

**Alaska Statewide Independent Living Council, Inc.
Quarterly Meeting**

LOCATION

Videoconference

DATE

September 28, 2021

MEETING MINUTES

Prepared by: Paula DiPaolo
Peninsula Reporting

Tuesday, September 28, 2021

Council Members Present:

Ric Nelson, Co-Chair
Deb Etheridge
Nona Safra
Irma Goodwine
Doug Toelle, Co-Chair
Jim Kreatschman
Emilie Woodward
Jessica Chapman
Jen Galvan

Council Members Absent Excused:

Anthony Newman
Wendi Shanks
Doreen Leavitt
Alecia Ore

Guests:

Joyanna Geisler
Denice Gilroy
Eric Gurley
Leah Arrington
Jeanne Owen
Ellen Hackenmueller (for Anthony Newman)

Staff:

Michael Christian, Executive Director
Kathy Munk, Administrative Assistant

Court Reporter:

Lenny DiPaolo, RPR, CRR, CCP

CALL TO ORDER – 9:30 a.m.

ROLL CALL – Quorum Established

CONSENT AGENDA

Doug Toelle **MOVED** to approve the consent agenda, **SECONDED** by Nona Safra. Hearing no objections, the motion **PASSED**, and the consent agenda was approved as presented.

INTRODUCTIONS

Michael Christian opened up an opportunity for members of the SILC to introduce themselves to new Council member Jen Galvan.

ACCESS ALASKA UPDATE

Eric Gurley reported that safety and security have been the focus of the first quarter of the new fiscal year. Access Alaska entered the new fiscal year open and participating in individual scheduled consumer appointments. Given escalated positive COVID-19 case counts on 9/20/2021, Access Alaska closed their offices to the public for a 30-day period after which a reassessment for extension will occur. Administrative duties are occurring through a minimal office presence across all four regional offices of Anchorage, Fairbanks, Mat-Su, and Soldotna.

DME services are occurring from the Anchorage and Fairbanks offices. Anchorage served 633 receiving \$3,979 in donations during the reporting period. Fairbanks DME reopened softly on 7/9/2021 after a long delay and office closure during a lengthy relocation to the new 3399 Peger Road address.

Access Alaska was started in 1983 and has 46 administrative staff in four brick and mortar presences across the state. Between the board and staff, they average 66 percent of persons experiencing a level of disabilities.

IL Department Goal Statement:

- To increase independent living's community impact through statewide collaborative efforts from all members of the IL team. Increased impact will be achieved by ensuring consumer engagement and control in all aspects of Access Alaska, Inc., providing stellar consumer services, and by clearly defining Access Alaska's role as a Center for Independent Living.

492 consumers during the reporting period. Top 3:

1. 164 Fairbanks
2. 124 Anchorage
3. 115 Wasilla

1744/1336 consumers requesting services. Top 3 of 20 service categories:

1. 694 Information and referral service
2. 366 IL skills training and life skills training
3. 218 Personal assistance services

793/753 consumers receiving services. Top 3 of 20 service categories:

1. 651 Information and referral
2. 68 IL skills training and life skills training
3. 25 Other

The top two of the number of goals set:

1. 300 self-care, 4 with goals achieved and 284 with goal in progress
2. 109 community-based living, 7 with goals achieved and 98 with goal in progress.

Outreach and Participation:

- Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities (AADD)
- Alaska Behavioral Health Association (ABHA)
- Alaska Association for Personal Care Supports (AAPCS)
- AgeNet
- Rural outreach to North Slope Regional Partnerships
- Tanana Valley State Fair

Activities:

- Stabilization during COVID-19
- Comprehensive CIL Suite training
- Information and referral training
- Conversation and partnerships around increased youth engagement (Big Brothers Big Sisters)
- Covenant House, Denali Family Service
- Filing staff vacancies
- Connecting with prominent figures in the disability rights field to educate staff and communities on relevance of independent living today
- Personal care services
- Companion/Compassion Care.

Access Alaska is in the process of completing an agreement with the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

ARCTIC ACCESS UPDATE

Denice Gilroy shared the following activities of Arctic Access:

- Grants were written and donations requested to get 60 lunch boxes for kids in school. Working with a couple of different programs to get cheese and milk for the lunchboxes.
- Distributing bicycle helmets donated by the traumatic brain injury group. Programs will be conducted in the grade schools to highlight the importance of wearing a helmet. 40 bicycle helmets have been distributed.

