

Oregon Commission for the Blind
Regular Meeting – December 3, 2021 - 1:00 pm
Approved Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Scott McCallum called the meeting to order at 1:05 pm via Zoom.com for a regular meeting of the Oregon Commission for the Blind. Members in attendance were:

Scott McCallum
Michael Babcock
Vivian Carlile-Smith
Laurel Hudson

Lillian Goodman, Dr. Christy Closson, and Nadeera Broome were absent.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – October 1, 2021 (Action Item)

Chair McCallum requested that the October 1 meeting minutes be corrected to reflect October 15 as White Cane Day. Commissioner Carlile-Smith made a motion to accept the minutes as corrected, and Commissioner Michael Babcock seconded. The motion passed.

AUDIENCE INTRODUCTION

Each member of the audience was asked to introduce themselves.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was submitted.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Executive Director Dacia Johnson presented the Executive Director report.

DONATIONS AND FINANCIAL REPORTS

Bequest and Donations Fund Statement: Our cash balance in the fund was \$367,908 as of October 31, 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. That obligation was carried forward to the new biennium and, after considering four months of activity, the remaining obligation on this special project is \$38,147, meaning our unobligated donations balance after this adjustment is \$329,760.

Financial Status Report: Referring to the Monthly Summary Report or Financial Status Report, OCB's legislatively approved budget (LAB) for 2021-23 is \$24,349,910, 69 positions and 66.42 full-time equivalents (FTE).

Based upon four months of activity through October 2021, should constraints on our ability to provide direct services continue, a variance representing an underspend of 8.1% or \$1,969,916 of our Legislatively Approved Budget would exist.

We will watch Federal Fund surpluses closely this biennium as the pandemic continues to impact our ability to operate in the community and provide direct services to blind Oregonians. With the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) vending project in mind, which we were not able to operationalize in 2019-21, we still do not believe that we will need to adjust our limitation any earlier than the February 2023 short session.

There were no questions.

FINAL CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPDATE STATUS REPORT

Executive Director Johnson provided a report on the Case Management System Project.

The new Case Management System, Aware, was implemented October 18, and we are fully transitioned to the new system. This will be the last report on that project to the board.

The implementation team has done a great job providing training for staff, and support that staff needed to make the shift. We are now aligning our business functionality toward Aware, with the largest element being Authorizations and Payments which has also permitted us to increase automation and realize efficiency.

Commissioner Michael Babcock asked whether we had onboarded new clients and whether it is a paperless process. They also asked if a blind person using screen reader technology requires any sort of assistance to complete the onboarding process. Director Johnson asked Angel Hale to address this question regarding the Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR). Angel described that we are not always paperless, but it can be fairly paperless from the clients' perspective as they may receive their plan via email, review it electronically, and sign it digitally, returning it to us via email or sometimes automatically. Some individuals are more comfortable relying on paper documents, and we accommodate that, as well. For those who lack skill using electronic documents, we will support them so they are able to complete the process.

The Aware system does generate documents in a broader range of formats, directly from the system. The previous system could generate digital versions, but they weren't always compatible with the software clients relied upon.

Executive Director Johnson noted that the Statewide Steering Committee (members of whom represent the Governor's office, Enterprise Information Technology Security, and the Legislative Fiscal Office) will hold their final meeting December 9.

FEDERAL UPDATE

The U. S. Senate has passed a continuing resolution that provides funding through February 18, 2022.

The Biden Administration has been making Presidential appointments within the Department of Education, but they have not yet appointed the Rehabilitation Services Administration Commissioner.

REOPENING STATE GOVERNMENT/COVID-19 UPDATE

Statewide information was received today that state government's anticipated January 3, 2022, reopening has been postponed indefinitely. We will continue to provide remote and distanced services by appointment. As opposed to during the pandemic when we did not meet face-to-face with clients, we will continue to meet safely with clients by appointment in their homes or in our offices, enforcing mask requirements for all staff and clients, and providing personal protective equipment as needed. Our staff will use a hybrid schedule, completing in-person or face-to-face work by appointments, and complete administrative functions (paper work) from an alternate location such as their home.

