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

Meeting Minutes  
February 16, 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 1:30 pm. The meeting was conducted via Zoom Meeting software.

Present

Dr. Judy Johnson, Chairperson  
Peter Smith, Vice Chairperson  
Mary Sonksen, Secretary   
Catherine Olker  
Susan John  
Darline Graham, Commissioner

Adoption of Agenda

Mary Sonksen made a motion to accept the February 16, 2021. Agenda. It was seconded by Susan John. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Public Comment

None.

Approval of Minutes

Vice Chairperson Smith made a motion to accept December 15, 2020 minutes. It was seconded by Secretary Sonksen. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Finance Report

Matt Daugherty reported:

* The agency had utilized 53% of the state fiscal year budget.
* Administration had utilized 58% of its budget.
* Rehabilitation Services had utilized 93% of its budget. The amount was high due to Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).
  + Region I had utilized 52% of its budget.
  + Region II had utilized 57% of its budget.
  + Region III had utilized 53% of its budget.
  + Ellen Beach Mack Rehabilitation Center for Employment and Independence had utilized 33% of its budget. The amount was low due to the closure of the Center during the pandemic.
* Prevention had utilized 8% of its budget.
* Older Blind had utilized 46% of its budget.
* Children’s Services had utilized 57% of its budget.
* Business Enterprise Program (BEP) had utilized 54% of its budget.
* Training and Employment had utilized 49% of its budget.
* Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) had utilized 67% of the 2020 Grant.

**Human Resources Report**

Luis Mendoza reported for Wanda Miller:

* No new hires or separations occurred for the month ending January 31, 2021.

**Commissioner’s Report**

Darline Graham reported:

* A phone conference had been held with Jennifer Bazer, President of the South Carolina National Federation of the Blind (NFB). Regular meetings had been scheduled to strengthen the partnership between the NFB and the South Carolina Commission for the Blind (SCCB).
* A phone conference had been held with Kimberly Tissot, Executive Director of AbleSC, to discuss ways to better serve individuals in South Carolina who need SCCB services. A phone meeting with team members from both organizations had been scheduled to discuss a referral process.
* On February 4, 2021, a zoom meeting with the Midlands Workforce Development Board’s Priority Populations Committee had been held.
  + A lunch and learn would be scheduled to strengthen the agency’s partnership with SC Works staff and to assist with increasing referrals when COVID-19 is less of a concern.
  + Regular meetings with community partners would continue to allow the agency to better serve consumers.
* On January 26, 2021, the agency had met with the House Ways and Means Healthcare Subcommittee to discuss the budget for State fiscal year 2022. A request for funds had been made for Salary Adjustments, Prevention of Blindness Services, and the Older Blind Program. A Capitol Budget Request to replace the HVAC system was also made and discussed.
* The Senate Budget Hearing had been scheduled for March, but the date had not been specified.
* The Senate Human Services Subcommittee had been scheduled for March 17, 2021. Bill S 430 would be considered. This bill would change the frequency of agency Board meetings from monthly to quarterly.
* The Senate Confirmation Hearing for Ms. Susan John and Ms. Catherine Olker had been held on January 27, 2021.
* Senior Managers had been revising Position Descriptions (PD) in each area. Upon completion of the revised PDs, the agency would post and recruit for the positions. Revised PDs would allow supervisors to complete a more accurate and timely Employee Performance Management System (EPMS) review.
* Due to changes in the Administration at the US Department of Education, the agency had not received the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) monitoring report. Once the report was received, a corrective action plan would be developed and utilized to assist with strategic planning.
* Safety protocols had been developed to deliver much needed face-to-face services, such as Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instruction, to consumers. The written procedures provide guidance on traveling to assist consumers in their community (but not to enter homes), delivering instruction in a safe outdoor location such as a sidewalk or driveway, and that staff and consumer must wear personal protective equipment (PPE).
* Advice from State Human Resources, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and other state agencies had been used to develop a Safe Return Plan for the agency.
  + Most staff have been rotating into the office several days a week and teleworking the other days. Staff that have positions which are not conducive to telework have been working at their assigned location daily.
  + Senior Managers would return to the office Monday-Friday in the near future. Several were already reporting to their office daily.
  + All staff would gradually return to the workplace on a full-time basis.
  + To help ensure safety, the agency had explored options to have some staff moved into phase 1A or 1B of the vaccine roll-out.
  + Several staff had presented to the House Healthcare Subcommittee regarding legislation that could expand phase 1A and allow prioritization of other occupations.

**Updated Intranet Demo/Preparation for Rollout**

Mark Gamble reported:

* A virtual Intranet demonstration was provided to introduce a new intranet platform which would allow easier access and more immediate flexibility.
* The home page was divided into two sections.
  + The left side of the home page would be an information blog, listing items such as staff recognition, memos, teleworking references, Public Employee Benefit Authority (PEBA), and other topics. The home page would be updated regularly by the Communications Director.
  + The right side of the page was a menu listing the latest posts, resources for staff, and links to agency departments and the many services offered by SCCB. The Human Resources area was used to show how department information would be displayed on tabbed pages. The tabbed pages for HR included “Overview,” “Benefits,” “Careers” (which will display open positions at SCCB), “New Hires” (which will provide access to information and resources for new employee orientation), and “Downloads.”
  + At the bottom of the page, a “tag cloud” area (i.e., a group of links named by topic) had been developed to provide a quick and easy way to find and open one or more posts about a particular topic.
* The Intranet had been tested throughout the process by several SCCB staff using different types of technology to ensure accessibility.
* Additional training would be offered to all staff.

Recruitment Dashboard/Electronic EPMS

Luis Mendoza reported:

* A Dashboard had been created using Microsoft Excel to improve the tracking of vacancies, provide leadership with the most current information regarding the agency’s recruitment efforts, and address areas of improvement. In addition, the Dashboard would allow the agency to track the cost per hire, average time to fill a position, and source of application.
* A virtual demonstration of the dashboard had been provided.
* State Human Resources had been reclassifying all Human Services positions, such as Caseload Technician, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, and Regional Director. A total of 43 positions had been reclassified and position descriptions updated. The agency had reported a total of 20 vacancies.

Roll Call of Participants

Dr. Johnson reported:

* 83 participants were present.

Old Business

None.

New Business

Jennifer Bazer shared a concern pertaining to the SCCB website. It was determined that the Communications Director would contact Ms. Bazer to discuss the concern.

Public Comment

None

Adjournment

There being no further business, a motion was made by Chairperson Johnson to adjourn, seconded by Ms. John. No discussion. The motion passed unanimously.

Future Board Meeting Schedule

March 16, 2021  
April 20, 2021  
May 18, 2021

Signatures

Dr. Judy Johnson, Chairperson

Mary Sonksen, Secretary

Date