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

Meeting Minutes  
October 20, 2020

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 1:30 pm.

Present

Dr. Judy Johnson, Chairperson, via Zoom  
Peter Smith, Vice Chairperson, via phone  
Mary Sonksen, Secretary, via phone  
Darline Graham, Commissioner, via Zoom

Roll Call of Participants

Mark Gamble reported:

* Eighty-seven (87) participants were present.

Adoption of Agenda

Accepted as written. No vote. No quorum.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

Accepted as written. No vote. No quorum.

Finance Report

Matt Daugherty reported:

* The agency was 25% through the State fiscal year budget.
* The Agency was 32% over budget due to the previous year’s accounts payable, but this will level out throughout the year.
* Rehabilitation Services had a 68% increase, of which most costs were in case services.
* Contractual services were now coming out of the rehabilitation line item and not from other operating costs.
* Budget line items had been adjusted to show the different programs. All programs had individual budget dollars projected.
* The budget would now be reflected in the State system to allow for better tracking.
* The Community Services line item had been renamed Children’s Services.
* The Agency total was at 28% spent with 25% of the year completed.

Human Resources Report

Wanda Miller Reported:

* Two vacant Caseload Technician positions had been filled.
* The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) position in Charleston was vacant.
* Because there was a large number of applicants for the Conway VRC position, there could be some also interested in applying for the Charleston position.

Commissioner’s Report

Darline Graham reported:

* This year marked the 75th Anniversary of the National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). Since its inception, NDEAM has raised awareness of disability employment issues and celebrated the varied contributions of American workers with disabilities.
* This was the 30th Anniversary of the Americans With Disabilities Act, signed into law in 1990, which has insured the rights of individuals with disabilities.
* This was the 100th Year Anniversary of the Vocational Rehabilitation program. In 1920, the Smith-Fess Act, also known as “The National Civilian Vocational Act,” was signed to assist individuals who had not acquired a disability as a result of serving in the military.
* On October 15, 2020, Governor Henry McMaster had signed a proclamation recognizing White Cane Awareness Day.
* The first issue of the SCCB Connects newsletter had been released.
* A Virtual Open House would be held on October 27, 2020 via Zoom.
  + Several staff and consumers would be presenting.
  + The event would allow the agency to reengage with business partners, referral resources, consumers, and members of the public.
* Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) monitoring would be completed soon. Financial processes and service delivery had been discussed in detail.
* The agency would be participating in the Executive Budget Hearing.
  + The agency would be requesting the same items as last year, including salary adjustments, an increase for Prevention of Blindness, and the HVAC system.
  + An increase for the Older Blind Program would be requested due to the increase in referrals for that program.
  + The agency would continue to operate under a continuing resolution at the same funding levels as fiscal year 2019-20.

Presentations

Rhonda Thompson reported:

* The Fall Virtual Senior Camp had been held on September 18, 2020, at Rocky Bottom Retreat and Conference Center. Activities had included a special music presentation, discussion of topics related to adjustment, shared stories of interest, plans to establish a book club, and a game night.
* In collaboration with Successful Transitions, a workshop for Children’s Services would take place on October 29, 2020. The goal was to offer fun and engaging sessions that would help children to learn and interact with others.
* Counselors and Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) had been meeting with parents to share program information. Four youth would receive pre-employment services during the first quarter of 2021.
* Information about eye disease and appropriate assistance would be shared virtually by the Low Vision Clinic.
* A meeting with Palmetto Vision Alliance had been held to discuss working together to strengthen gaps in services, resources, and current needs.

Kisa Grate reported:

* Assistive Technology (AT) instructors would continue to provide virtual training for consumers, both one-on-one and in groups.
* Loaner laptops that had been issued to consumers, but were no longer being used, would be retrieved in order to meet the high demand for such equipment.
* AT consultants would continue to provide virtual assessments and collaborate with Teachers of the Visually Impaired to ensure consumers received equipment needed to support online learning.
* AT consultants and instructors had facilitated a series of workshops about assistive technology for consumers, Rehabilitation Center staff, and Vocational Rehabilitation counselors.
  + Equipment featured had included a braille display, Closed Circuit TV (CCTV), smart glasses, and low vision aids.
  + Voiceover versus JAWS had been demonstrated.
* Employment consultants would continue to provide consumers with job leads, resume writing assistance, and preparation for interview training.
* Fifty new businesses had been contacted and would receive online sensitivity training from the agency through the use of an “Inclusive Work Culture” Prezi: Prezi is a presentation tool similar to Power Point.
* Study sessions and online trainings had been provided to prepare consumers for the customer service exam.
* All BRIDGE participants had earned the Customer Service and Sales Certified Specialist credential from the National Retail Federation. A Certificate of Completion ceremony had been scheduled for November 12, 2020.

Zunaria Wasif reported:

* Steady participation had resulted in consumer workshops continuing to grow.
* Crystal Brunson, with Southern Illinois University, had conducted a workshop on Preparing for Employment. Topics had included seven steps to attaining a quality career, interviewing with confidence, mindfulness, and social skills at work.
* Home Management workshops had included:
  + Cooking and cleaning techniques.
  + How to make natural cleaning products.
  + Grocery shopping.
  + Selecting produce using touch and smell.
  + Selecting meats without relying on vision.
* The final Home Management workshop for October would be a zoom meeting demonstrating how to prepare a chicken noodle casserole. Consumers would practice pouring, measuring, mixing, and safety as they learned to prepare the meal.
* Orientation and Mobility workshops had focused on commonly encountered challenges in rural communities such as traveling without the use of sidewalks and trailing techniques. Special challenges in commercial settings, such as how to use escalators, had also been discussed.
* An informational presentation had been given on the NFB Newsline and Talking Book Services.
* The South Carolina Election Commission had presented on accessible voting.
* For a Manual Arts workshop, supplies had been sent to consumers to allow them to actively participate in hand stitching a leather bag and attaching accessories. Consumers had followed instructions, used their sense of touch, and practiced manual dexterity and fine motor skills, verbal communication, and problem solving.

Old Business

None.

New Business

The Governor’s Office had been working to find new Board Members. It was possible that two members could be added in the next few months.

Public Comment

A question was asked about the Business Enterprise Program’s maintenance personnel. It was reported that there were two actively servicing the state, one full time employee (FTE) and one temporary employee. A third FTE position had been approved for posting.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 2:27 pm. No vote was taken. No quorum.

Future Board Meeting Schedule

November 17, 2020  
December 15, 2020

Signatures

Dr. Judy Johnson, Chairperson

Mary Sonksen, Secretary

Date