptance testing.

The MassMATCH website’s accessibility doesn’t work well, the color contrast doesn’t work well. People with low vision can't differentiate between the white and pastel colors, it all blurs together. Index uses tools like Wave that do accessible tests and that was one thing that was picked up. These tools don’t pick up the intuitive analysis of what people are looking at and translating into the experience of a user with using assistive technology. Another thing that was immediately notice is there is too much text and that heightens the cognitive load for some people. There will be quick links added to get to exactly what anyone is looking for without having to navigate through the entire structure of the website. A rough draft of the website was made and tested with quick links to make sure all the main functions work.

It is imperative in the success of the website to know exactly why people visit it. There will be a survey about the website asking, what people like and dislike, what should be translated to the new website, what are the glaring problems. Index will be looking at different topics to adjust it to the basic needs of what people are looking for. One thing that came out during the Advisory Council meeting is success stories and those will need to be highlighted. People relate to success stories. They want to use those as scenarios for their situation.

The website will be built on Word Press with lots of plug‑ins. The code will be able to be changed to make it more accessible and it will be mobile friendly. Everyone wants one website, one set of content that looks great across a desktop, a mobile phone or a tablet and produces the same experience but just changes the layout. The newsletter will prominently be on the home page with the call to action boxes where you have your main content and underneath have view this content area or check this out. That will assist people to where they need to go.

**KOBENA** mentioned the website committee, and explained the group has met and done some work on the website. This committee started off with ways to update the website, and then over time decided to do a survey to figure out what some issues are. After some research it was found that no one has done the survey like what they were looking to do. The committee created their own and got some feedback. The information was used to come up with a short list of things that needed to be done. After finishing some of the tasks they found they needed to go back to the organization that has been doing the work on the website. It was mentioned that the website was built on the platform that is ten‑plus years old and takes a lot of work to do the littlest things. That didn’t work out and the decision was made to rethink the whole website and figure out a way to upgrade it and to have it completely rebuilt. After the process was followed it was decided MRC would go with New England INDEX to redesign and redevelop the MassMATCH website. Now its INDEX’s role is to come up with a concept of what makes sense to redesign, rebuild, et cetera, but the folks that have volunteered to serve on the website committee, work with INDEX and Derek to come up with what makes sense.

**KAREN** asked on the REquipment piece of it they are looking at the platform for the data behind the scenes, the inventory, the reports and the consumer intake information. REquipment collects a lot of data but they don't have the reports to reflect the data.

**JENNIFER** added she’d like to be able to have the capability to write some customer reports. She has a different login for the AT for All, Nebraska that they were looking at. She's going to get guided through and going to go a Go-To Meeting type thing and look at the reports this other group uses.

**KAREN** mentioned that REquipment is modeled after Kansas and they are looking at a Nebraska one. They seem to be the top two for the country. One of the things they are looking for is how many people in each district were served. They are collecting it by region now. Another report they would like to run is race and ethnicity to better help them with their outreach efforts. They would also like to look at whole issue of funders, they get state appropriation but a lot of people who visit them might be receiving Medicaid, Medicare, duals, private insurance, and they collect that information. They would like to use this for the purpose of showing the state treasurer and say REquipment saved the Commonwealth X amount of money in Medicaid funds last year through our reuse program.

**DEREK** responded yes, typically Google Analytics is integrated with all the Word Press sites and it has the ability to drill down visitors by town, by region, by county, etc. to those reports will be available. Derek said he didn’t know if they could break down reports for funding purposes. If Index had that data that would be useful. Those are questions to ask the website group and the stakeholders.

**KOBENA** said with Google Analytics there is the ability to see where people have been on the website and he could get that data to Derek. Kobena also said that what Derek is going to do is there will be a page that can be created for REquipment and from there they can access the AT For All information or conversely the information from AT For All can be displayed, the relevant information can be displayed on that REquipment page which is tied into MassMATCH. If anyone is interested in being a part of this group reach out to Kobena. Anyone that is part of this new website committee will be able to work together on assisting with the rebuild.

**PETER** asked if there will be a preview site that any of the advisory council members would be able to look at periodically and add appropriate, advisory meeting chime in with their opinions.

**DEREK** said INDEX will put it on an obscure URL while developing that will be shared with key stakeholders to view progress and give feedback. Before going live there will be a "soft launch," Index will transfer it to a site that is called betaMassMATCH.com. The user testing group can switch between the two and see the difference. They are going to see two completely different products.

**PETER** asked if Index was focusing on the accessibility of people using AT. He stated he uses Dragon Naturally Speaking and wanted to know if while the website is being constructed and will it be tested with Dragon.

**DEREK** responded that he would welcome the feedback and that the primary testing tools are JAWS and NEDA and that INDEX doesn’t typically test with Dragon.

