

Oregon Commission for the Blind
Regular Meeting – June 3, 2022 - 1:00 pm
Approved Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Scott McCallum called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm via Zoom.com for a regular meeting of the Oregon Commission for the Blind. Members in attendance were:

Scott McCallum
Dr. Christi Closson
Michael Babcock
Nadeera Broome
Vivian Carlile-Smith
Lillian Goodman
Laurel Hudson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 15, 2022 (Action Item)

Chair McCallum requested a motion to approve the April 15, 2022, meeting minutes. Commissioner Lillian Goodman made a motion to accept the minutes, and Commissioner Christi Closson seconded. The motion passed.

AUDIENCE INTRODUCTION

Each member of the audience was asked to introduce themselves.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was received.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Executive Director Dacia Johnson presented the Executive Director report.

Introduction of Senior Assistant Attorney General Sean Brady

Director Johnson introduced and ceded the floor to Gretchen Gunn Merrill. AS Senior Assistant Attorney General at Oregon Department of Justice, Atty. Merrill has worked directly with the Agency since 2016 in legal matters but will retire in June. She introduced Atty. Sean Brady, Senior Assistant Attorney General, also with Oregon Department of Justice, who will support the Agency going forward.

DONATIONS AND FINANCIAL REPORTS

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

This summary is based on actual data for the first ten months of biennium 2021-23 plus financial projections for the remainder, as of April 30th.

Financial Status Report: OCB's Legislatively Approved Budget for 2021-23 is \$24,865,520, 69 positions and 66.42 full-time equivalents (FTE) after an increase in expenditure limitation relating to salary pot adjustments during the February session.

Based upon ten months of activity through April 2022, plus projections for the remainder of the biennium, a variance representing an underspend of 5.9% or \$1,081,267 of our Legislatively Approved Budget would exist.

With the BE vending project in mind, which we were not able to operationalize in 2019-21, we do not currently believe that we will need to request limitation adjustment however we will be watching federal funding closely, as the restraints on our ability to operate in the community caused by the pandemic lessens.

Bequest and Donations Fund Statement: Our cash balance in the fund was \$386,469 on April 30, 2022.

Dacia Johnson asked Max West to read aloud a letter addressed to Commissioners that accompanied a recent donation. Diana Huff participated as a student in SWEP in the 1970s and has provided financial and moral support for the students since then. This is SWEP's 50th anniversary at OCB.

Chair McCallum spoke and expressed thanks for Diana's support.

This concluded the Financial and Donations Reports, and there were no questions.

Annual Review of Agency Head Transactions

Clay France presented this annual report, and there were no questions.

Agency Reopening Update

State of Oregon offices reopened to the public May 2, 2022. As we were already seeing clients by appointment, we have observed a slight increase clients and students in our offices.

Chair McCallum asked if OCB's offices statewide have experienced an increase in client traffic, and Director Johnson agreed that there had been an increase since reopening.

Commissioner Babcock asked if we had observed an increase in requests for Orientation and Mobility (O&M) training.

Malinda Carlson, Independent Living Services Program Director, replied that we have many referrals coming in, and that it has been clear that clients had been reluctant to invite Rehabilitation Instructors into their homes. We are observing more requests for O&M than in the past two years. Jonathan Scrimenti, Program Director of the Orientation and Career Center for the Blind, remarked that, as folks have become more comfortable with resuming daily activities, such as requests for single tasks/trips (grocery store), we are often needing to reset users' expectations that they will need a full curriculum

that cannot be completed in a single week. OCB needs to help clients understand the breadth of skill required to be fully independent travelers.

Federal VR Monitoring Update

We reported at the December 2021 meeting the Agency was among several Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies that had been identified for federal monitoring by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), the federal funding entity within the U.S. Dept. of Education. We have not been monitored since 2008.

The agency is preparing for the onsite review by holding pre-onsite meetings and information/document sharing. The RSA Monitoring Team will meet with us onsite June 14-16.

OLD BUSINESS

Business Enterprise Program Update

Self-service Initiative: The Multnomah County vending route vending machines have been fully installed. Two more routes' surveys are nearly complete, and we anticipate ordering the equipment by the end of the state fiscal year.

Spring Inservice: Vending Facility Managers attended their Spring training in-service in May. Topics presented included challenges presented by the pandemic, increasing retail prices to increase profitability, and micro-markets. They received technical training about the Aira app (<https://aira.io>). Also, they received information about availability of continued VR services, customer service basics, and reporting/record keeping. Presentations were provided by several presenters and included Agency staff, Rehabilitation Instructors and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors.

Silver Falls State Park, South Falls Café: Memorial Day marked the one-year anniversary of the opening of South Falls Café as a Business Enterprise Program site. This year, the VFM there served 584 customers in the three-day period (10 more than in 2021). The café reported a 21% increase in sales over the same period in 2021.

Chair McCallum asked if the individual vendors' challenges (that were mentioned at April's meeting) were being resolved. Director Morris replied that our contractor who services the vending machines, Smitty's, found that a small plastic piece installed on every machine resolved the issues. There will always be issues, but we will not see the prevalence that we observed a couple of months ago.

Strategic Plan for 2023-25 (Action Item)

Director Johnson presented the Agency's strategic plan which has been discussed, in whole and part, at the last several meetings. Chair McCallum asked for a motion to approve the Strategic Plan. Commissioner Vivian Carlile-Smith made the motion, which was seconded by Dr. Closson, and the motion passed.

Policy Option Packages (POP) for 23-25 Agency Budget (Action Item)

Director Johnson introduced the Agency Request Budget which is due August 1. The policy option packages represent the additional investment that we are requesting to implement the strategic plan which was just approved.

- POP 101: Expanding Opportunity and Access
- POP 102: Business Enterprise Program Economic Recovery and Resilience
- POP 103: Information Technology (IT) Modernization
- POP 104: Specialized Staff

Chair McCallum called for a motion to approve the policy option packages. Director Christi Closson motioned to approve the request, as stated, and Commissioner Babcock seconded. The motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

SWEP Donations Expenditure Approval (Action Item)

Angel Hale discussed the 2022 Summer Work Experience Program (SWEP) which takes place in June and July. The Salem program will be held at Western Oregon University in Monmouth, while the Portland program will be housed at Portland State University. The third track is community based, and students will complete their SWEP activities in their respective communities.

Students will receive training in independent living skills, as well as completing tasks such as creating resumes and practicing interview techniques. Students housed at the dorms purchase their own groceries, prepare their own meals, and use public transit, etc. They will receive O&M instruction to enable them to travel independently to/from their work sites. Additional activities are planned to offer opportunities for socialization and application of newly acquired skills.

Boards and Commissions Best Practices Survey

Angel Hale provided an update on the recent survey completed by commissioners, and there were no questions.

Recognition of Dr. Christi Closson for Her Service

Chair McCallum honored departing Commission member Dr. Christi Closson for her years of service. Dr. Closson has served since 2015, and will resign her position, effective June 30, due to her upcoming relocation to Florida. The staff and Commission thanked Dr. Closson for her service.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair McCallum adjourned the meeting at 2:20 pm.