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

## Meeting Minutes February 18, 2020

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

### Opening

The meeting of the members of the South Carolina Commission for the Blind was called to order at time 1:40 pm on February 18, 2020 by Chairperson Peter Smith.

### Present

Peter Smith, Chairperson, via phone

Dr. Judy Johnson, Vice Chairperson

Mary Sonksen, Secretary

Rosemary Roberson, Board Member, via phone

Darline Graham, Commissioner

### Public Comment

None.

### Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with minor adjustments. Dr. Johnson made a motion to approve February minutes. Ms. Sonksen seconded the motion. The motion passed without discussion.

### Finance Report

#### Juan Sims reported:

* As of January 31, 2020, the agency is in the seventh month of the fiscal year and has utilized 58.31% of its budget.
* February had three pay cycles, the 1st, 16th, and 31st, because February 1st fell on a Saturday.

Matt Daugherty reported:

* Staff are working on the Open Encumbrances report, contracts, and invoice reconciliations. Currently, there is no time frame for how long this process will take.
* He is working on a format change to financial documents.
* Three positions are open in Finance.

A motion to approve the Financial report was made. Ms. Sonksen seconded the motion. The motion passed without discussion.

### Introductions

* None.

### Human Resources Report

#### Wanda Miller reported:

* The Greenwood office position has been filled, and the start date will be March 2.
* Seven VR positions have been filled this year.
* Three vacant positions are currently advertised: Licensed Practical Nurse, Instructor, and Driver.

Zunaira Wasif reported:

* She is in the final stages of rewriting the job description for a Job Readiness Instructor.

### Commissioner’s Report

#### Darline Graham reported:

* The Legislative Breakfast was a great success and she thanked the Foundation for hosting the event. She added that, according to the caterer and Foundation members, a record number turned out for the event.
* Communications Director Mark Gamble did a fantastic job designing the banners and displaying information on every table that sparked a lot of conversation about our consumers and their abilities. In addition, a suggestion from Zunaira Wasif led to the display around the room of beautiful artwork created by one of our consumers.
* She thanked Shimeka Robinson and Brittany Fulton for their hard work at the sign-in table.
* She thanked the senior managers for helping to educate the legislators and their staff about the services SCCB provides.
* The Braille Challenge was rescheduled to February 27 due to bad weather. Rhonda Thompson worked very hard with this last-minute change to have everything in place.
* The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) Blind Licensed Vendor (BLV) Annual Meeting will be held on March 6-7, at the Columbia campus.
* The Vision Summit will be held on March 6 at the SC Department of Archives and History. It will be hosted by SC Vision Education Partnership.
* She will be splitting her time between attending both events on March 6.
* She recently attended a SC Vision Education Partnership meeting with Zunaira Wasif and Karma Marshall and is looking forward to working with the Partnership.
* No date has been set for RSA monitoring visits to begin. She noted that while gathering documents that were uploaded to a secured portal on January 15, staff identified areas where the agency needs to make improvements to policy as well as certain procedures which need updating.
* In preparation for the RSA monitoring, the agency is participating in a Community of Practice organized by CSAVR along with other states that will be monitored, including Arkansas, Georgia, Nebraska, Delaware, and New Mexico. The next meeting will be in March.
* She is working closely with Elaine Robertson and Marcellous Primus to write new job descriptions and develop training for the BEP staff.
* Finance is in process of writing new job descriptions which will be posted soon.
* Recommendations from the Executive Budget were positive; all requests were approved except for one item, which was the request for additional FTE positions.
* She spoke about SCCB’s budget with a legislative aide who stated that the House is in full committee this week, and that the budget recommendations will be posted online and made public.
* Senate Bill S1027 was introduced by Senator Alexander and will allow the Board to meet quarterly instead of monthly; it was approved by the subcommittee and will move to the floor for vote.

