

Oregon Commission for the Blind
Regular Meeting – June 4, 2021 - 1:00 pm
Approved Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Scott McCallum called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm via Zoom.com for a regular meeting of the Oregon Commission for the Blind. Members in attendance were:

Scott McCallum
Michael Babcock
Nadeera Broome
Vivian Carlile-Smith
Dr. Christie Closson
Laurel Hudson and Lillian Goodman were absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – April 2, 2021 (Action Item)

Chair McCallum asked for a motion to approve the April 2, 2021, meeting minutes. Commissioner Vivian Carlile-Smith made a motion to approve the minutes, as written, Commissioner Christi Closson seconded, and the motion passed.

AUDIENCE INTRODUCTION

Each audience member introduced themselves.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was submitted.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Executive Director Dacia Johnson presented the Executive Director report.

Director Johnson introduced Jonathan Scrimenti, the new Director of the Orientation and Career Center for the Blind (OCCB). Jonathan gave a brief statement of his experience and interests.

DONATIONS AND FINANCIAL REPORTS

CFO Kat Martin presented the Donations and Financial Status Reports.

Referring to the Bequest and Donations Fund Statement which you received, our cash balance in the fund was \$349,906 as of April 30, 2021.

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. Our remaining obligation

on this special project is \$1,668 and the unobligated donations balance after this adjustment is \$348,239.

Referring next to the Financial Status Report, we are projecting expenditure of all General Fund by the end of this month, which also marks the end of the biennium. We are projecting the biennium to be 13.11 per cent under budget, which is 3.6 million dollars less than what the legislature approved for Commission use in 2019-21.

Vivian Carlile-Smith asked if the under-budget variance was due to the pandemic and decreased demand due to physical distancing. Director Johnson answered that there are two factors: First, that we have two places which account for most expenses – clients (direct services) which have been reduced during the pandemic; and we have delayed hiring (vacancy) while uncertain about the future financial condition of state government. Add to that the additional spending authority we requested to complete the Business Enterprise Program’s (BEP) vending machine project but will not be able to until the next biennium. The unused spending authority will carry forward, but the general fund variance and moneys will terminate June 30, at the end of the biennium.

ANNUAL REVIEW OF AGENCY HEAD TRANSACTIONS

Clay France, Internal Auditor, presented a report of Annual Review of Agency Head Transactions, and there were no questions.

CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPDATE STATUS REPORT

Director Johnson discussed the case management system progress, reporting that we are advancing toward the planned “go-live” date of October 18. Staff have begun training while data conversion testing is being performed.

MICROSOFT 365

Migration to the 365 platform has been completed, which included updating hardware and software to current models and versions. This included improvements to IT security by providing commissioners secure devices to monitor their official email and receive commission materials.

COVID-19 EMERGENCY UPDATE

The Governor’s Executive Orders regarding the pandemic will expire shortly, and we anticipate decisions soon regarding the transition to the planned reopening of state government, to the public, September 1. We have resumed in-person services, based on individual client needs, on a case-by-case basis. Scheduled appointments, requiring face coverings, in agency offices or out of doors is permitted at this time.

FEDERAL UPDATE

There has been no information regarding new presidential appointment for the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) commissioner.

Our federal funds are underspent for the current biennium, due to the pandemic limiting our ability to provide services. We are seeking an extension to the ability to expend funds we have not been able to spend. It is unclear whether Congress may be depended upon to take up this issue.

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE – 2021 SESSION

Our biennial appropriation bill has passed through subcommittee and full committee for Joint Ways and Means, and has gone through the House Chamber and passed without any “no” votes. It is now before the Senate and includes three of the four policy option packages we requested:

- Preserve pre-employment transition services by replacing those third-party cooperative agreements with state general fund.
- Budget alignment and restoring a position from 0.96 FTE to 1.0 FTE.
- Reclassified one IT position, and keeps Aware project lead for additional nine months to conclude the project.

This policy option package was not included:

- Fully fund the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) staff position currently funded by set-aside funds, and establish a BEP innovation fund

NEW BUSINESS

FEDERAL COMPLIANCE AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESPONSE

The statewide single audit is to comply with the federal regulation commonly known as the Uniform Guidance and was for the year ending June 30, 2020, and addressed Vocational Rehabilitation grants made to states. The Secretary of State’s office notified us of the audit November 2020, and they issued their final record April 7, 2021, finding two significant deficiencies:

Federal Reporting: The auditors recommend we implement controls to ensure the accuracy of federal reporting.

