South Carolina Commission for the Blind  
1430 Confederate Avenue  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Meeting Minutes  
May 18, 2021

Notifications of all regular, called, or special meetings are compliant with the FOIA requirements, Section 90-4-80.

Call to Order

Chairperson Johnson called the meeting to order at 1:31 pm. The meeting was conducted via Zoom Meeting software.

Present  
  
Dr. Judy Johnson, Chairperson  
Peter Smith, Vice Chairperson  
Mary Sonksen, Secretary   
Catherine Olker  
Susan John  
Darline Graham, Commissioner  
  
Adoption of Agenda

Peter Smith made a motion to accept the May 18, 2021 Agenda. It was seconded by Susan John. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

Catherine Olker made a motion to accept April 20, 2021 minutes. It was seconded by Peter Smith. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Finance Report

Matt Daugherty reported:

* The agency had utilized 83% of the state fiscal year budget.
* Administration had utilized 83% of its budget.
* Rehabilitation Services had utilized 92% of its budget.
* Region I had utilized 76% of its budget.
* Region II had utilized 92% of its budget.
* Region III had utilized 83% of its budget.
* The Training Center had utilized 46% of its budget.
* Prevention of Blindness had utilized 17% of its budget.
* Older Blind had utilized 70% of its budget.
* Children’s Services had utilized 79% of its budget.
* Business Enterprise Program (BEP) had utilized 78% of its budget.
* Training and Employment had utilized 72% of its budget.
* Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) had utilized 93% of the required 15% for the 2020 grant.
* 100% of the Independent Living for Older Blind grant for 2020 had been utilized.
* The agency had utilized 47% of the 2020 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) grant, which included receipt of a $1 million re-allotment.
* The CARES Re-Imbursement for the agency had been completed and would be shifting over to the Federal Financial Relief and Restoration payments which is for the Blind Licensed Vendors (BLV’s).
* End of the year open encumbrances were at $860,000. There are 842 open authorizations in AWARE (Accessible Web-based Activity and Reporting Environments) and 100 open purchase orders in SCEIS (South Carolina Enterprise Information System). The money that had been allocated would identify the invoices that would need to be carried over to the next fiscal year.
* The accounts payable supervisor position would be filled soon.

Facilities & IT Report

Matt Daugherty reported:

* A new position had been created for a procurement manager and would be posted soon.
* The Florence District Office had moved to a new location.
* The Conway District Office would move to a new location by the end of May.
* The Training Center dormitory would be ready for residential consumers by the beginning of June.
* Other projects included a new generator and new lighting around the campus to ensure safety of consumers and staff.
* The IT Department continued to update phones, internet systems, digital faxing, and issue laptops to staff.

**Human Resources Report**

Luis Mendoza reported:

* Four Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions remained opened with no offers, no hires, and no separations. Open positions included Charleston, Conway, Columbia, and Spartanburg. Charleston and Conway vacancies were the hardest to fill. Several offers had been made but not accepted.
* The Interim Human Resources Director had contacted other agencies and learned that due to the pandemic, those agencies had experienced a 50% decline in applications.
* All Administrative Assistant positions had been filled.
* The number of FTE’s for the Training Center had increased due to adding a custodial position and restructuring changes.
  + An instructor position would be reclassified to an O&M (Orientation and Mobility) supervisor.
  + Interviewing for the new custodial position at Training Center had begun.
  + A vacant driver position would be reclassified to a nursing assistant for the third shift.
  + A second vacant driver position would be reclassified to a Region IV Director.
  + Interviews would be conducted for the vacant Vocational Evaluator position.
  + The Mental Health counselor position would be reclassified.
  + The position description for the Woodshop instructor would be reviewed.
* A new automated system had been used to conduct employment verification and background checks, which would allow the agency to save time and focus on retention.

Commissioner’s Report

Darline Graham reported:

