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

Meeting Minutes  
September 28, 2021

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 11:01 am. The meeting was conducted via Zoom Meeting software.

Present  
  
Dr. Judy Johnson, Chairperson  
Peter Smith, Vice Chairperson  
Mary Sonksen, Secretary   
Susan John  
Cathy Olker  
Darline Graham, Commissioner  
  
Adoption of Agenda

Peter Smith made a motion to accept the September 28, 2021 Agenda. It was seconded by Mary Sonksen. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None

Approval of Minutes

Susan John made a motion to approve the August 18, 2021 minutes. It was seconded by Mary Sonksen. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Susan John made a motion to approve the September 8, 2021 (special called meeting) minutes. It was seconded by Cathy Olker. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Mary Sonksen made a motion to approve the September 14, 2021 (special called meeting) minutes. It was seconded by Cathy Olker. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Peter Smith abstained from voting on the minutes for the special called meetings because he was unable to attend them.

Cathy Olker abstained from voting on the August 18, 2021 minutes because she was not able to attend that meeting.

Finance Report

Matt Daugherty reported:

Budget for the period ending August 31, 2021.

* The agency utilized 21% of the state fiscal year budget.
* Administration utilized 16% of its budget.
* Rehabilitation Services utilized 13% of its budget.
* Training Center utilized 16% of its budget.
* Transition utilized 45% of its budget.
* Business Enterprise Program (BEP) utilized 26% of its budget.
* Prevention of Blindness utilized 6% of its budget.
* Older Blind utilized 16% of its budget.
* Children’s Services utilized 17% of its budget.
* Pre-ETS utilized 100% of the required 15% for the 2020 grant.

Human Resources Report

Luis Mendoza reported:

* There was one separation and no new hires.
* Four Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) positions remained opened:
  + The Conway VRC position was advertised.
  + The Charleston VRC started September 2, 2021.
  + The Deaf-Blind Coordinator was advertised, the interview process has been completed, and a selection made.
  + The Greenwood VRC position was pending relocation to the Oconee/Pickens area.
* The Training Coordinator, Mental Health Counselor, and Vocational Training Instructor positions remained open.
* The vacant O&M position was advertised.
* The O&M Lead position and the Braille Instructor position were in the selection process for interviewing.
* The Region IV Director was selected but declined the offer. The position would be reposted to interview additional candidates.

Commissioner’s Report

Darline Graham reported:

* The Commissioner met with Senior Managers to update the agency’s Strategic Plan. As a part of the Accountability Report, the Strategic Plan was reviewed by the Board of Commissioners and submitted through the Executive Budget Office’s new Agency Success portal on September 14.
* An agency-wide virtual meeting was held on August 19. Luis Mendoza and the Commissioner presented the restructure and salary adjustment plans.
  + The restructure plan would improve service delivery and the ability to work together as a team.
  + The salary adjustment plan would bring salaries closer to the state averages within job classes. The methodology used was described. The salary adjustments would be reflected beginning with the October 1 paychecks.
* The restructure plan would begin implementation in October and would include in-person cross-program trainings. This resulted from a collaborative effort between Senior Managers and Elaine Robertson.
* The distribution of salary increases was a result of reccurring funds received from last year’s budget request.
* The Commissioner and several staff attended an event held by the SC Chamber of Commerce which provided information on challenging issues that affect South Carolina’s economy, businesses, and government entities.
* The Commissioner attended the 65th Annual State Convention of the National Federation of the Blind in North Charleston. An agency update was given during the Morning General Session on August 21.
* Several SCCB team members and the Commissioner met with the CEO and several staff members of the Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired of South Carolina to better understand the association’s structure and services.
* Mike Daniels, other SCCB team members, and the Commissioner met again with the Clemson University Extension staff to discuss possible next steps in that partnership. After the Vocational Training Instructor is hired, an introduction to the partnership would be held to begin planning work experiences and training for consumers. This would allow consumers to prepare for possible opportunities that exist in the beekeeping industry.
* The Commissioner attended the virtual Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation’s regional meeting and provided an agency update. Other agencies in the Southeastern region discussed challenges related to COVID, such as service delivery and performance. Several agencies reported completing their monitoring process with RSA and were waiting for the final report.
* Kisa Grate and her team continued making improvements to the Training Center.
  + A meeting was held with several consumers who expressed positive results in training and instructors.
  + The Building Readiness for Individualized Development of Gainful Employment (BRIDGE) program will begin October 11, 2021.
  + Several consumers will soon begin Randolph Sheppard online instruction on how to become a licensed vendor in the Business Enterprise Program.
* In addition to the Columbia Low Vision Clinic, two others were held this month in Greenville and one in the Charleston office.
* Rhonda Thompson was working with the NFB on the Fall Senior camp. A decision would be made next week if it would be virtual or in-person.
* Senior Management was in the final planning stages of preparing for the agency’s Budget Hearings for fiscal year 2023. The executive budget hearing will be October 21, 2021.
* The Commissioner and several Senior Managers were conducting interviews to fill vacancies. Next month’s Human Resources (HR) report would reflect the results of the interviews.
* Congratulations was extended to Luis Mendoza, selected as the HR Director, and Karma Marshall, selected as the Consumer Services Director. In addition, the agency welcomed four new employees: Amy Hatten, Counselor in the Charleston office; Valerie Turner, Certified Nursing Assistant at the Training Center; Jacqueline Carter, Driver in Columbia; and Oliveen McFadden, Residential Facility Assistant at the Training Center.

Training Update

Elaine Robertson reported:

* Information was presented on the current training plan for the agency and the progress made in meeting this goal.
  + Trainings created for each policy and procedure would include desk reference guides and AWARE guides.
  + Each training, plus support materials, would be posted on the intranet to be utilized for refresher training and new staff onboarding.
* An overview of completed trainings was provided; these included:
  + Case Review Tool and Process
  + Eligibility Policy and Procedure
  + Individualized Planned Services
  + Measurable Skill Gains and Credentials
* Details on the upcoming Program Cross-Training was provided, along with information concerning the team collaboration involved. A demonstration of the Program Resource Tool was given. Details about the external training provided by Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Employment (VRTAC-QE), starting in October, was provided.

Old Business

A motion was made by Peter Smith to approve the proposed Board meeting date and time change, introduced in the August Board Meeting, and seconded by Susan John. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously. The new date and time of SCCB Board Meetings would be the fourth Tuesday of each month at 11:00 am.

New Business

None

Public Comment

None

**Executive Session**  
Chairperson Johnson called for a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss a contract matter. A motion was made by Susan John and seconded by Peter Smith. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Chairperson Johnson had to leave the meeting near the end of the Executive Session.

Vice Chairperson Smith stated that the members were out of Executive Session. No votes were taken during Executive Session.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Vice Chairperson Smith called for a motion to adjourn at 12:50 pm. A motion was made by Susan John and seconded by Cathy Olker. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Future Board Meeting Schedule

October 26, 2021  
The meeting will be held via Zoom beginning at 11:00 am.

Signatures

Dr. Judy Johnson, Chairperson

Mary Sonksen, Secretary  
  
  
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Date