**ELIZA** said it is exciting, the integration of a larger disability database with MassMATCH. Massachusetts is unique to having that and deploying that. She added that on MassMATCH the person always knew they were on a site about assistive technology and not just disability in general. The whole thinking behind the site was that the audience was the savvy advocate. Now it’s much more of a friendly cognitively accessible utility but presumes a structure underneath it like a quick link that can take you to a place that is helpful. Making sure that there's somebody on the other end. It may be the future of that, because of the cognitive load on the site which was huge. It was there because we need to push out to people, how this country funds AT. It may be that it needs to go into a direction that says that information is stored with our partners, who are receiving continuous training, then bring the ATRC front and center. Bring photo illustrations and introductory video that will guide people through the site and introduce some of the people that might be met on the AT journey. Have that phone link or that web link to that program where they are ready to receive you. It would presume that the kind of dense information there is not being lost but going out in a new way and lives with an alive, living document. If people are revising that information about all of those disability groups, it may or may not work to chunk out bits of that to then feed into that site. If someone is just going to be fed over to Easter Seals Massachusetts which is not a good example because they have such a huge technology history. You probably could get there and find AT but for many of the groups with a technology component to be chunked out to that source immediately loses you out of AT. Someone might be pushed over to UCP but their child or person does not have cerebral palsy so they get lost thinking, why am I here now, I must have just lost my way in the navigation. You have to be able to think like the person who arrived at the site who had a technology or acquisition or demo question.

***Membership Committee Update***: **Kobena Bonney**

It is time for re-election for the two positions held at the council meetings, chair and vice chair. Anyone who is interested in running should reach out to Kobena. Currently, Jae Spalding is the chairperson and Kevin Hatch is the vice. The position is held for two years. Ballots will be prepared and a vote will take place. The advisory council is made up of two broad categories. They are members and non-members. Non-member or providers should be part of the council to update everyone on what is going on, to give input and updates. Members are the people who vote, those are the people with disabilities or family members of individuals with disabilities and then representatives from various organizations. The AT Act says that the Advisory Council has to be made up of people with disabilities who use AT or family members and representatives of certain state agencies. A majority always has to be the people with disabilities or their family members. There cannot be too many other representatives even if the people with the disabilities represent an organization, they will not be counted as a person with disabilities. The law has specific organizations that need to be represented like the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the independent living Council or independent living Centers. Tory Dixon is the ILC rep. The agency for the Blind if there's one within the state, from MCB its Alexandra Pooler. There's a requirement for the Workforce System and somebody from that outfit be represented on the council. There's supposed to be someone from that entity but that seat is currently empty. It also says "other organizations or agencies." In Massachusetts we have MCDHH as one of the agencies to have represented, also Tom Mercier from the Department of Developmental Services and Mass Office on Disability is also represented. All of these are agency representatives. All three put together, constitute their membership and of course the nonmembers. The members are the ones are being asking to run for chair or vice chair.

**ANN** commented that most of the people at the meeting were providers and a lot of the members weren’t present so nominations will be low. She said it might be better to put this off and get some nominations in before the next meeting and follow‑up then.

**KOBENA** said he will be sending something in writing for anyone not present. He also said last year it was decided that the memberships needed to be cleaned up and that people who have served, follow the rules. The guidelines say that when folks join the council they are allowed a 3‑year term and it can be renewed once and then they have to step down for at least a year. It was decided to try and enforce the rules, but if they had half of the members would be off. There was an extension granted hoping that would give enough time to bring in new members and be able to enforce the guidelines. There were some new members that joined but none of them worked out. Kobena said that his suggestion would be to grant another extension and it would be put on the agenda.

**KAREN L.** asked in reporting if it has to say who is on the council and if it’s in compliance.

**KOBENA** responded with saying on the report, it has to say whether or not they have reps for all the areas that are required. There is a statement that says, we are short and working on it to recruit somebody.

**ANN** said when bringing on the rep from Department of Special Ed. and Workforce Development that will bring on at least two more consumers. The council needs to make sure that it’s at least 51% consumers and family members.

**KOBENA** went on to the last item on the agenda, how to get more or new members. One suggestion that was made was to reach out to the Pappas Rehabilitation Hospital for Children, formerly the Mass Hospital School. There was a young man from there who was interested in becoming a member. After going through the process and being accepted he never showed up or responded. The council needs to make sure that the group is balanced in a number of ways. One is geographic. The people who are members with the exception of providers were western Mass and also Tory who is representative of Independent Living Centers and Lee is from Stavros. Kobena stated that with the implementation of remote services it may help and asked if anyone had any suggestions on that to reach out to him. The council has to make sure that it is racially, culturally and language diverse as well and as of right now it is not.

The meeting adjourned at approximately 2:30 PM.