- The traumatic brain injury group also donated snow-go helmets. Working with Rotary Club, Lions Club, Kawerak, Nome Eskimo, Bering Straits, and Sitnasuak to develop programs for people to win helmets. 10 helmets have been distributed so far.
- 13 students are participating in a work study program with the high school. Students go to school half the day, and as long as they attend, they are allowed to go to their job during the second half of the day. Pre-ETS funds this program, which has been very successful.
- Jill Peters is teaching soft job skills in the special education class through classes students can choose. They are working with NACTEC on this project.
- Dementia project this quarter collecting photos from family members of people with dementia to create picture books for the elder. This has been a very successful project, and seven photo albums have been created.
- Denice has been working with Ronda Burnett on the homeless population. 38 individuals who were homeless are being housed at the Nugget Inn, which has been beneficial for both the hotel and the individuals because hotels have been struggling due to COVID. The rent relief funding for the hotel is being provided by Bering Straits and Nome Eskimo Community. Individuals housed are also being worked with to get on benefits and to help them with anything they may need to get a job or some level of security.
- Food boxes are being created for elders thanks to fishing equipment and permits purchased by Arctic Access. Food on store shelves has been scarce, and the elders appreciate having Native foods.
- Native elder cooking classes are being hosted online, and it's typically elders that attend, and the women enjoy trading recipes.
- Through a heating crisis grant, Arctic Access was able to purchase 30 Toyo stoves for caregivers and people over the age of 60 that were in a heating crisis. They also paid over 300 diesel fuel bills and purchased diesel fuel for this winter.
- Denice has been working with the Food Bank, Bering Straits Regional Housing, Kawerak, Bering Straits Development Corp, Nome Eskimo, and Sitnasuak on re-entry.

SOUTHEAST ALASKA INDEPENDENT LIVING (SAIL) UPDATE

Deb Etheridge presented the following for SAIL:

Staff:

Southeast Alaska has staff located in the following communities: Juneau, Haines, Ketchikan, Sitka, Klawock and soon to be Angoon. Current staffing includes 22 full time, 15 part time, 5 seasonal, and 1 part-time temporary. All offices are closed to the public, although people come in by appointment for the loan closet and taxi voucher program.

ADRC/DDRC:

SAIL also serves as the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) and Developmental Disabilities Resource Connection (DDRC) for the Southeast Census area. The ADRC and DDRC staff are located in Sitka, Haines, and Juneau, and they hope to restart outreach efforts soon.

ORCA (adaptive rec program.)

Since restarting in-person activities, there have been 38 ORCA activities with a total of 220 participants. During ski season they had 26 ski days with a total of 191 participant slots filled (unduplicated skiers is 27).

Challenge Course Ropes Course

603 individuals have to date have been served by the challenge course. SAIL was fortunate to be a receiver of the 100 Women Who Care donations, which they used to support student experiences at the ropes course. They also held a successful DVR-supported camp incorporating the challenge course in the curriculum, Camp YEA.

PRETS

Pre-ETS served 44 students in Southeast.

ILC

Staff in all offices are doing a great deal of COVID work in Southeast communities. In Klawock, the staff person goes door to door to check on community members and provides outreach on the COVID vaccine.

Taxi voucher program.

SAIL has a taxi voucher program in both Ketchikan and Juneau that served 192 consumers last quarter.

Loan Closet

All SAIL offices have loan closets which include DMS and AT. Like ILC, each office has AT demonstration kits with new technology and devices.

Last Resort Fund (LRF)

April 1st through June 30th, 32 individual consumers were served by the LRF. SAIL also used LRF money to buy items for the Juneau loan closet intended to directly benefit seniors (three standing walkers for Parkinson's patients, new bedside commodes, ice grippers, and other items).

In Ketchikan SAIL purchased box fans to help seniors keep cool during the heatwave. They also purchased some loan closet items for Klawock that will benefit Klawock and surrounding villages (shower chairs and rollator walkers).

