# South Carolina Commission for the Blind1430 Confederate AvenueColumbia, South Carolina 29201

## Meeting MinutesMay 19, 2020

Notifications of all regular, called, or special meetings are compliant with the FOIA requirements, Section 90-4-80.

### Opening

The meeting of the members of the South Carolina Commission for the Blind was called to order at 1:31 pm on May 19, 2020 by Chairperson Peter Smith.

### Present

Peter Smith, Chairperson, via phone

Dr. Judy Johnson, Vice Chairperson, via phone

Mary Sonksen, Secretary, via phone

Rosemary Roberson, Board Member, joined at end of meeting

Darline Graham, Commissioner

### Public Comment

None.

### Approval of Minutes

No Quorum. Dr. Judy Johnson noted that Ms. Roberson’s last name was misspelled under Adjournment.

### Finance Report

Matt Daugherty reported:

* The agency was 83% of the way through the State Fiscal Year and 74% of its budget had been utilized.
* The Finance team had caught up on completing shopping carts and was working hard on invoices in order to catch-up on open encumbrances.
* The Grants/Budget Manager/Accountant position would be advertised that week.
* The Accounts Payable/Receivable Supervisor position had closed, and interviewing would soon begin.

No Discussion.

### Introductions

### None

### Human Resources Report

#### Wanda Miller reported:

* There was a vacancy in Spartanburg for a Transition Counselor.
* There were two vacancies in Florence and Greenville.
* There were four vacancies in the Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center (EBMRC) including an Instructor, a Driver, and a Vocational Evaluation position.
* A Licensed Practical Nurse had accepted the position and would start in June.

### Commissioner’s Report

#### Darline Graham reported:

* Board of Commissioners member Rosemary Roberson was recognized for her many years of service to the agency and the citizens of South Carolina.
* Staff were continuing to telework and provide services to consumers remotely. Staff were staying engaged through meetings and trainings utilizing Zoom Meeting Software.
* Mark Gamble and Luis Mendoza were part of a team composed of members from all state agencies to help with the Governor’s accelerateSC plan. The purpose of that team has been to provide ongoing information for the accelerateSC website and to assist with developing a call center. The website and call center would provide a one-stop resource for South Carolinians to access information regarding COVID-19, including the reopening of state agencies and public businesses.
* The Department of Administration Human Resources team had provided guidance to help state agencies develop a safe return plan divided into three phases. They indicated that some agencies may handle the return differently depending on the type of services they offer. Wanda Miller and Mark Gamble used this information to create a plan and timeline for agency staff to return slowly and safely to their offices.
* The agency had been operating in Phase 1 for several weeks. Some senior managers and essential staff were working a rotating schedule in Columbia and in the district offices to check mail, scan documents, and take care of other important business.
* Phase 1 would begin no later than June 1, 2020, depending on the availability of personal protective equipment from the Department of Administration. During this phase, employees necessary to the critical operations of the agency or employees whose duties are not conductive to work from home would begin returning to the office. Mark Gamble would be working on signage that encourages social distancing to be provided to and displayed in all offices.
* Phase 2 would start a minimum of four weeks after Phase 1 to allow time for DHEC to monitor disease transmission.
* During Phase 2, additional staff would return to their office on a rotating or staggered basis, with 40-50% of staff working in their office at least 50% of the time. Staff would be split into two teams, one to work on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and the second to work on Tuesday and Thursday. The teams would rotate every other week.
* Phase 3 would start a minimum of four weeks after Phase 2. The goal would be for the agency to return to normal operations as much as possible. Staff that fall into the high-risk category would be allowed to continue teleworking.
* The agency would gradually begin providing services to consumers in person as more employees return to their offices.
* Consumers would not return to the residential rehabilitation center until the Fall. The agency is planning to evaluate guidelines established by colleges and universities regarding residential services. The safety of consumers and employees is of primary importance.
* Todd Collins had arranged for all offices to be professionally sanitized and that task has been completed.
* Todd Collins, Matt Daugherty, and Mark Gamble had cleaned the exterior of the Columbia campus, including washing windows, removing spider webs, and cleaning gutters.
* Matt Daugherty, Wanda Miller, and Vickie Bowles had worked to fill vacancies in the Finance department during this challenging time.
* The Finance department had worked to ensure that all contracts were up-to-date and in compliance.
* The Governor’s office had nominated three individuals for vacancies on the board. One nominee had a conflict. Therefore, two applicants would be sent to the Senate for confirmation.
* The Governor signed a continuing resolution into law which means the agency would operate under the same budget until the Fall.
* The agency celebrated Employee Appreciation Day on May 6, 2020. Mark Gamble and the members of the Fun Team organized a virtual event using Zoom which included an agency update provided by the commissioner, a reading of the Governor’s Public Service Recognition Proclamation, and games. The event helped staff stay connected as a team. The Fun Team members include Felisa Massey, Kisa Grate, Melissa Young, Barbara Thompson, Rita Yeager, Paulette Pinto, Jessica Matthews, Donna Earley, and Shimeka Robinson. Unofficial Fun Team members who contributed were Steve Cook, LaJuana Dawson, and Chris Breece.
* As part of Employee Appreciation, gift boxes from Four Oaks Farm were sent to all employees. Mark Gamble, Juan Sims, and Donna Earley arranged for this in a short amount of time.
* The Spring Senior Camp normally held at Rocky Bottom Conference Center had been changed to a Virtual Senior Camp Day scheduled for May 30, 2020 from 10 am to 3 pm via Zoom. Shannon Cook and Shelly Coppell developed this opportunity to ensure participants would be able to stay engaged and continue to have opportunities to learn.

