

Oregon Commission for the Blind
Regular Meeting – July 29, 2022 - 1:00 pm
Approved Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Scott McCallum called the meeting to order at 1:08 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
Lillian Goodman
Laurel Hudson

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – June 3, 2022 (Action Item)

Chair McCallum requested a motion to approve the June 3, 2022, meeting minutes. Commissioner Vivian Carlile-Smith moved to accept the minutes, and Commissioner Michael Babcock seconded. The motion passed.

AUDIENCE INTRODUCTION

Each member of the audience was asked to introduce themselves.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment.

SWEP 2022 Presentation

Angell Hale, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, provided a report about SWEP's (Summer Work Experience Program) 2022 season which closed today for both the Salem and Portland programs. Celebrations took place this morning in both Salem and Portland for students enrolled there, and was attended by family, community, and OCB staff as they wished well for this summer's cohorts.

Angel Hale spoke briefly about the program, both the challenges of producing an event such as this as we are emerging from a pandemic and the successes – the strengths that the students had the opportunity to develop.

Director Hale recognized her staff for their expertise and dedication for executing the program, especially coming out of the pandemic.

Commissioners were joined by two SWEP participants from both the Salem and Portland cohorts to report their experiences. In attendance to share their experience were:

From Salem SWEP:

Daveline Yon, Salem SWEPEe of the Year.
Deacon Davis

From Portland SWEP:

Noelia Lopez, Portland SWEPEe of the Year
Fatima Vazquez Zurita

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Executive Director Johnson welcomed the commissioners and delivered the report.

DONATIONS AND FINANCIAL REPORTS

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

Kat Martin, Chief Financial and Information Officer, presented the Donations and Financial Reports.

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 eleven months of activity through May 2022, plus projections for the remainder of the biennium, a variance representing an underspend of 5.1% or \$1,273,429 of our Legislatively Approved Budget was reported.

Based on preliminary June and end-of-year figures for 2022, OCB would still be underspent by \$501,425 which is 2% below Legislatively Approved Budget at the close of the biennium. The change from May reporting is driven by a large uptick of spending in June and fine-tuning of projected spend for the remainder of the biennium.

Turning to the Bequest and Donations Fund Statement, our cash balance in the fund was \$286,120 on June 30, 2022, after transferring \$100,000 with the Commission's approval to 2022 SWEP activities.

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 twelve months of activity, the remaining obligation on this special project is \$21,424 meaning our unobligated donations balance after this adjustment is \$264,696.

OCB's Participation in The Big Data Project for Older Blind

Malinda Carlson, Director of Independent Living Services, reported on The Big Data Project for Older Blind. Coordinated by VisionServe Alliance and Ohio State University College of Optometry, the project analyzes standardized statewide data and national reports of people who are blind or have low vision. Using data from the CDC's Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System and The American Community Survey, eight states were initially provided demographic reports broken down by demographics and

characteristics of health. The information is now available to other states, such as Oregon, which may use it to guide their strategic development plans. OCB has contracted to receive the report, customized for Oregon.

The Board inquired on the details of this project: its role, purpose and implications for service delivery for Oregonians who are blind.

Post-Reopening Training Center Update

Jonathan Scrimenti, Director of the Orientation and Career Center for the Blind (OCCB) provided an update about OCCB's return to in-person instruction. Summer term saw fifty-five percent of our students immediately return to in-person lessons.

Considerations for in-person vs. remote vary by individual but are mainly based on client preference and the client's perceived threat of being exposed to Covid-19.

Remote training and classes have aided expansion of services into remote portions of the state, and permitting participation by individuals who have family or career obligations that limit their travel or proximity to the training center. Braille is one class that offers remote lessons, and has an online curriculum and self-paced lessons that integrate with personal, remote lessons with an instructor.

Chair McCallum applauded the efforts to maintain a variety of service delivery, whether in person or remote and virtual, and acknowledged the collection of data to learn what may be best for clients, going forward. Commissioner Vivian Carlile-Smith and Nadeera Broome echoed Chair McCallum's comments, reiterating support for flexibility and adaptability.

There were no questions.

Federal Update

The Rehabilitation Services Administration Commissioner position (at U.S. Department of Education) is not yet filled under the Biden Administration.

OCB hosted an RSA monitoring team who visited June 14 – 16. We anticipate the result of monitoring in a report we'll receive in the next few months.

Chair McCallum asked if there were any significant discrepancy found between guidance provided and OCB's current practice. Director Johnson remarked that some service alignment is expected to be required, but we do not expect any significant changes.

OLD BUSINESS

23-25 OCB Agency Request Budget (Action Item)

Executive Director Johnson introduced the request to approve the 2023-25 Agency Request Budget. Chair McCallum called for a motion, and Commissioner Nadeera Broome moved to approve the 2023-25 Agency Request Budget. Commissioner Vivian Carlile-Smith seconded, and the motion passed.

Business Enterprise Program Update

Eric Morris, Director of the Business Enterprise Program, provided commissioners with an update on the Business Enterprise Program.

Self-service Initiative: Four vending facility managers' routes are yet to be converted to the self-service model. Surveys of all sites have been completed, identifying the vending machines required to appropriately service each facility. The equipment will be ordered shortly.

Increased Foot Traffic in Public Buildings: Buildings continue to re-open but often with fewer regular staff and foot traffic. This contrasts with two new locations that offer insight into potential, new opportunities for Vending Facility Managers who are blind. The new Multnomah County Courthouse in SE Portland promises reliably-high foot traffic of court employees and jurors who will require meals, beverages and snacks on a large scale. Also, Silver Falls State Park's South Falls Café provides a contrasting "tourist" visitor, entering and exiting the trailhead at South Falls.

VFM's are interested in capturing more high-traffic locations as populations shift following the pandemic's disruption of the workplaces and communities. Many building operators are faced with the reality of being unable to justify, any longer, a café or micro market.

Data is constantly being collected from building operators, vending facility managers, and consumers to guide the decision-making process.

Silver Falls State Park, South Falls Café: SWEP students visited South Falls Café and its VFM Char Hawkins to learn what food service looks like and entails. The students were there with their counselors and the Northwest Blind Athletes Association guides who took them on a several hours-long hike in the park.

Char Hawkins has operated the South Falls Café' since Memorial Day Weekend, 2021, and she will leave the facility at the end of the Summer season. The facility has been awarded to Sal Barraza, a long-time vendor whose cafes are in buildings that were impacted by the pandemic shutdown and slow-reopening.

Commissioner Michael Babcock asked if there was any concern that Sal would be unable to subcontract the work. Director Morris remarked that he was unaware of any related issues.

NEW BUSINESS

Executive Session

Executive Session called pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(i) to review and evaluate the employment-related performance of the Executive Director.

Reconvene Regular Meeting

The meeting was reconvened following the Executive Session.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chair McCallum adjourned the meeting at 2:35 pm.