Other items SAIL helped purchase last quarter:

- Plumbing repairs
- Dentures
- Interim personal care services
- Trapeze for a bed and household items
- Rec center and exercise passes
- Dumpster rental for someone in Haines
- One month's rent for someone
- Toyo stove
- Chromebook computer
- Hickel House lodging for medical appointments in Anchorage

Haines Disaster Relief

Team Rubicon focuses on serving vulnerable and at-risk populations affected by disaster. While the initial damage and trauma of natural disasters will impact any population regardless of socio-economic factors, the financial burden of recovery and rebuilding has dramatic and long-lasting repercussions on many rural and urban populations lacking proper insurance and public and private resources. SAIL worked with Team Rubicon to serve people, many of them SAIL consumers, who were impacted by the Haines landslide.

HomeMAP

SAIL is about to unroll a new Google Doc-based platform that will make producing reporting much easier. They continue to work on new funding streams, including hoping SDS will embed comprehensive home survey into allowable provider services.

Other Programs:

- VOICE program

- Nursing Facility Transition program
- Traumatic and acquired brain injury program
- Homeless coalition.

Picnic:

Haines was able to hold their annual picnic, and they gave out helmets, which was a hit and people continue to request helmets.

INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTER (ILC) UPDATE

Joyanna Geisler stated that ILC incorporated in 1991 currently has four offices: Homer, Kodiak, Central Peninsula, and Seward. Current staffing includes 16 full-time and part-time staff, 82 percent of whom experience disabilities ourselves. ILC also serves as the ADRC and DDRC for the Gulf Coast Region of the Kenai Peninsula, Kodiak Island, and Valdez/Cordova Census area.

This quarter ILC has provided independent living services to 535 consumers, closed 42 files, and started services for 47 new consumers. The number one requested program is the Supported Transportation Voucher Programs available in the three Kenai Peninsula offices. This program was started by ILC in 1997 working with local taxi cab companies to provide affordable and accessible transportation. Two of the cab companies own and operate their own accessible cabs. This quarter there are over 360 consumers enrolled in the program.

ILC started the first Veterans Directed Care program via advocacy in 2015, and they have assisted over 102 veterans to manage their own budgets and care and stay out of nursing or assisted living homes. 42 veterans have been served this quarter.

ILC has an inclusive recreation program named TRAILS that provided recreation to 58 consumers in 14 group activities during this quarter. Activities were primarily held in the summer and include charter fishing and wildlife boat tours out of Homer and Seward, Tai Chi classes, canoeing in the Homer reservoir, group walks and hikes, BBQs, and Zoom socials.

All ILC offices have AT demonstration kits with new technology and devices, some loanable AT, and community loan closets with recycled DME and donated medical supplies. ILC has two certified Medicare Counselors on staff.

ILC started a small program recently with unrestricted funds called ModMatch, where ILC can purchase materials for small housing modifications if the consumer can facilitate the labor. ILC is currently working with four consumers with this new program.

ADRC has worked with 94 individuals this quarter; DDRC, 44; and over 550 information and referral calls were answered by all programs. Summary of CARES Act Consumer Services (CACS) funds this quarter - \$18,600 for 6 individuals:

- \$4,270 for funeral and moving expenses for the spouse of a consumer in Homer who passed away with COVID.
- \$800 for short-term personal care services for a consumer in Soldotna who was unable to get services through her agency due to staff shortage/COVID.
- \$3,100 for CCTV for a consumer in Homer who was unable to get his usual reading services due to library's closure.
- A total of \$10,440 for utilities for three consumers from Soldotna who had job/income loss due to COVID.

DIVISION OF SENIOR AND DISABILITIES SERVICES (SDS) UPDATE

Ellen Hackenmueller stated that the grants activities surrounding relief funding have been a priority over the last year or so and have taken a lot of work and time for the team to implement. SDS still has COVID CARES relief funding available, and they will be reissuing that grant request for proposals in the near future.

Ellen stated that a large project for SDS is the enhanced FMAP application, which is part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA). SDS is awaiting approval from Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) on their application. They are hopeful they will hear an initial determination by September 30th. Once they receive approval on the plan, SDS will share more on what was approved and how that might intersect with other work so there can be shared priorities.

DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (DVR) UPDATE

Jim Kreatschman reported the following for the Pre-ETS program:

- 197 youth participate in the summer work program; half of them were served by Centers for Independent Living. \$314,000 in student wages was

expended in the summer work program with 60 businesses and organizations participating. Approximately 18 youth moved into competitive integrated employment.

