

Oregon Commission for the Blind
Regular Meeting
Portland, Oregon – February 3, 2023 - 1:00 pm
Draft Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Scott McCallum called the meeting to order at 1:03 pm for a regular meeting of the Commission of the Blind. Members in attendance were:

Michael Babcock
Nadeera Broome
Vivian Carlile-Smith
Laurel Hudson
Alan Labrum, OD
Scott McCallum

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 2, 2022 (Action Item)

Chair McCallum requested a motion to approve the December 2, 2022, meeting minutes. Commissioner Michael Babcock moved to accept the minutes, and Commissioner Nadeera Broome seconded. The motion passed.

AUDIENCE INTRODUCTION

Each member of the audience was asked to introduce themselves.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Public comment was provided by two individuals:

Pete DeVasto offered comments on www.GoodMaps.com being tested at Portland International Airport (PDX) and that the committee involved was grateful that many people were able to come out and join the effort.

Chair McCallum acknowledged an OCB staff member for the great support that he offered to a blind Washingtonian who was coming down to Oregon to visit Casey Eye Institute.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Executive Director Johnson presented the report.

Donations and Financial Reports

The Agency's CFIO, Kat Martin, provided the Financial and Donations reports.

Bequest and Donations Fund Statement – Our cash balance in the fund was \$277,565 on December 31, 2022.

As a costs savings measure to reduce our general fund obligation, the legislature directed OCB to use a portion of donations to match the salary expense of one transition counselor. That obligation was

carried forward to the new biennium and, after considering eighteen months of activity, the remaining obligation on this special project is \$7,182 meaning our unobligated donations balance after this adjustment is \$270,383.

Financial Status Report – OCB’s legislatively adopted budget for 2021-23 is \$24,865,520, 69 positions and 66.42 full-time equivalents (FTE).

Based upon seventeen months of activity through November 2022, plus projections for the remainder of the biennium, a variance representing an underspend of 2.6% or \$555,683 of our Legislatively Adopted Budget is forecasted, with overspending on services and supplies offset by underspending on salaries, wages, other payroll expenses, and special payments.

At your December 2nd meeting, a draft of a letter was shared with the commissioners seeking a funding increase from the legislature.

Updated projections for the remainder of the biennium suggest the agency will exceed our allowable federal allotment by more than \$866,000. With your approval, the agency will be requesting \$1,618,248 in federal fund limitation. Of that amount, \$1,243,756 is for the BE vending machine project which had been delayed from 19-21, \$349,368 for unbudgeted maintenance and support of the new AWARE case management system, and \$25,124 for servers collocated at the state data center. In addition, \$200,000 in General Fund to replace funds lost due to the Blind and Visually Impaired (BVIS) fund’s denial of Salem SWEP 2023. The overall budget rebalancing request to our 21-23 budget, if approved, represents an increase of 7.3%.

Federal Update

The federal fiscal year (FFY) 2023 began October 1. We anticipate approximately 6% increase due to the significant cost of living adjustments and other calculations. We have not yet received our vocational rehabilitation awards.

Also, we have not seen movement on the appointment of the Rehabilitation Services Administration Commissioner. A new Congress was sworn in at the beginning of January, and nominations not confirmed by the end of 2022 must be resubmitted to the process.

Governor Kotek’s Expectations for State Agencies

Executive Director Johnson presented an overview of Governor Kotek’s formal expectations for Executive Branch agencies, distributed during their first week in office.

OCB already conducts many of the tasks described in Governor Kotek’s expectations, so some tasks may require revision to meet the new requirements while others may require creation of new business practices. We look forward and are fully prepared to implement fully the expectations she puts out for our agencies.

Governor’s Budget for 23-25

Governor Kotek’s budget was released January 29, solidifying some of the priorities that were part of her campaign.

The priorities are:

- Housing and homelessness
- Climate and the environment
- Wildfire protection
- Mental health and recovery
- Economic opportunity
- Education
- Childcare
- Racial justice
- Healthcare
- Public health

The budget the Governor submitted for the agency provides for sixty-six FTE (full time equivalents) positions, and consists of:

General Fund	\$ 7,265,754
Other Funds	\$ 1,134,262
Federal Funds	<u>\$ 18,809,642</u>
Total Funds	\$ 27,199,658

The status of the policy option packages (POP) in the Governor’s Budget is as follows:

- POP 101 Expanding Opportunity & Access – not included.
- POP 102 Economic Recovery & Resilience – not included.
- POP 103 Information Technology & Modernization – partially included.
- POP 104 Specialized Staff – partially included.

Commissioner Babcock asked if this meant that the agency received no professional development funding. Director Johnson explained that we have some funding in the current budget, but that it was not increased in the Governor’s budget.

Legislative Session Update

In most biennia, the Governor’s Budget is released in December, and we have several weeks to plan for the presentation to the House Ways & Means Joint Subcommittee on Human Services. We will present 8 am Thursday, February 16.

Commissioner Vivian Carlile Smith inquired whether it would be possible to ensure funding for Salem SWEP through the state budget process, reflecting on BVIS’s (Blind and Visually Impaired Student) denial of 2023 funding. Executive Director Johnson described that the BVIS funds were used to match against the federal award (4:1 Federal to State funds). If the Governor’s budget is enacted as submitted, OCB may not be able to meet the match requirement, and the issue will need to be raised again so it may be addressed.

OLD BUSINESS

Business Enterprise Program Update

Eric Morris, Director, provided an update on the Business Enterprise Program (BEP).

Director Morris presented, first, the Business Enterprise Program’s annual report to the state legislature, as required by that body’s 2017 revisions the statutes (ORS) that govern the Business Enterprise Program. The report is due January 15 each year, and includes a high-level director’s report, an update on outreach efforts, the impacts of Covid-19, program highlights (such as the shift to micro markets from traditional food service vending), the self-service vending initiative, as well as the use of funds the legislature committed to BEP in 2016 and 2017 and subsequent rollout of those vending machines.

The statute also requires all local state and municipalities to report to OCB their use of OCB’s BEP services through a survey we send to over two thousand business contacts. To date, we’ve received fifty-one responses from a wide variety of agencies, providing the opportunity to identify new sites that require our services.

The report also includes information on program performance, year-over-year. Overall, vendor sales increased 22%, while facility manager earnings were up 9%.

Updated Legislative Funding Request for 21-23 (Action Item)

Executive Director Johnson introduced the Legislative Funding Request for Biennium 21-23 to seek an additional \$200,000 in General Fund appropriation and additional spending authority of federal money of \$1,618,248. Chair McCallum asked for a motion to approve. Laurel Hudson motioned, and Nadeera Broome seconded. The motion passed.

SWEP 2023 – Fiftieth Anniversary of SWEP

Angel Hale, Director of Rehabilitative Services, discussed OCB’s Fiftieth Anniversary of SWEP which will take place during June through early August.

Thirty-one students have applied for or are considering SWEP for their 2023 Summer schedule. The Salem program will run June 24 thru July 28 and be based at Willamette University (Monmouth). As in past years, the Portland program will be based at Portland State University, and will run June 24 through August 4. The community-based track has a flexible calendar and locations, suited to the needs of those students.

The agency is seeking suggestions on ways to celebrate or recognize the fifty years that SWEP has been a part of the agency’s service offerings.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair McCallum adjourned the meeting at 2:05 pm.