* The Department of Administration had advised agencies to limit non-essential travel due to the Colonial Pipeline disruption. This delayed office visits for Senior Managers and the Commissioner; however, visits had been made to the Greenwood, Greenville, and Rock Hill offices prior to this restriction. Visits to the Charleston, Florence, and Conway offices would be rescheduled.
* Charleen Allen, Customized Employment Consultant in the Greenville office, and Ronald Guest, Administrative Assistant in the Rock Hill office, had joined the agency.
* LaJuana Dawson would serve as Interim IT Director.
* The agency had received the draft of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Monitoring Report. The monitoring included years 2017, 2018, and 2019. The agency had submitted a response within the 15 days allowed. After the Final Monitoring Report was received and posted on the RSA website, the agency would submit a Corrective Action Plan no later than June 21, 2021. The Monitoring Report would guide the agency moving forward; it also provided validation that the agency had been making appropriate progress.
* Progress was being made to reopen the Training Center dormitory.
* The Finance team had worked with the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) staff to prepare distribution checks for the Blind Licensed Vendors (BLV). The agency had begun distributing unassigned vending income from federal and state stands for part of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021. Additionally, funds that had been held for match purposes from the same source would also be distributed. The distribution of checks to the BLV’s would begin within the next few days.
* The agency had been preparing for the distribution of funds from the Randolph-Sheppard Financial Relief and Restoration Payments Appropriation. This required the agency to collect detailed income and expense information from each BLV. The distribution should be completed by the end of the fiscal year.
* The Senate Confirmation Hearing for Peter Smith to serve another term on the Board had been held on May 12.
* The Student Internship Program would provide the opportunity for six SCCB consumers who are college students to participate in an internship related to their major. Their orientation would include workplace etiquette, self-advocacy, resume writing, interview skills and mock interviews that would be held virtually from May 19-21. The internships would occur between June 1 and August 6 at the following locations:
  + Freeway Music in Columbia
  + Orangeburg County Department of Disabilities and Special Needs
  + SCCB’s Assistive Technology Department
  + ABC Academy Daycare in Saluda
  + Courage Center in Saluda
  + Courage Center in Lexington, and
  + The Richland County Public Defenders’ Office in Columbia.
* From June 21 – July 31, the National Federation of the Blind’s Successful Transitions Program would assist SCCB with the Summer Teen Program. Two tracks would be offered, one to prepare students for future internships and the other to provide students with an internship experience. The summer program would combine virtual learning and face-to-face activities. Activities were designed to provide students with skills and knowledge in self advocacy, critical soft-skills, confidence-building, and post-secondary exploration. The first week would be virtual for both tracks while weeks two through five would be held during the day at various locations in the Columbia area. Week six would be a graduation retreat held at Rocky Bottom Retreat and Conference center in Pickens County. There would be a limited number of participants and all Center for Disease Control and American Camp Association guidelines for COVID-19 would be followed to ensure the safety of staff and students.
* The Children’s Camp, hosted by Successful Transitions, would be held June 26 – July 1, at Rocky Bottom Retreat and Conference Center of the Blind in Pickens County for ages 12 and under. The agency would assist in promoting the camp and making the arrangements for several young consumers to attend. Activities would include:
  + Canoeing for Kids at Table Rock,
  + Technology day,
  + Braille activities,
  + Independent living activities,
  + Swimming, and
  + A virtual story hour presented by the State Library.

Training Center Update

Kisa Grate reported:

* The agency was working to reopen the Training Center. Four areas would need to be addressed prior to the reopening:
  + In-Person Instruction
    - Five residential students and two day students had been identified.
    - Instructors would provide in-person training in the morning and virtual training in the afternoon.
    - New referrals for virtual training would be assigned to training partners.
  + Facility Maintenance
    - The dormitory would be deep cleaned and sanitized.
    - New furniture, mattresses, blinds, mini refrigerators, washers and dryers would be installed.
    - Durable lounge seating with healthcare grade upholstery would be placed in all consumer lounges.
    - The addition of door alarms would help to monitor movement in the dormitory after hours.
    - The cafeteria would be cleaned and sanitized.
  + Safety Measures
    - Updated medical clearance from consumers would be requested.
    - The orientation manual would be updated to include additional safety precautions due to the pandemic.
    - All returning temporary staff would need to complete the onboarding process, including State Fleet driver training and other safety trainings.
  + Staffing
    - All O&M instruction would be assigned to the Training Center.
    - The referral process would be maintained by the Case Manager to streamline service delivery.
    - Recruitment for a custodian had begun. The position would assist with the dormitory maintenance, allowing cleaning to be done and monitored on a daily basis.
    - A CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant) position would be added to the third shift and would be posted.
    - Recruitment for staff to work with the CNA and security staff on second and third shifts had begun.

Old Business

As a follow-up to the May 2021 Quality Assurance report, Michael Daniels reported:

* Quality Assurance had launched the third quarter Consumer Satisfaction Survey on April 7. A strategy had been developed to boost the response time by utilizing consumers in the BRIDGE (Building Readiness for Individualized Gainful Employment) pre-apprentice program to conduct surveys via phone. The customer service training would enhance consumer’s learning skills through work experience that could lead to competitive employment. The results gathered by the consumers had not been finalized.

New Business

* A question was asked about changing the date of the monthly board meetings from the third Tuesday of each month to the third Wednesday of the month. Meeting dates could be addressed in one of two ways:
  + Members could agree to change the date of a single meeting on a case-by-case basis.
* All board members agreed to meet on the third Wednesday of July at 11:00 am.
* Three Board Commissioners requested a tour and a meeting with select staff to discuss reopening the Training Center for face-to-face/residential services.

Public Comment

* The following questions/comments were made:
  + How many board seats were allowed?
  + How long have there been vacancies?
  + When would in-person and in-home training resume?
  + Were consumers required to be vaccinated?
  + Were staff required to be vaccinated?
  + When would the Training Center reopen?
  + When would the Low Vision Clinics resume?
  + When would training for levels 3 and 4 in the Business Enterprise Program resume in-person training?
  + There was a need to update the dormitory.

Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made by Peter Smith to adjourn at 3:04 pm, seconded by Mary Sonksen. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Future Board Meeting Schedule

June 22, 2021

Signatures

Dr. Judy Johnson, Chairperson

Mary Sonksen, Secretary

Date