

Oregon Commission for the Blind
Regular Meeting Portland, Oregon – October 6, 2023 - 1:00 pm

Approved Minutes

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Chair Scott McCallum was absent, and the role was filled by Commissioner Michael Babcock. Mr. Babcock called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm for a regular meeting of the Commission of the Blind. Members in attendance were:

Michael Babcock
Nadeera Broome
Lillian Goodman
Vivian Carlile-Smith
Alan Labrum, OD

APPROVAL OF MINUTES – August 4, 2023 (Action Item)

Acting Chair Babcock requested a motion to approve the August 4, 2023, meeting minutes. Commissioner Nadeera Broome moved to accept the minutes, and Commissioner Vivian Carlile-Smith 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 Johnson presented the report.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month- October

Executive Director Johnson reported on the statewide activities scheduled to recognize National Disability Employment Awareness Month (October) including an upcoming program in Salem that will be attended by legislators representing committees whose work includes services for individuals who experience disabilities.

White Cane Awareness Day

Commissioner Vivian Carlile-Smith asked whether the agency was doing anything special in the community or at the agency on White Cane Day. Executive Director Johnson answered that we are participating in partnership with Portland State University and Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) at an event that will be held in Beaverton. Also, in September, we participated in Portland Sunday Parkways with staff representing the agency in a booth shared with PBOT near Gabriel Park in Southwest Portland.

Donations and Financial Reports

The Agency's CFO, Kat Martin, provided the Financial and Donations reports.

Donations Report: 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 \$8,000 of donated funds expended through August 31st, the unobligated donations balance after this adjustment is \$252,247.

Financial Status Report: Between the budget and end-of-session bills, OCB was approved for \$27,820,809, 66 positions, and 66.00 full-time equivalents (FTE) during 2023-25 by Oregon's Legislature. This represents a 7.9 percent increase over the 2021-23 legislatively approved budget as of January 2023, and a 1.7 percent increase over the 2023-25 current service level. Current service level factors are intended to accommodate projected cost-of-living increases and other adjustments. With collective bargaining agreements now ratified that included a one-time bonus of \$1,500 paid September 1 to all state employees, as well as a cost-of-living increase on December 1 of 6.5 percent, and another of 6.55 percent in early 2025, the state's new CFO has asked us to determine what the limitation is on the federal revenue stream we're anticipating, consider the bonuses and Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA), and work with the CFO's office on whatever budget adjustment may be needed to see us through to the end of the biennium June 2025.

Based upon two months of activity through August 31, 2023, plus projections for the remainder of the biennium, a variance representing an underspend of 0.9 percent or \$245,999 of our Legislatively Approved Budget is forecasted.

As promised in August, when last we met, Accounting has also finalized year- and biennium-ending adjusting entries for 2021-23.

After finalizing 2021-23, a 5.9 percent variance to our Legislatively Approved Budget occurred with all but \$1.11 of General Fund fully expended while Other Funds and Federal Funds were under adjusted limitation totals by 46.4 percent and 5.5 percent respectively. All categories of expenditures types were under the adjusted budget, with total personal services under by 2.1 percent or \$314K, services and supplies under by 11.2 percent or \$762K, capital outlay under by 62 percent or \$28K, and special payments \$479K or 9.7 percent under budget.

Additionally, Kat Martin mentioned that the agency is engaged in a SWOT analysis to aid us in the creation of an Information Technology Strategic Plan.

A SWOT analysis is a strategic planning technique to identify core strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats that lead to fact-based analysis, fresh perspectives, and new ideas. Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors, while opportunities and threats represent external factors.

Federal Update

Congress has approved a continuing resolution that temporarily funds the government until November 17 (45 days).

Commissioner Babcock asked if clients would be impacted. Executive Director Johnson answered that services to clients would not be affected.

