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

Meeting Minutes  
August 18, 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

Invocation

Chairperson Johnson.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

Accepted as written. No vote was taken. No quorum.

Finance Report

Matt Daugherty reported on Fiscal Year 2020:

* Administration had utilized 90.88% of their budget.
* Rehabilitation Services had utilized 82.11% of their budget.
* Prevention and Older Blind had utilized 76.36% of their budget.
* Children’s Services had utilized 94.66% of their budget.
* In total, the Agency had utilized 82% of its allotted budget.
* Federal Authorization was at 77.57%.
* State Appropriations was at 91.68%.
* Earmark Authorizations was at 40.67%.
* Total funding source was at 80.87%.
* The Federal Spread Total was at 77.95%.

Matt Daugherty reported on Fiscal Year 2021:

* Administration had utilized 16% of their budget.
* Rehabilitation Services had utilized 10% of their budget.
* Prevention and Older Blind had utilized 8% of their budget.
* Children’s Services had utilized 11% of their budget.
* In total, the agency had utilized 9% of its allotted budget.
* Federal Authorization was at 8%.
* State Appropriations was at 13%.
* Earmark Authorizations was at 4%.
* Total funding source was at 9.21%.
* Federal Spread Total was at 8.40%.

Human Resources Report

Wanda Miller Reported:

* All Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) positions had been filled.
* Two Caseload Technician positions were available, one in Columbia and one in Greenville.
* The Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center began the month with three positions available.

Commissioner’s Report

Darline Graham reported:

* The Agency will remain in Phase 2 of the Safe Return Plan until further notice. Most employees have been rotating into the offices using the team concept, with one team working Monday, Wednesday and Friday, while the other works on Tuesday and Thursday, and then they switch days.
* Everyone (staff, visitors, and/or consumers) must go through a checkpoint located in Building D of the Columbia Complex where temperatures will be checked and a brief survey of questions asked.
* Service delivery during Phase 2 has been provided remotely; however, face-to-face services were offered when needed.
* The Rehabilitation Center will continue offering remote services to consumers until it has been determined it is safe for them to return. The agency has been monitoring colleges and universities to see how COVID-19 could impact the opening of their dormitories. It has been estimated that it will be the end of 2020 or the beginning of 2021 before the residential facility could be safely opened.
* The number of virtual workshops offered to consumers had increased; they are held each week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday.
  + The Home Management workshop had discussed ways to ensure surfaces and clothes were kept clean, how to use different types of fruits and vegetables, and presented fun activities for the consumers to participate in at the end of the session.
  + Orientation and Mobility instructors Valerie Singleton and Dr. Solomon Sainyo had discussed safety tips when traveling.
  + The workshops have helped consumers know we are here for them and helped them remain connected with each other.
* The teens who attended the 2020 Summer Teen Program stated they had learned a lot of valuable information.
* The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), had notified the agency that the monitoring and technical assistance project will be held virtually. Staff had gathered information to upload to their secure portal. Once the documents have been reviewed by RSA a series of virtual meetings will be held to explain and answer any questions pertaining to them. This process will be completed by December 2020.
* In the budget request for fiscal year 2020-2021, the Executive Budget Office and the House Ways and Means Committee had recommended the agency receive $350,000 for salary adjustments, $150,000 for the Prevention Program, and $5.1 million for a one-time project (the HVAC unit). Due to the pandemic the final recommendation had not been decided on by the Senate Finance Committee.
* The Senate will return in September to pass the State budget.
* A conservative budget request will be developed for fiscal year 2021-2022.
* Senior Managers and the Commissioner had met to develop the Strategic Plan, which is part of the Accountability Report due by September 15, 2020.
* New members that had joined the SCCB Team included:
  + Kevin Graham, Grants and Budget Accountant
  + Soni Rai, Accounts Payable Supervisor
  + Carrie Morris, Grants and Budget Manager
  + Joanna Melo, Human Resources Specialist
  + Joshua Fulmer, Training and Employment IT Specialist
  + Sophia Smalls, Caseload Technician, Florence and Conway

Presentations

Zunaria Wasif reported:

* Twenty-five (25) students had participated in the Summer Teen Program.
* Other states had difficulty developing and implementing virtual programming for students. In comparison, the agency’s Summer Teen Program was a great success.
* Students had participated in approximately 150 sessions over eight (8) weeks, from July 6, 2020 to July 31, 2020.
  + Pre-ETS topics had included:
    - Career Exploration
    - Exploration of post-secondary enrollment opportunities
    - Self-Advocacy
    - Workplace readiness
  + Other activities included:
    - How to make an omelet in a cup (a demonstration was held via Zoom with the instructor providing step-by-step instruction).
    - How to pour beverages.
    - Basic cutting and chopping skills.
    - How to make sandwiches.
    - How to make pasta.
    - Financial management (students received a set amount of money with which to purchase a home, furnish it, buy groceries and allow for unexpected expenses).
    - College students had discussed their experiences regarding financial aid and other programs available to students.
  + Blind and Socially Savvy Strengths Services presented networking and social skills such as:
    - Dress for Success
    - How to begin and end conversations
    - Dress code when attending special events
    - How to properly hold your cane when shaking hands, getting food, and communicating with others.
* The Summer Teen Program had concluded with a talent show which helped the students demonstrate self-confidence and share other skills.

Matt Daugherty reported:

* In the budget:
  + The Community Services line item had been re-classified as Children’s Services because Community Services were no longer being offered.
  + Prevention and Older Blind had been split because Prevention was State funded and Older Blind was funded with a federal grant.
  + Rehabilitation Services represented Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). Both programs were state and federally funded. Federal dollars spent on BEP operations could be State matched.
  + Pre-ETS had accounted for 15% of the VR budget.
* The budget request for the coming year would be a mix of reoccurring and non-reoccurring expenses. A special budget request had been added to the base budget to increase salaries. State Allotment money that had been carried forward from last year would be a priority for spending this year.

Rhonda Thompson reported:

* Eighty-one percent (81%) of Prevention referrals had been converted to consumers.
* Sixty-seven (67) Prevention cases had been closed.
* Lions Vision Services and Palmetto Vision Alliance were alternate resources to assist individuals not eligible for programs offered by the agency.
* Thirty (30) cases had moved from Children’s Services to Pre-ETS.
* Workshops provided by Successful Transitions to students and parents had included:
  + Internet safety
  + Preparation for safe return to school
  + Proper nutrition
  + Good study habits
  + How to reach goals
  + Self-advocacy

Roll Call of Participants

Mark Gamble reported:

* Sixty-nine (69) participants were present.

Old Business

None.

New Business

None.

Public Comment

None.

Executive Session

Chairperson Johnson stated the members would go into executive session to discuss Darline Graham’s Performance Review.

Chairperson Johnson stated that the members were out of Executive Session and no action was taken. No vote. No quorum.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 3:35 pm. No vote was taken. No quorum.

Future Board Meeting Schedule

September 15, 2020

Signatures

Dr. Judy Johnson, Chairperson

Mary Sonksen, Secretary

Date