

Oregon Commission for the Blind
Regular Meeting Portland, Oregon – February 2, 2024 – 1:00 pm
Approved Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 pm, February 2, 2024, by Board Chair Scott McCallum. Commissioners in attendance were:

Scott McCallum
Nadeera Broom
Vivian Carlile-Smith
Laurel Hudson
Alan Labrum, OD

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – December 1, 2023 (Action Item)

Chair McCallum asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the December 1, 2023, board meeting. Vivian Carlile-Smith motioned to approve the minutes as written, Nadeera Broome seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

AUDIENCE INTRODUCTION

Members of the audience introduced themselves.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No public comment was submitted.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Executive Director Dacia Johnson presented the Executive Director Report to Commissioners.

Donations Report: Our cash balance in the fund declined \$1,753 to \$290,495 on December 31, 2023.

As a cost 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 once again carried forward to the 2023-25 biennium and, with \$18k of donated funds expended through December 31st, the unobligated donations balance after this adjustment is \$258,732.

Financial Status Report: Between the budget and end-of-session bills, the Agency was approved for \$27,820,809, sixty-six positions, and 66.00 full-time equivalents (FTE) during 2023-25 by Oregon's legislature. Between both bills, the commission has the following with which to operate July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2025.

- \$7,829,032 General Fund
- \$1,133,91 Others Fund
- \$18,857,476 Federal Fund

Based upon six months of activity as of December 31, 2023, a variance to our Legislatively Adopted Budget is projected for the end of the biennium with:

- General Fund fully utilized.
- Other Fund under the approved limitation by \$444,373 or 39.2 percent.
- Federal funding under the approved limitation by \$1,047,859 or 5.6 percent.

The total variance is projected to be \$1,492,232, or 5.4 percent, where the approved budget is \$27,820,809 and projected expenditures \$26,328,577.

The Commission is tracking budget requests submitted for the 2024 Short Session, which commences Monday, February 5. The first request moved funds from IT Professional Services to Personal Services while increasing the Agency FTE by 1.0 to bring IT Help Desk Support into the agency.

With the cost savings realized from this request, the Commission submitted a second request which includes finalization of classification changes for two positions approved for inclusion in the request to the legislature by DAS Chief Human Resources Office and a partial fix towards a technical correction in the way indirect personnel have been budgeted. The partial fix will address budgetary pressure on the agency's General fund allotment for 2023-25.

Introduction of New Leadership Team Members

Executive Director Johnson introduced two new directors of Agency programs:

- Ron Stewart – Director, Business Enterprise Program
- Jim Portillo – Director, Orientation and Career Center for the Blind

They were both invited to introduce themselves to the commissioners who welcomed them to the Agency.

Federal Update

Dante Allen was confirmed December 7, 2023, as Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), Department of Education.

2024 Legislative Session

The Oregon Legislature's 2024 short session will commence February 5. Oregon's Constitution allows 35 days in even-numbered years for lawmakers to conduct the State's business. "Sine die," by Constitution, is March 10.

Summer Work Experience Program (SWEP) 2024

Angel Hale, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, provided an update on the Summer Work Experience Program (SWEP).

Student applications to participate in SWEP 2024 are due during February. We are working with students to determine who is interested and able to attend the Portland residential program. Salem SWEP is not being offered this year, but we hope to offer it, again, in 2025. We are evaluating our third track, the community-based track, for the students who would normally attend Salem’s SWEP program.

We are engaged with regional programs to recruit staff for the summer sessions including job developers and other necessary staff. Ways to bring the participants from both programs, the Portland residential and the community-based, together for group activities are also under consideration.

Federal Compliance Audit for Vocational Rehabilitation Program for FY 2023

The Agency has received the engagement letter from the Secretary of State (SOS) Audits Division on the anticipated federal compliance audit for the Vocational Rehabilitation program. This task occurs every three years, under the Single Audit Act, where the SOS Audits Division reviews the records and programming in accordance with guidance that Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has distributed. The audit term is State Fiscal Year 2023, July 1, 2022, through June 30, 2023. Department of Human Services (DHS) Office of Vocational Rehabilitation will be audited at the same time. SOS Audits Division anticipates that field work will be completed during March, so the audit’s results may not be available by the April board meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) for the Vocational Rehabilitation Program

The Agency conducts a comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA), specific to Vocational Rehabilitation, every three years. This allows us to assess the degree to which we are meeting the needs of our un- and underserved populations. Required by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), the assessment utilizes data from the American Community Survey, the U.S. Census, Cornell University, our case management system, and surveys gathered from clients, staff, stakeholders, and the Commission for the Blind Board.

This activity allows us to strengthen access to services, adapt service delivery to suitably engage clients, and to identify and learn ways that we could connect with those who are not yet clients or have traditionally gone unserved or underserved, notably in the rural or remote parts of Oregon where public transportation and digital access is limited. Also identified as a barrier was the lack of education for employers in hiring and retaining individuals who experience blindness.

Director Hale acknowledged Agency employee Cassie Richard for her work performing the research and writing the CSNA.

NEW BUSINESS

Agency Contracts Review

Clay France, Internal Auditor, presented a report on the recent contracts review enacted by the Agency.

Chair McCallum asked when Mr. France expected to conduct the next audit of contracts. Mr. France responded that time has been included in the coming year's audit plan to return and review that the corrective action plans have been implemented.

Commissioner Nadeera Broome asked about the frequency of background checks, whether they are only done initially or if vendors submit to them routinely. Mr. France advised that they are conducted for the vendor and their key personnel before final approval of the contract as well as when the contract(s) is renewed.

Chair McCallum also asked if there was a requirement for vendors to report problems that bear on the background report outcomes. Mr. France deferred to Director Angel Hale who was unsure whether the contract language, provided by the State, addresses this issue.

Mr. France advised, as well, that if a contractor adds a key person that requires a modification to the contract, a background check would be conducted prior to approving the addition of that individual.

Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan for 24-27 (Action Item)

Jonathan Scrimenti provided an overview of the Agency's Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan of which an Executive Summary and the report was shared with commissioners.

Chair McCallum requested a motion to approve the Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan for 2024-27. Commissioner Nadeera Broome motioned to approve, Commissioner Dr. Labrum seconded, and the motion passed.

Agency Service Delivery Overview

The directors of each program provided a report on the Agency's service delivery:

- Angel Hale - Vocational Rehabilitation Services
- Malinda Carlson - Independent Living Services
- Jim Portillo and Jonathan Scrimenti - Orientation and Career Center for the Blind
- Ron Stewart - Business Enterprise Program

Commissioners and presenters engaged in a robust discussion concerning the programs, the number of clients served, accessibility and barriers to services.

2024 – 27 Strategic Plan Development – continued from December 3, 2023, meeting.

Pete Pande, Pivotal Resources, led the commissioners in a lively discussion where they provided information for the development of the Agency priorities identified at the December meeting.

EXECUTIVE SESSION - Pursuant to ORS 192.660(2)(f) to consider information and records exempt from public disclosure.

RECONVENE PUBLIC MEETING

Chair McCallum reconvened the regular meeting of the Oregon Commission for the Blind at 3:28 pm.

CONSIDERATION OF FINAL ORDER ON CONTESTED CASE-OAH Case No. 2023-ABC-06035 (Action Item)

Chair McCallum requested a motion to authorize the Executive Director, Dacia Johnson, to issue the Final Order on Contested Case OAH Cas No. 2024-ABC-06035. Commissioner Carlile-Smith motioned to approve, Commissioner Broome seconded, and the motion passed.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:29 pm.