Strategic Planning for 2024-27

Executive Director Johnson alerted the commissioners that the agency is engaging in review and development of the Strategic Plan in advance of the 2025-27 biennial budget. Governor Kotek has instituted standard criteria for strategic planning, slightly different than the agency's past business practices. Ms. Johnson summarized the strategic priorities identified previously by the board and encouraged commissioners to ask themselves:

1. Are these still the top things we should be focusing upon?
2. Are there other things that we should be focusing on?

The priorities, as they exist in the current Strategic Plan, are as follows:

1. Service Equity
 - a. Statewide access.
 - b. Inclusive service delivery.
 - c. Tech accessibility.
2. Aging Oregonians
 - a. Age-related vision loss.
 - b. Oregon's aging workforce.
3. Specialized Staff
 - a. Staff access to continuing education.
 - b. Maintain specialized skills.
4. Access and Opportunities
 - a. Public policy regarding employment of job seekers who are blind.
 - b. Inclusive communication.
 - c. Business partnerships (employers).
 - d. Focus on Business Enterprise Program (BEP) entrepreneurs.
5. Accountable Government
 - a. Optimize performance.
 - b. Open and transparent business practices.

Commissioners briefly discussed their current impressions of the priorities.

Commissioner Broome asked after the impact the shortage of Orientation and mobility instructors has had on the state agency's ability to provide services. Ms. Johnson explained that the agency, in the current 2023-25 biennium budget, created a third tier that Rehabilitation Counselors and Instructors may attain. We anticipate this will help us retain highly skilled, certified staff.

We are also leveraging our partnerships with Portland State University (www.pdx.edu) and helping to finance staff who are interested in pursuing these careers.

Salem Office Update

Executive Director Johnson notified commissioners that the Salem office relocated to: 213 Madrone St. SE; Salem OR 97302.

Commissioner Michael Babcock asked if the Cherriot's Bus line stopped nearby. Ms. Johnson reported that the new office is on the bus line and better situated than the prior location.

NEW BUSINESS

Overview of ODOT ADA Transition Plan

Executive Director Johnson introduced David Morrissey, Equity Manager at Oregon Department of Transportation (ODOT) to describe, for commissioners, ODOT's ADA transition plan.

The Title II ADA Transition Plan serves as a road map for incrementally and systematically reducing or eliminating barriers to universal accessibility of ODOT transportation infrastructure and related programs.

- ODOT has been implementing ADA since 1990; last transition plan was in 2017.
- The process for the 2023 updated version of this plan included:
 - Preparation. Began in late 2021.
 - Three phases of public input in 2022. Attention to accessibility of all input processes.
 - Survey. 507 of responses; outreach/promotion.
 - Advisory Committee. 13 members across identity & geographic communities.
 - Review and comment on updated plan. Plan roll-out began in April 2023.
 - Iterative strategies and content development in 2022.
- Adoption by the Oregon Transportation Commission. July 2023.

Commissioner Babcock asked, as someone who struggles to figure out who should be contacted when a consumer needs assistance or to report deficiency(ies)/problems, where should he direct his attention when, for example, he needs a sidewalk on the side of the street that his house is on. Mr. Morrissey suggested using this information to report a situation: [ADA Accessibility Request Form](#), call 888-Ask-ODOT (888-275-6368), or send an email to ODOT_ADA@ODOT.Oregon.Gov.

2023 Risk Assessment

Clay France, Internal Auditor, presented the 2023 Risk Assessment report. This will inform our audit plan development for the coming year.

OLD BUSINESS

Business Enterprise Program Update

Michael Wolff, Interim Director of the Business Enterprise Program, shared an update of BEP for commissioners.

1. BEP Director Position: The position has been posted and will accept applications through the current month.
2. Fall Inservice: The event will be held December 2, and the agenda is being developed now.

Commissioner Babcock asked if BEP was actively recruiting new vending facility managers. Wolff replied that the program employs a staff member dedicated to working with vocational rehabilitation counselors to identify clients who may be interested. Currently, there are two new candidates engaged in training.

Summer Work Experience Program 2023

Wrap-up of 2023 Summer Program: The annual survey of student participants was largely positive but it did identify opportunities for improvement, We are considering, in view of the changing labor market, ways to staff SWEP adequately and reduce the impact on our ability to provide services to our Independent Living Program clients.

Review of Annual Performance Measure Progress Report

The agency met the legislatively-set targets in three of four measures, but not in the area of Employment. The Employment measure was new to the Statewide Workforce System, and the legislature has not yet identified optimal target results for the measure. Currently, measured against our internal target of 60.5 percent, 41.7 percent of clients are still employed four quarters after case closure.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 2:36 pm.