- They reviewed a sample of federal reports SF425 and RS2, and they identified numerous inaccuracies likely caused by an ineffective or lack of independent review of the reports before they were submitted.
- This is a repeat finding from the 2017 audit.
- Corrective Action: There will be an independent review for accuracy and compliance prior to filing the reports, and will document this as an internal control in our Quality Assurance Manual.

Management Review: The auditors recommend we improve documentation of management review of program costs.

- They reviewed allowable costs and allowable activities. One timesheet was not approved by a manager, and one purchase reimbursement was submitted and approved by the same employee.
- While not considered material, the auditors felt they were significant enough, combined, to address as an audit finding in the report.
- Corrective Action: We've committed to enhancing the internal controls around time sheets and reimbursements to make sure that they are properly documented and reviewed, that we will

include written procedures for these processes and training for staff.

Kat Martin is responsible for these corrective actions.

2021 ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PROGRESS REPORT (APPR)

Angel Hale alerted Commissioners to expect this survey after today's meeting, explained its purpose, and asked them to complete the survey to assess whether the commission has met their best practices for Boards and Commissions.

OLD BUSINESS

SUMMER WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM (SWEP) 2021

The 2021 Summer Work Experience Program (SWEP) kickoff was May 22 for students in both the Salem and Portland programs. A separate orientation was held for parents. While we are not based on college campuses this year, we are allowing students and employers to make decisions around their work experiences.

This year's program will include orientational ability, resume writing and mock interviews, working with employers, and those things we know are important foundations for our students. We will also be offering work experience, either virtual or in-person, working to meet students where they are across Oregon.

At this time, Salem has nine students, Portland has four, and the Third Track (community-based) has four.

Commissioners will receive an invitation to join us for SWEP graduations which will take place the morning of July 30.

BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM (BEP) UPDATE

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

- Reopening State and Federal Government

We are in conversations with building management with the state Capitol, Bonneville Power Administration, and other large cafeteria operations to determine how many staff will return, once buildings reopen. Based on that, we will be able to adapt the type of service(s) we can efficiently and profitably provide in each location, scaling down as necessary.

- Self-service Vending Machine Project

Will recommence with State government's scheduled reopening September first, deploying the vending machines warehoused during the pandemic, reassessing building populations and placing equipment where it will most benefit Vending Facility Managers (VFM).

- Silver Falls State Park

This state park located east of Silverton and sports BEP's newest café, operated by a BVM. Collaborating with Oregon Recreation and Parks Division (ORPD), BEP assumed operation of the café at the park's South Falls entrance. That entrance is used by about 3,500 visitors a day, and this café (not to be confused with the conference centers also operated by ORPD) opened in time for Memorial Day weekend.

- Vending Facility Managers' Financial Relief

The federal government approved twenty million dollars for Randolph Shepherd financial relief for uncompensated losses under the COVID-19 pandemic, of which Oregon received \$181,000 to distribute to our vending facility managers (VFM). The Business Enterprise Consumer Committee (BECC) worked with the agency to establish a protocol to distribute the funds to VFM. The protocol received Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) approval, and each VFM received about fourteen thousand dollars for uncompensated losses. For those who did not meet the 12-thousand-dollar threshold, the Agency covered all their losses for the prior year.

Chair McCallum asked for Director Morris' expectations (of revenue) for the Silver Falls site. Director Morris described that, drawing visitors from all over the state and U.S., even if staff and hours are adjusted for seasonal fluctuation, that it will still provide adequate income to justify the commitment of the Agency and VFM.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The meeting was adjourned for Executive Session pursuant to ORS192.660(2)(h). This meeting or portions thereof may be held in Executive Session to confer with legal counsel with regard to current litigation.

Chair McCallum reconvened the meeting at 2:13 pm.

CONSIDERATION OF FINAL ORDER ON CONTESTED CASE NUMBER AGENCY CASE NO. OCB-BE-2020-08 (ACTION ITEM)

Chair McCallum asked for a motion to approve the Final Order on Contested Case Number OCB-BE-2020-08. Commissioner Christi Closson made the motion to approve, Nadeera Broome seconded, and the motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:15 pm.