The Covid-19 preventive measures currently in use will remain in place with continued reminders and increased communication until no longer needed: PPE, enhanced cleaning and ventilation, use of masks and face coverings, and safe practices such as hand washing. Also, our larger conference rooms are being converted to serve as classrooms or break rooms to allow more physical distance between individuals.

Chair McCallum offered a suggestion that Washington State School for the Blind has installed a motion-activated audio speaker that advises visitors that "masks are required and to maintain social distance," asking if we had considered anything similar.

FEDERAL COMPLIANCE AUDIT FOLLOW-UP ENGAGEMENT

We have received an engagement letter to expect the federal compliance auditors to return and evaluate our progress implementing the recommendations from the 2021 audit report.

NEW BUSINESS

PAYMENTS AUDIT OVERVIEW

Clay France, OCB's Internal Auditor, reviewed the recent Payments Audit with commissioners. Mr. France conducted an audit of both client and non-client payments for the period July 1, 2020, thru June 30, 2021. The audit considered these points:

1. Determine if expenditures and payments met federal, state, and agency requirements.
2. That proper procurement procedures were followed.
3. That expenditures were reasonable and an appropriate use of funds.
4. That appropriate approvals were documented.
5. For client payments, that services were related to their rehabilitation and were included in the respective plan.

Overall, payments during the period were reasonable and necessary, properly approved and documented, and compliant with federal, state and agency requirements. Areas of concern have been brought to managers' attention so they may address whether it is appropriate to revise procedures or provide further training.

Commissioner Carlile-Smith asked if, when we identify issues, whether we draw another sample to re-test the results? France replied that we will not take an additional sample, but we will follow up in the future to confirm the corrective action plans were implemented which may require additional testing.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES DISCUSSION FOR 22-25

Executive Director Dacia Johnson opened the presentation, discussing the strategic planning process. OCB’s business routine asks us to update and revise the strategic planning process to align with our budget planning. This ensures that the Commission board members lead the work, and that we engage stakeholders in our creation of our priorities. The priorities, in turn, drive our budget needs and policy option packages (POP). POPs are ultimately service enhancement requests that we submit in our Agency Request Budget (ARB).

Our Strategic Plan is developed for three years, and is updated each two years:

<u>Strategic Plan</u>	<u>Biennium (Budget)</u>
2020-23	July 2021-June 2023
2022-25	July 2023-June 2025

Executive Director Johnson introduced the Program Directors who presented these topics:

- Service EquityJonathan Scrimenti, Director
Orientation and Career Center for the Blind

- Aging OregoniansMalinda Carlson
Director, Independent Living Services

- Specialized StaffKat Martin, Executive Director
Chief Financial and Information Officer

- Diverse WorkforceAngel Hale, Director
Vocational Rehabilitation Services

- Good GovernmentEric Morris, Director
Business Enterprise Program

OLD BUSINESS

BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM UPDATE

Fall Inservice – This annual event was well-attended and addressed the Business Enterprise Consumer Committee (BECC) elections, included training using materials from National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) and a presentation by Hadley School for the Blind regarding their new module for business accounting. Participants also learned information about working with a “hybrid” workforce, elements of diversity and inclusion in the workplace and its effect on your organization’s culture.

Self-service Initiative – Several vending facility managers (VFM) are setting their plan to deploy vending machines in their facilities. We are constrained by vehicle and equipment shortages, and it has required more time than expected to facilitate logistics for removal of old equipment, installation and set-up. As

government agencies reopen, we are receiving inquiries asking to initiate new services, often allowing integration of the new micro-markets and their efficient services.

BECC Invited to Strategic Planning Session – We have invited BECC to provide input to the strategic planning process, and we have encouraged them to broaden their outreach to consider public parks/tourism as a potential market. Public parks/tourism, as a market, has been a “win” because of the facility at Silver Falls State Park, and it’s an area that may provide further and more immediate opportunities.

Commissioner Babcock asked whether there was any indication that Silver Falls’ usage this time of year was typical, or if it had increased due to the pandemic? Director Morris answered that park attendance has always been greater than our initial impression and that attendance has increased during the pandemic. In a recent debrief with Oregon Parks and Recreation, they commented that, prior to OCB assuming operation of the café at Silver Falls State Park, the number one complaint was the café, and that is no longer the case.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Chair McCallum adjourned the meeting at 3:00 pm.