South Carolina Commission for the Blind  
1430 Confederate Avenue  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

Meeting Minutes  
November 17, 2020

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

Call to Order

Chairperson Johnson called the meeting to order at 1:32 pm.

Present

Dr. Judy Johnson, Chairperson, via Zoom  
Peter Smith, Vice Chairperson, via phone  
Mary Sonksen, Secretary, via phone  
Darline Graham, Commissioner, via Zoom

Adoption of Agenda

Accepted as written. No vote. No quorum.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

No vote. No quorum.

Dr. Johnson requested that the October minutes be amended to clarify that “Prezi” refers to a presentation tool similar to Power Point.

Finance Report

Matt Daugherty reported:

* The agency was 34% through the State fiscal year budget.
* The Agency was 36.41% over budget due to continued use of the Department of Administration’s (DOA) Finance Department and the obligation of funding for the CareerBoost contract for delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).
* The Agency had completed adjustments to the 2019 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Older Blind (OB), and Supported Employment (SE) grants to move forward with closing them out. This included moving some Pre-ETS spending from the 2019 grant to the 2020 grant.

**Human Resources Report**

Wanda Miller Reported:

* The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) positions in Charleston and Conway were vacant.
* The Caseload Technician position in Rock Hill was vacant.
* Human Resources would be consulting with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for guidance in ways to best use the vacant positions at the Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center (EBMRC) to serve consumers.

**Commissioner’s Report**

Darline Graham reported:

* The agency had submitted the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) 425 and 911 reports.
* The 2021-22 budget request had been presented at the Executive Budget Hearing. The same items as last year were requested, including:
  + Funds for staff salary adjustments, Prevention services, and capital projects.
  + An increase for the Older Blind Program due to increases in referrals for that program.
* The agency held a virtual Open House in which over 100 individuals attended. Several staff members shared information relating to programs and services offered by the agency. Former consumers shared their experiences that led to their success.
* The agency, along with South Carolina’s General Vocational Rehabilitation Department, had participated in a National Showcase hosted by Mark Schultz, RSA Commissioner and acting Assistant Secretary for the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services. The agency had shared information about services and best practices, including:
  + Staff members spoke about the BRIDGE program, virtual workshops, and the virtual Summer Teen Program and virtual senior camps.
  + A video featuring Kristen Pratt from Apprenticeship Carolina shared information about the agency’s partnership and the benefits of the pre-apprenticeship training.
* The BRIDGE program graduation had recognized four consumers who completed the Pre-Apprenticeship Program. The consumers shared how BRIDGE had made a difference in their lives.
* RSA monitoring was completed on November 2, 2020.
  + The agency had participated in 17 sessions for a total of 34 hours.
  + The agency would receive RSA’s draft report and would have 21 days to respond and provide feedback.
  + The final report would allow the agency to develop a corrective action plan and assist with the agency’s strategic planning.
* Several senior managers and staff had participated in the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Fall Virtual Conference during which they received information on virtual service delivery, diversity and inclusion, agency measures, and many other helpful topics.
* The Governor’s Office had made two interim appointments for the agency board. The interim appointments would be formalized at the next ensuing legislative session. Catherine Olker from the 3rd Congressional District and Susan John from the 7th Congressional District would join the Board beginning in December.

Facilities Services

Matt Daugherty reported:

* The Agency had been working on three major capital projects:
  + Handrails would be replaced for safety and code compliance.
  + Consolidation of the old generator into a single unit.
  + Parking lot lights would be replaced to provide better lighting.
* Improvements would be made to several Business Enterprise Program (BEP) locations, starting with canteens on the capital complex grounds:
  + Air conditioning systems would be updated.
  + Flooring would be replaced in several locations.
  + Potential for reopening a stand that had been closed.

Information Technology (IT)

Chris Breece reported:

* The IT Team had updated technology to improve communication and service delivery:
  + Aging laptops and desktop units had been replaced with new ones and additional monitors added to workstations.
  + The agency’s security system for accessing the network off-site had been updated.
  + Voice Over IP (VoIP) phones had been installed at all local offices to allow more functionally, including remote message updates and voicemail access.
  + A digital fax system had been installed, allowing faxes to be sent and received using email.
  + The AWARE Case Management System had been updated.
  + Improvements in the planning stage for 2021 would include:
    - The ability to accept digital signatures.
    - Implementing a Quality Assurance (QA) module for better feedback to improve service delivery.
    - Implementing a BEP module to track assets, products, and service delivery to the Blind Licensed Vendors (BLV).
    - Development of a portal that would allow consumers to apply for services and interact with their case files online, and would allow Blind Licensed Vendors to submit invoices and see payments that had been made.

**Quality Assurance**

Mike Daniels Reported:

* The fiscal year 2020, first quarter Validation Review had been completed. This was a proactive process to identify quality issues prior to the annual audit.
* Quality Assurance reports had been utilized to analyze areas of strengths and document areas of continuous improvement.
  + An Eligibility Letter that had been generated in AWARE confirmed 100% of the cases reviewed were within the compliance requirements.
  + A Case Closure Letter generated in AWARE had confirmed 95% of the cases reviewed were within the compliance requirements.

**Intranet**

Mark Gamble Reported:

* A demonstration of the Intranet was given during the meeting. The Intranet would serve as a hub for staff to access internal and external resources for communication, collaboration, and to share documents and other information.
* Departments would have their own areas where they would be able to post topical information, comments, policies, downloads, and list the members of that area.
* The Intranet would be screen reader accessible.

Roll Call of Participants

Mark Gamble reported:

* Eighty-seven (87) participants were present.

Old Business

None.

New Business

None.

Public Comment

A participant had asked if the new interim board members were sighted or visually impaired. No answer could be provided at that time, but it was noted that the agency was aware that the majority of board members were required to be visually impaired.

Adjournment

There being no further business the meeting was adjourned at 2:32 pm. No vote was taken. No quorum.

Future Board Meeting Schedule

December 15, 2020

Signatures

Dr. Judy Johnson, Chairperson

Mary Sonksen, Secretary

Date