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

Meeting Minutes  
July 21, 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 11:08am. The meeting was conducted in-person and via Zoom Meeting software.

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

Cathy Olker made a motion to accept the July 21, 2021 Agenda. It was seconded by Mary Sonksen. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

Had the Strategic Plan been updated on the website?

Approval of Minutes

Susan John made a motion to accept June 22, 2021 minutes. It was seconded by Mary Sonksen. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Finance Report

Matt Daugherty reported:

* The agency utilized 88% of the state fiscal year budget.
* Administration utilized 93% of its budget.
* Rehabilitation Services utilized 99% of its budget.
* Region I utilized 87% of its budget.
* Region II utilized 109% of its budget.
* Region III utilized 100% of its budget.
* Business Enterprise Program (BEP) utilized 97% of its budget.
* The Training Center utilized 83% of its budget.
* Prevention of Blindness utilized 23% of its budget.
* Older Blind utilized 88% of its budget.
* Children’s Services utilized 97% of its budget.
* Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) utilized 104% of the required 15% for the 2020 grant.
* 100% of the Independent Living for Older Blind grant for 2020 was utilized.
* The agency utilized 55% of the 2020 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) grant, which included receipt of a $1 million re-allotment.
* The CARES Re-Imbursement for the agency was distributed. The Federal Financial Relief and Restoration payments for the Blind Licensed Vendors (BLVs) was fully distributed to assist with covering losses during COVID.
* Closing date for the 2020/2021 purchasing was June 30, 2021.

A motion was made by Mary Sonksen to approve the financial report and seconded by Susan John. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Human Resources Report**

Luis Mendoza reported:

* Four Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) positions remained open.
  + The Charleston VRC will start on September 2, 2021, due to the need to relocate.
  + A vocational evaluator began July 2, 2021.
  + The vacant position for counselor trainer remained open but the duties were temporarily assigned to another employee.
  + The vacant position for recreation specialist remained open.
  + The Mental Health Counselor and Woodshop instructor positions remained open. The position descriptions were being reviewed.
  + The vacant O&M Lead position was advertised on SC Careers.
  + The Certified Nursing Assistant position was in the interviewing process.
  + The Region IV Director position remained open.

Commissioner’s Report

Darline Graham reported:

* The Training Center residential facility reopened.
  + The Commissioner and other staff met with the consumers at the end of the first week. Positive feedback and a few concerns were expressed.
* Several camps and summer programs recently ended or remain ongoing.
  + The Children’s Camp, held the last week of June, was hosted by the National Federation of the Blind (NFB).
  + The Summer Teen Camp began June 21 and will conclude on July 30. The teens enjoyed games and waterslides while learning helpful skills that focused on employment. They also learned about self-advocacy, independence, and prepared and served a meal for NFB members. In addition, some of the teens participated in work experiences.
* The Student Internship Program (SIP) continued, with several interns and businesses sharing wonderful experiences.
  + The consumer interning at the Courage Center, a non-profit facility focused on substance misuse recovery, was assisting with research grants. The staff at the center was so pleased that consideration was now being given to providing additional internship opportunities.
  + The consumer interning at the Public Defender’s office assisted with researching criminal cases. This experience helped the consumer determine which area of the legal field would best suite them for employment.
* To ensure a safe working environment, Todd Collins, Facilities Supervisor, and LaJuana Dawson, Interim IT Director, have met with a technology firm to add electronic access to district offices for security and safety purposes. Doorbells and door alarms that will alert staff when someone enters the building or is waiting at the door have been installed until the new system is completed.
* The Commissioner will travel to Florence and Conway to see the new locations and observe the new added security.
* The Commissioner and several Senior Managers visited the Charleston office and received helpful feedback. Since the visit, additional Senior Managers traveled to the Charleston office to provide support and guidance.
* A fourth Regional Director position that will operate out of the Charleston office will be posted. This is part of a restructure plan approved by State Human Resources.
* The Commissioner reported that SCCB HR worked with State HR to develop a plan for distributing salary adjustments.
* In the final state budget, the agency received $527,000 in recurring funds for salary adjustments and $5.1 million for capital improvements. The $527,000 will allow the agency to align staff salaries closer to state averages and the $5.1 million will help replace an aging HVAC system.
* Carrie Montgomery, the new Vocational Evaluator, was welcomed to the agency.

Training Center Update

Kisa Grate reported:

* Cleaning of all dormitory rooms was completed.
* A custodian to assist with the maintenance of the dormitory and office areas began on June 17, 2021.
* Installation of new refrigerators, washers, and dryers was completed.
* New furniture for the dormitory would arrive in August.
* Ten residential students, 2-day students, and 1 SIP student were being served at the Training Center.
* Consumers received information on:
  + Navigating the dormitory and room locations.
  + Traveling on the Columbia campus and the location of classrooms in the Building B and other training areas in Building A.
  + The instructors and the Training Center nurse.
* The revised Consumer Handbook was reviewed with an assigned staff member.

Program Update

Rhonda Thompson reported:

* Children’s camps held included Camp Leo in Hilton Head and the Children’s Camp at Rocky Bottom, hosted by Successful Transitions. The camp at Rocky Bottom offered:
  + Technology demonstrations
  + Bowling
  + Swimming
  + Games
  + Canoeing at Table Rock hosted by Canoeing for Kids out of Lexington, SC.
* Positive feedback was received from parents and students about both camps.
* Children’s Services staff continued to meet with service partners to reach new referrals.
* The Summer edition of the Children’s Services Newsletter included information regarding Summer activities, resources, stories, and other activities.
* Monthly workshops were held to encourage critical thinking and interaction with others.
* The Prevention of Blindness program sponsored more than 130 services for consumers. While the pandemic slowed services, there was an increase in cases.
* The Low Vision clinic in Columbia was offering two clinics per month, serving eight consumers per clinic. It was planned to re-open the Greenville and Charleston clinics in upcoming weeks.
* To ensure the agency bridges possible gaps in consumer services, a webinar with the Department on Aging would be held.
* Plans were being developed to continue the twice-annual Senior Camp for the Older Blind consumers.
  + Approximately fifteen older blind consumers participated virtually in the Spring 2021 Senior Camp.
  + Twenty-five consumers will have the opportunity to attend the Fall Senior Camp in-person in November 2021. There may be a virtual segment provided.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

Public Comment

None

Executive Session

Chairperson Johnson called for a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss a personnel matter. A motion was made by Cathy Olker and seconded by Mary Sonksen.

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

A motion to approve the restructuring of the agency Organization Chart changes as approved by the State Office of Human Resources was made by Susan John and seconded by Mary Sonksen. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion to approve the salary adjustments recommendation by the State Office of Human Resources was made by Cathy Olker and seconded by Mary Sonksen. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

During the Executive Session, the Board discussed Commissioner Darline Graham’s Performance Evaluation for the past year. Chairperson Johnson stated that the Commissioner has done a superlative job and the Board very much appreciated her.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairperson Johnson called for a motion to adjourn at 2:24 pm. A motion was made by Mary Sonksen and seconded by Susan John. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Future Board Meeting Schedule

August 18, 2021. The meeting will be held in-person and via Zoom beginning at 11:00 am.

Signatures

Dr. Judy Johnson, Chairperson

Mary Sonksen, Secretary

Date