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

## Meeting Minutes April 21, 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 April 21, 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, via phone

Darline Graham, Commissioner

### Public Comment

None.

### Approval of Minutes

The minutes of the previous February were approved. Mary Sonksen made a motion to approve and Rosemary Robeson seconded the motion. The motion passed without discussion.

### Finance Report

Matt Daugherty reported:

* The agency was 83% of the way through the State Fiscal Year and 73% of its budget had been utilized.
* The Finance team had worked to complete a backlog of shopping carts and invoices to satisfy vendors.
* Staff were notified to end spending for the current fiscal year on April 30 in order to give the Finance team additional time to resolve open encumbrances.
* Three candidates for the Grants and Budget Manager position would be interviewed in the upcoming week.
* An Accounts Payable/Receivable Supervisor position would be advertised.

A motion to approve the Financial report was made. Ms. Sonksen seconded the motion. The motion passed without discussion.

### Introductions

### None

### Human Resources Report

#### Wanda Miller reported:

* All VR positions that were open had been filled.
* Two positions were being advertised, a Licensed Practical Nurse and a Prevention of Blindness Coordinator.
* There were concerns about filling positions because some candidates had not responded to various methods of communication, most likely due to COVID-19.
* One staff member had tested positive for COVID-19. No other staff members had reported being sick with COVID-19 or similar symptoms.

### Commissioner’s Report

#### Darline Graham reported:

* The COVID-19 pandemic, along with severe weather affecting portions of the state, had made the previous two months very challenging.
* The agency began planning a response to the COVID-19 situation in the first week of March. Wanda Miller assembled a task force composed of safety team members and other key staff to gather input and recommendations.
* Mark Gamble, Communications Director, and Wanda Miller prepared a COVID-19 Implementation Plan and a timeline which included a Telework Policy, Telework Agreement, Telework Activity Log, and options for providing online training and other resources for staff.
* Staff at higher risk for COVID-19, along with staff in the smaller offices, were the first to begin teleworking.
* As more staff began teleworking, a plan was developed whereby the Senior Managers and key staff would work in the Columbia, Greenville, and Charleston offices using a rotating schedule.
* Chris Breece and LaJuana Dawson had inventoried laptops, cell phones, and other key equipment. They worked additional hours, including at home and on weekends, to ensure that staff had the necessary equipment to telework.
* Staff had remotely provided quality services to SCCB consumers.
* Marcellous Primus and the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) staff had maintained open communication with Blind Licensed Vendors (BLV).
* Mark Gamble and Luis Mendoza had worked to provide online training opportunities for teleworking staff. The trainings included presentations by staff, plus other online options that covered topics such as Using Microsoft Word, Supervision Skills, Assistive Technology for Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired, and the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprise Program. The trainings were made available as part of the Telework Resource website accessible only by staff.
* Online meetings and trainings had helped to keep staff connected and continue to feel part of the SCCB team.
* Mark Gamble stayed late on several occasions to listen to the Governor’s press conferences and communicate to staff any organizational changes that resulted from new Executive Orders.
* Mark Gamble and Wanda Miller began developing a Safe Return Plan to address the issues involved when staff return to work in their offices. The Plan would be a reversal of the Telework Plan, and provide for a slow, safe return to work.
* Todd Collins arranged for a professional service to clean and sanitize all buildings and offices around the state.
* At the beginning of March, the SCCB budget was in the process of being approved by the House. As the COVID-19 situation worsened, that process had been put on hold. The Senate and House were working to pass a continuing resolution to provide basic funding that would last until the Fall.
* The Governor’s office has not provided feedback on the individuals recommended for vacancies on the SCCB Board of Commissioners.
* Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) monitoring had been postponed. A new date was not set.