- S’Cool Store (introduction to entrepreneurship) program in Kodiak has had a very successful hydroponics project, and they have commercial accounts in Kodiak they sell the micro greens to.
- DVR Director Duane Mayes has made transition a priority, and they will be targeting outreach to teachers and schools. They would like to see a 20 percent increase in plans for kids from schools over the next two years. A website has been developed and devoted to this for teachers to access, which includes the correct counselors to contact in each school district. Jim stated he has been meeting with special education directors to brainstorm about Pre-ETS, and he has worked to increase DVR’s ability to connect with schools by making DVR more accessible.
- 135 teachers are registered for the virtual secondary transition training.
- In December they will have another statewide transition camp on www.transitionAlaska.org. Last year they had 59 youth participate in the camp.
- With the help of the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority, DVR developed the Picture Your Future, Exploring Your Transition Goals as an outreach tool for rural Alaska. They hosted a virtual training with teachers on how to use that tool that covers all five domains of transition planning in an Alaska-specific way. All the TVRs contacted Jim, and they pooled funds and printed out 600 copies of this tool, which will be going out to the TVRs for distribution to teachers in their areas.

STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COMMITTEE (SVRC) UPDATE

Ric Nelson reported that the SVRC met for two half days in September and received partner reports and talked about the background check crisis that agencies are facing. They also discussed what they would like to work on for the next year, their annual reports, and decided on the next meeting dates in November.

ADVOCACY DISCUSSION

Deb Etheridge shared that she has volunteered to chair the Advocacy Committee. The committee had one meeting in July, and she stated that this committee is an avenue for individuals to identify areas of needed advocacy such as background

checks, living wage for direct service professionals (DSPs), and home assessments and modifications. Next for the committee will be developing next steps for the advocacy issues identified. She encouraged SILC member participation in this committee.

Ric Nelson queried SILC members for additional advocacy issues that could be investigated by this committee.

Nona Safra stated that an issue she has talked about for years is the DSP workforce crisis to not just include salaries and benefits but certifications and dignity within the program. She stated that core competency training is being offered at an affordable price for DSPs through the Alaska Training Cooperative with classes available October through December. Deb Etheridge stated that the committee can bring in Kim Champney as a guest speaker to talk about her work with the DSP issue so they can see how the SILC can support those efforts.

Michael Christian added that he is heavily involved in the DD Systems Collaborative, Alaska Association on Developmental Disabilities, and Alaskans Together for Medicaid, and workforce is an issue that comes up in all of those meetings. He has heard recently that CEOs and administrative staff of agencies are having to step in and provide the services that would have been provided by DSPs because the shortage is so bad right now.

Ric Nelson stated that they can worry about training later, but right now they need to focus on getting people to cover shifts. It's a huge crisis right now. Ric believes members of the SILC need to talk to their legislators about this issue before the start of the legislative session.

Deb Etheridge added that SAIL has engaged with DVR in thinking outside of the box and considering working with seniors to become DSPs. She also that the time may be ripe to talk about a consumer-directed pilot making background checks optional and putting negotiating wages with the consumer in the consumer's hands. Jessi Chapman commented that background checks are required by law, and she feels waiving background checks should be an option that is up to the client. Deb stated that there is a way to offer a variance around it. She believes that background checks are required for home and community-based services because it's part of the State's application to CMS, but they could engage SDS in seeing if there is any room for flexibility around the background check requirement. She also noted that the flexibility around the background checks would be for a situation where a family member or a close friend wants to be a DSP for someone.

Deb summarized that there needs to be an avenue to allow the consumer's voice to be heard when they are selecting someone to care for them; and not necessarily avoid background checks, but more so to allow someone with a minor criminal background be a caregiver for someone who trusts them. Emilie Woodward agreed.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Michael Christian stated that something recently came out from NCIL on updating SSI benefits and asset limits because that hasn't been done in a long time. They are asking people to write letters about their experience with SSI. He will forward the e-mail he received from NCIL to the SILC members.

Michael Christian reported that the SILC received the contract with the Northwest ADA Center, and it is a five-year contract to improve the Northwest ADA Center presence in Alaska, conduct ADA trainings, and put out information on the ADA. Along with that contract comes funds for outreach, which will also coincide with the development of the State Plan.

PUBLIC TESTIMONY

Public testimony was heard, and a full transcript was prepared.

