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Board of Directors *Meeting Minutes*

July 7, 2023

Attendees: Veronica, Brad, Elaine, Linden, Heather, and Katie

This regular meeting was called by verbal agreement during the prior meeting, or by intermediate written reasonable notification made in good faith and agreed to by a majority of board members through email or phone, and was held through videoconferencing.

Agenda

- Next regular meeting
- Site additions
- Air travel practicalities
- Peer convention
- In the media

• **Next regular meeting**

Friday, September 1st at 1:00 PT/3:00 CT/4:00 ET.

• **Site additions**

The service dog meetup page is up and off to a good start. It has the potential to do a lot of good in the service animal community.

<https://www.psychdogpartners.org/meetups>

Veronica published “Is owner-training or a program service dog right for me?”, with Brad’s pictures and edits. This article will help address a very common issue for people who are looking at our resources or contacting us.

<https://www.psychdogpartners.org/resources/getting-a-dog/owner-training-vs-program-service-dog>

• **Air travel practicalities**

We are working with our JetBlue contact to figure out alternative possibilities for the service dog flying access—possibilities that honor airlines’ concerns and ours. Our DOT advocate meeting will be next week.

From earlier: In an upcoming advocate meeting with DOT, Veronica and Brad will be discussing with DOT whether it is appropriate under the regulations for Open Doors to have an initial work/task screening question in their handling of service dog documentation for some airlines.

DOT has clearly said that airlines aren't permitted to require documentation beyond DOT's (see the email excerpt below from May 10, 2023). However, some airlines direct passengers to Open Doors' system, which has the extra screening question beyond DOT's form. There hasn't been a clear indication this process is optional. What's more, it would be an outlier to try to avoid the Open Doors system and submit DOT's form to the airline, which in practice tends to make such an attempt difficult and burdensome when airline employees aren't accustomed to (or accepting of) handling the passenger's service animal paperwork themselves. This renders the Open Doors' system—with its extra screening question—as a practical requirement, in violation of the regulations. As an extra consideration, Open Doors people are not actually service dog experts, which makes their judgments on their extra question suspect. Their denial might impact a passenger's ability to fly with any of the often limited airlines available from their particular locale.

This is also an issue for the "Service Dog Pass", which may result in harassment of those who don't have it.

The DOT's service animal rule does not permit airlines to require documentation from passengers beyond the DOT forms, the rule also does not prohibit airlines from asking passengers to "voluntarily" complete other documentation, which would include the service dog pass. Please understand that this statement is based strictly on the language in DOT's service animal rule, 14 CFR Part 382, Subpart E, and is not the result of any approval or endorsement from DOT of the service dog pass, or any other documentation outside of the DOT forms. We can discuss this in more detail at the next advocacy meeting.

From earlier: Open Doors Organization is handling the service animal documentation for multiple airlines, including JetBlue, Alaska, and Allegiant. We are not quite on the same page about how this should be done, but we were able to do an invited training for their staff and leadership. We made significant inroads toward ensuring they handle the documentation in appropriate ways, and we will keep communicating with each other.

• Peer convention

We are just beginning to plan the 2024 convention in Rock Hill, South Carolina. From last meeting:


This year's convention went even better than usual; the convention received an unprecedented 100% 5 stars overall on our post-convention survey. The tourism day scholarships seemed to encourage people to plan to attend Monday's events, so we might offer them at least one more year to establish some momentum.

We want to make sure next year's convention will be a welcoming place for our LGBT+ community members, in spite of any oppressive laws that may pass. We want to have a hate-free, safe convention for our community members and will be taking action to make this happen.

We are renaming the convention a "peer convention" to better reflect the nature of the convention, so people don't expect it to be like an academic conference or an enormous Comic-con-like event.

<https://www.psychdogpartners.org/resources/convention/2023-convention>

• In the media



A local news station (WBTV) interviewed Brad, Veronica, and community member Sabrina Tolle for a long-form segment about the impact of PSDP in people's lives.