### Senior Manager Updates

#### Wanda Miller reported:

* Members of the Safety and Security Committee were recognized for their contributions in the development of the COVID-19 Implementation Plan, including Kisa Grate; Karma Marshall; Cara Jackson, Secretary; Steve Cook, Vice Chair; Jacqueline Stubbs; Donna Early; John Stockman; Todd Collins; DaJohnia Blake, Assistant Secretary; Wanda Miller; and Tara B. Thigpin.
* A four-stage COVID-19 Implementation Plan was developed by the Committee.

Stage One included:

1. General information on COVID-19 was distributed to staff via email.
2. Supplies of hand sanitizer, Lysol, and disinfectant wipes were purchased.
3. Essential personnel were identified and notified.

Stage Two included:

1. A hidden webpage had been created on the agency’s website to provide a central location for staff to receive information about COVID-19; download Telework policies, forms, technical guidelines, and other resources; and offer online training opportunities.
2. Supplies of hand sanitizer and cleaning products were distributed SCCB offices around the state.
3. Essential personnel were activated.

Stages Three and Four were combined as the COVID-19 situation rapidly changed:

1. Employees were encouraged to stay home if they were sick.
2. Public engagement and travel were suspended.
3. Residential Consumer Services were suspended, and those consumers returned to their homes.
4. Social distancing had been implemented in all offices.
5. Consumer contact had been limited in all offices.
6. Services were provided to consumers by phone and virtual means.

Chris Breece reported:

* More than 40 laptops were located, configured, and distributed to employees who did not already have one.
* Virtual Private Network (VPN) services were provided to key employees.
* An online meeting solution had been implemented by utilizing Zoom Meeting software.

Zunaira Wasif reported:

* The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff had responded to the changes brought on by COVID-19 by being flexible, adaptable, and accountable. They were continuing to provide services to consumers, by phone and virtual means, which included counseling and guidance, career exploration and resources, accepting new applications, and updating referral information.
* A consent signature email process had been developed and implemented for use with consumers.
* Instructors had updated all classroom curricula.
* Kisa Grate had setup and configured laptops and other technology for consumers, students, and adults who needed those items for school, work, and college.
* A distance learning curriculum had been developed for use with the Summer Teen Program in the event it would not be possible to implement the in-person curriculum due to COVID-19.
* Hannah Richie had conducted a training about the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) Performance Measures.
* The WIOA Combined State Plan was submitted on time to the RSA. Elaine Robertson’s assistance with the State Plan was acknowledged.

Rhonda Thompson Reported:

* The Greenville staff had worked to close referrals, update caseloads, and complete consumer assessments. They worked as a team, stayed positive, and went above and beyond expectations.
* Low vision devices were provided to consumers who needed replacements.
* All Low Vision Clinics were postponed until May at the earliest.
* A list of all referrals had been maintained.
* Shana Robinson had provided AWARE updates and other assistance.
* Staff and partners that participated in the Braille Challenge in February were recognized for their contributions to the success of that event.

Marcellous Primus reported:

* BEP staff were recognized for providing support to Blind Licensed Vendors (BLVs) on weekends and after hours.
* Weekly conference calls were held with the BLVs.
* A temporary repair hotline had been implemented so that Charlie Rabon could remotely assist BLVs with making minor repairs to equipment.
* A letter from the Commissioner was sent to all BLVs informing them about the agency’s response to COVID-19 and providing them with updated contact information.
* Consultation with RSA was made to explore options for providing relief to BLVs.

Matt Daugherty reported:

* The Finance staff had worked to process more than 400 shopping carts and clear out the Open Encumbrance Report.
* Training was provided to staff about Pre-Employment Training Services spending and the use of the Open Encumbrance Report.
* The cutoff date for programmatic spending in the current fiscal year would be April 30.

### Committee Report

None.

### Old Business

None.

### New Business

None.

### Adjournment

There being no further business to discuss, Dr. Johnson made a motion to adjourn and Ms. Roberson seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm by Chairperson Smith.

**Future Board Meeting Schedule:**

May 19

June 16

### Signatures

Chairperson

Secretary

Date