Michael Christian and Kathy Munk stated that the public testimony was advertised through the public notice flyer sent to all CIL directors, an SDS e-alert, and posting on the State website.

INDEPENDENT LIVING CONFERENCE PLANNING

Michael Christian stated that the SILC has the funds to hold an Independent Living Conference next spring, potentially the last Monday and Tuesday in March. Available funds will cover the conference space at the Egan Center, audio/visual support, catering, and ASL interpretation. The total expenditure is just over \$20,852, which requires two signatories on the check. Due to the pandemic and SILC member turnover, there isn't currently a second signatory available. He asked the board for approval for him to write a check for conference expenses that would only include his signature.

Michael Christian explained that he has been in communication with Foraker Group about switching over to Bill.com, an automated bill pay service going forward.

Deb Etheridge **MOVED** to allow Michael Christian do a single signature on a check for the conference space to include catering and audio/visual for an estimated amount of \$20,852 and some cents, **SECONDED** by Nona Safra.

During discussion, Doug Toelle asked if there was an out policy or clause to the agreement with the Egan Center. Michael Christian stated that all the bases have been covered there, and if anything happens due to COVID, they can change the dates to any time in the future. They can also get a full refund if desired, and it doesn't need to be a COVID-related reason.

Irma Goodwine commented that as long as there is an invoice in place, that would be fine.

Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

Michael Christian stated that he will ask Wendi Shanks, current SILC treasurer, to sign onto the Bill.com account to be the second signatory.

During further discussion about the IL Conference, Michael Christian asked council members how they would feel about making the IL Conference an event that all SILC members would attend in lieu of a spring face-to-face meeting. The conference could act as a training meeting, and then the SILC can conduct a brief virtual meeting at the end of April, early May to attend to any board business. If this was agreeable to the council, they could create a SILC tract of the conference.

Members of the SILC expressed their interest in attending the IL Conference. Ric Nelson suggested holding the council meeting the day following the conference since everyone would already be there.

Deb Etheridge **MOVED** for the SILC board members to be in attendance at the IL Conference and hold a board meeting either at the end of the conference or the following day, **SECONDED** by Irma Goodwine. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**.

Michael Christian opened up a discussion on the contents of the IL Conference. He noted that in addition to SILC member suggestions, CILs and CIL staff will also be able to provide input. There are also other partners such as the Governor's Council, Alaska Mental Health Board, and the Commission on Aging who are interested in participating on the IL Conference Planning Committee.

Previous suggestions for the content of the conference included:

- DD Shared Vision
- IL history
- Language and identity
- Diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Meeting participants suggested the following additional topics:

- Systems advocacy – possibly ask Teri Tibbett to do an advocacy training.
- Emergency preparedness and response led by CIL staff, Lanny Mommsen from the GCDSE - Alaska Disability Advisory Group (ADAG), and invite the Washington SILC to talk about their program.
- Employee wellness and social isolation during a pandemic.
- Technology – invite ATLA to do a demonstration and have CILs talk about what they have been doing around technology.
- Topics relating to the SPIL – transportation, housing, employment, technology, emergency preparedness, youth leadership, health and wellness.
 - Invite Director Duane Mayes - Alaska Work Matters Task Force – employment. Incorporate TVR and subsistence employment opportunities
 - Invite Patrick Reinhart – Alaska Mobility Coalition – transportation
 - CILs can present on health and wellness activities
 - Bring in partners from Arizona to talk about the Youth Leadership Forum
 - Housing – Discuss Rural Ramp Project and home modification projects the SILC has done.
- Veterans – SAIL and ILC programs. Invite a representative from Association of Programs for Rural Independent Living (APRIL). Discuss budget authority in the veterans program.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT, continued

Michael Christian stated that the contract with SDS has been fully executed and will run from October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022. The SILC will receive their funds in advance so they don't have to worry about reimbursement issues. It's also possible that the SILC may have some funds in reserve as a result of the Home Accessibility Enabling Technology pilot project. The Trust has expressed that the SILC can take a larger administrative cut on that project because of the

time that's been spent on it. This would give the SILC a buffer of reserves, which is something the SILC has never had before.

Michael Christian reported that elections for vice-chair and secretary will take place at the November meeting.

CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Michael Christian stated that the Consumer Satisfaction Survey serves as both the SILC and the CIL satisfaction survey, and he would like to get feedback from the SILC on whether the questions need to be changed in any way. He would also like to get comments and feedback from Iris Matthews at the Stellar Group, and the survey questions will also be discussed at the IL Network meeting tomorrow.

Led by Deb Etheridge, the SILC reviewed each of the questions on the survey and made the following suggestions:

Question 1:

- No suggestions.

Question 2:

- Use plain language.
- It doesn't seem like it's part of the survey. It's more of a housekeeping item as a part of the introductory statement.

Question 3:

- Need to change the age groups. Age 5 to 19 is a very big age gap. Maybe 0 to 5, 6 to 13, 13 to 17, 18 to 25, and then 25 every ten years until 65, and then 65 and older.
- Some senior services start at age 60, so need to consult with the Commission on Aging on the standard they use for seniors.
- Bring the recommendation to the CIL directors and see how they can fit this in with how they are already capturing data. In the MiCIL demographics report, the ages are: Under 5, 5 to 19, 20 to 24, 25 to 50, 60 and older, and age unavailable.

Question 4:

- IL directors can have a conversation about how to simplify this list or expand it.

- They frequently receive answers to “other.”
- Many of these services received selections will correspond to the CIL data collection systems.

Question 5:

- People may hesitate to answer this question because they fear losing the services they currently have.
- The survey responses are collected by the SILC, and the CILs get a consolidated version of the responses with no identifiers.
- Put a disclaimer at the beginning of the survey that it is anonymous.
- The index card to win the drawing is kept separate from survey responses and does not correspond to the survey in any way.
- Change the wording from “Did we...” to “How could we...”

Question 6:

- Responses to this question often include people writing in additional information even though there isn’t a space to do so.
- Add a line for people to make comments if they want to.

Question 7:

- It might help to have a scale of 1 to 5 instead of yes, no, or unsure.
- They could also put in a “not applicable” option.

Question 8:

- It feels like this question is confusing if the person previously received services and isn’t receiving services right now.
- Surveys are sent to people who received services during the CILs most recent quarter.
- Questions 7 and 8 are very similar and could be combined.

Question 9:

- Answers to this question are always very creative.
- It might be helpful to create a list of areas that respondents would have preferred more assistance with.
- Eliminate this question because it’s answered in 10.
- 10 is more global to statewide; and 9 is more specific to the CIL.

Question 10:

- Wordsmith the radial buttons.

- This list was created based on past public testimony, and it shifts moderately every couple of years.
- Many people comment in the “other” category.
- Reword this question to say “statewide” instead of the CIL.
- Employment and a career path is different than just work, and that should be distinguished in this list.
- Does this question read differently depending on the age of the respondent?
- There is nothing in this question about education.
- Maybe create a scale of 1 to 5 for these responses to so they see a more individualized perspective.
- Respondents could also be asked to prioritize the list in order of importance.
- Tracking the consolidated data may be more difficult for staff.
- Bifurcate the question by age group to determine priorities and then follow that with a grading scale for all Alaskans.

Other Suggestions:

- Have the survey available in alternative language to English.
- Reduce the number of questions overall.
- Bullet points where people can check things off is preferred to open-ended questions.
- Make sure it’s clear that people can check more than one box in a question.
- It might be useful to see sample Consumer Satisfaction Surveys from other SILCS. Michael Christian will collect some examples for review at the November meeting.

SILC FOR-PROFIT ARM

Michael Christian reminded members of the SILC that at a previous meeting, they had a guest presenter from South Carolina that formed a for-profit arm, which is something that would make the SILC truly self-sustaining. That organization formed a benefit corporation as well as another layer to provide protection to the non-profit organization. The benefit corporation then formed a number of limited liability companies (LLCs), and 100 percent of the profits of the LLCs go towards the benefit that the benefit corporation has identified as its priority. The benefit corporation conducts an assessment, and a score is generated in terms of social and environmental benefits. This determines the benefit priority of the organization.

A business has to be in operation for one year before it can get certified as a benefit corporation; however, if that corporation is dedicated to social/environmental

benefits from the very beginning, they can do a pending benefit corporation status. The fee for starting a pending benefit corporation is \$1,000, and remains \$1,000 each year thereafter for any business making \$0 to \$150,000.

Michael Christian stated that the benefit corporation would have a board separate from the SILC that would have good stakeholder representation. He envisions it would include people with disabilities and SILC board members as ex-officios to help keep everything consistent with the mission of the SILC.