### Presentations

Zunaira Wasif reported:

* Vocational Rehabilitation curriculums directly tied to employment had been updated to focus on how consumers could learn specific skills and transfer them to jobs. The first series of workshops to be offered using the updated curriculums focused on wellness, nutrition, and relaxation. The workshops also addressed COVID-19 issues and provided tips on how consumers could keep themselves safe while meeting their daily needs.
* The wellness workshop incorporated a career exploration component. Consumers heard from a massage therapist who spoke about his life journey, vision loss, how he found his job, and how he does his job. They would next hear from a radio personality who would cover the same topics.
* Consumer participation in the workshops was high and their feedback positive. They would like the agency to continue providing the workshops.
* VR Instructors have used Zoom conference calls to provide training for consumers.
* Several consumers have interviewed for jobs or internships. Two consumers have recently been hired.
* The Summer Teen Camp would be held virtually using Zoom. Forty-six consumers with disabilities, ages 13-21, have registered.
* Shana Robinson had worked with the VR team to update the applicant interview tool to collect additional information at the beginning of the interview process in order to help improve plan development.
* Ms. Wasif would participate in a training cohort project offered by George Washington University on June 1, 2020.

Hannah Ritchie Reported:

* Ms. Ritchie recently took on additional duties to assist in providing training and development for staff.
* Along with Elaine Robertson and Zunaira Wasif, Ms. Ritchie developed and presented a training that provided an overview of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and focused on the WIOA Performance Measures.
* Ms. Ritchie would conduct an upcoming training on best practices for assisting consumers with trauma related issues.
* The agency was one of ten in the US chosen to participate in the VR 101 training offered by George Washington University. The VR 101 training emphasizes the changes that were enacted under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. The trainings would be self-paced and conducted online. Seven training modules would be offered in the series.
* In conjunction with SC Works, several trainings for staff would be offered in July.

### Committee Report

None.

### Old Business

None.

### New Business

None.

### Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss the meeting was dismissed. No Quorum.

**Future Board Meeting Schedule:**

June 16

July 21

August 18

### Signatures

Chairperson

Secretary

Date