### Senior Consultant Report

#### Elaine Robertson reported:

* She and Marcellus Primus attended the Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America 2020 Sagebrush National BEP Training Conference in Las Vegas from February 10-14.
* She received a lot of positive feedback on her presentation about BEP recruiting and incorporating BEP into Pre-ETS services. She was approached by RSA Commissioner Shultz who wanted to incorporate the material into his own presentation. Several attendees from other states also asked for a copy of the presentation.
* Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Commissioner Shultz provided an update on the current backlog of Randolph-Sheppard issues at the Federal level. He stated that as of October 3, new employees have been working diligently to resolve pending arbitration. One case has reached an agreement, four have been withdrawn, and the remaining cases are moving forward. Regarding state policies and manuals, three were approved, two have received feedback, and eight remain to be reviewed. He said that any state waiting for review should reach out to Jesse Hartle for an update; SCCB has done this and is waiting for a reply.
* Commissioner Shultz also discussed a new RSA monitoring process for the BEP. They are piloting a two-day monitoring process in Maryland and Georgia. When completed, they plan to develop a monitoring guide and establish a schedule to perform monitoring visits on all agencies. There is no timeline for this. He also proposed providing technical assistance to BEP programs but noted this is in the development and planning phase.
* Catriona Macdonald provided an update from the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB). She said that in the current federal budget there is no reference to rest area commercialization as there has been for the past few years. While this is a good sign, it is also worrisome that there is no mention of where money will come from for proposed transportation infrastructure recommendations. She also reported the Department of Defense (DOD) was in the process of drafting regulations to shut Randolph-Sheppard Program participants out of military dining facilities. She explained that there was a ruling in Kansas in which DOD won a case to award to a vendor other than a Randolph-Sheppard Program participant, and now DOD is appealing cases they have lost in other states.
* Hands on training was provided in the use of QuickBooks by BLVs, and Intuit, the company that produces QuickBooks, will offer a free one-year subscription to new users.
* The National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) provided updates on new technology in automatic card readers and energy efficient vending machines. They also shared information about labeling laws in different states and how to ensure each state follows those laws. SCCB consults with DHEC to ensure compliance with this.
* The presentation on “Exploring the Commissary Possibility” discussed how many states are attempting to use the Randolph-Sheppard Program priority to take on commissaries. One important aspect, especially regarding federal prisons, is that while the Randolph-Sheppard Program has priority, safety comes first for the vendors.
* AIRA and Be My Eyes provided demonstrations of new apps and technology. Each company will offer free services to BLVs when their system is used for business purposes.
* Vendors were encouraged to “tell their story” to state legislators and building managers. The importance of the Randolph-Sheppard Program and its impact on Blind individuals is vital to growth and success of the program.
* She participated on a panel with a business consultant from Nevada and program director from Washington Blind to discuss the importance of business plans.
* During a SLA Roundtable, BEP directors from across the country shared their concerns about the program, which included rest area commercialization; delays in approval of policy and procedure manuals; difficulty recruiting vendors; military contract issues; lack of teamwork with vocational rehabilitation teams; difficulty in growing programs due to lack of staff; exercising Randolph-Sheppard priority in secure locations to gain a percentage of income for vendors when it is not possible for a vendor to physically be at the location; and BLVs who hire sighted persons to do all the work while the BLV is rarely on-site at their facility.
* She attended a presentation on how income from the Randolph-Sheppard Program affects Social Security and Medicare benefits, and how a vendor calculates their income for SSA purposes.
* Dan Spoone, American Council for the Blind (ACB) President, discussed the upcoming ACB conference to be held in July in Schaumburg, IL.

### Committee Report

None.

### Old Business

None.

### New Business

None.

### Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 2:15 pm by Chairperson Smith. Dr. Johnson made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss personnel matters. Ms. Sonksen seconded the motion. There was no discussion.

Dr. Johnson stated the members were out of executive session. Chairperson Smith made a motion to adjourn and Ms. Sonksen seconded the motion. There being no further business to discuss the meeting was adjourned at 3:15 pm.

**Future Board Meeting Schedule:**

April 21

May 19

June 16

### Signatures

Chairperson

Secretary

Date