Michael reminded council members that at their last meeting, they discussed the potential for an aquaponic greenhouse, and the SILC asked Michael to produce a business plan. After more consideration, Michael believes a better way to start would be to seek a grant to do a smaller greenhouse to get good production data on the greenhouse before deciding whether or not to suggest that to the benefit corporation.

Michael Christian suggested that a faster opportunity to take advantage of this would be an offshoot of what the SILC has already done with the Rural Ramp Project, because there is such a high demand for ramps in rural and remote communities. Since that project ended October 2020, the SILC has had more than 50 requests and inquiries for ramps in rural and remote communities, and that's only the tip of the iceberg. The ramps the SILC has purchased are of a vastly superior quality to anything that's being done with wooden ramp construction. He has heard stories about wooden ramps recently installed in the Mat-Su where there were complaints about the ramps from the beginning. The ramps manufactured for the SILC are aluminum and composite modular ramps that are well adapted to Alaska conditions, have a high level of adjustability, and a high level of durability.

Michael explained that in addition to perhaps participating in the Medicaid home modification program, there is also a potential to rent these aluminum modular ramps to long-term care facilities to be able to release someone from long-term care back into their home. The SILC was able to do this in the Rural Ramp Project for a young man who had been hospitalized for two years because he didn't have a ramp on his home. The SILC accomplished this quickly and got the young man home and is something they could do for many more people.

Michael Christian asked the SILC if they would feel comfortable with him moving forward the formation of the benefit corporation provided there are funds in the amount of \$1,000 available for that purpose. That would allow the SILC to see the

benefit corporation form its board and have input from the SILC as it moves forward.

Deb Etheridge asked if Michael Christian would be the executive director of the benefit corporation and serve both that and the SILC. Michael explained that the benefit corporation would have a benefit director whose primary responsibility would be to protect the benefit, which in their case would be programs for people with disabilities. The most interaction he would have would be an advisory, ex-officio capacity. He further explained that the SILC non-profit would be at the top of the hierarchy, the benefit corporation would be the next level, and the level below that would be the limited liability corporations.

Michael Christian stated that if the SILC were to move forward with this and if something related to ramps was included under the benefit corporation, he would ask the Trust for technical assistance funds to get up to speed on how to bill Medicaid for the ramps. Kelda Barstad at the Trust expressed her excitement for the SILC to form a for-profit arm so it can become more involved in home modifications.

Doug Toelle asked for Michael to send the SILC members more information about benefit corporations for them to consider before the November meeting. Michael will do that and noted that he can ask the South Carolina organization to come back to present to the SILC at the November meeting. Michael will also ask someone from B Lab, the benefit corporation certification organization, to join the meeting as well.

SPIL PROCESS AND SPIL SURVEY

Michael Christian reviewed the State Plan for Independent Living (SPIL) process for SILC members by stating that the SILC submits the SPIL every three years. The current plan runs from 2021 to 2023, and by June 30th 2023 they have to submit their 2024 to 2027 SPIL. In 2022 they will do the SPIL survey and will conduct listening sessions to gather community feedback. At their November 2022 meeting, they will start drafting the SPIL for submittal in June 2023. SILC members participate in facilitating the listening sessions, and they use a guide of questions as a prompt for those sessions. Michael would like the SILC to review those questions as well as the survey prior to the survey release.

Council members began a review of the survey questions as follows:

Survey Introduction:

- Update the executive director and contact information.

Question 1:

- Delete or rename the Gulf Coast as a region. It is usually called Southcentral. Clarification was offered that the Gulf Coast region is a census area and is ILC's service area. The Gulf Coast region includes Valdez, Cordova census area, Kenai Peninsula Borough, and Kodiak Island Borough.

Question 2:

- Like how this question is worded, and this could be a model for the Consumer Satisfaction Survey.

In the interest of time, conversation about this topic continued after adjournment. Ric Nelson, Emilie Woodward, Michael Christian, and Kathy Munk continued discussing the survey questions and recommendations will be presented to the full council in November.

ADJOURN

Deb Etheridge **MOVED** to adjourn the business meeting, **SECONDED** by Doug Toelle. Hearing no objection, the motion **PASSED**, and the meeting adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Minutes Approved – 11/15/21 P.D.