

Commissioner's Meeting of the NE Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired

August 5, 2000, 1: 00 P.M.

Nebraska City, Nebraska

Approved

Meeting was called to order by Barbara Walker issuing greetings and the emphasis of starting the meetings on time. Introductions were made. All Commission board members were present: Barbara Walker, Bill Orester, Bob Burns, Dorothy Westin-Yockey and Maya Samms.

Sam Gibilisco welcomed everyone to Nebraska City and thanked the board for holding their meeting in conjunction with the Nebraska Association of the Blind. He also extended an invitation to those interested in taking a trolley tour of Nebraska City at 3:30 P.M.

Election of officers: Bill Orester nominated Barbara Walker as chair and Dorothy Westin-Yockey seconded. Walker stepped aside and asked Orester to chair the voting procedure. The vote was taken and Barbara Walker was unanimously elected to serve as chair to the newly formed Commission Board to the Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired.

Bob Burns nominated Bill Orester as vice chair. Maya Samms moved Orester be elected by acclamation and Dorothy Westin-Yockey seconded. Bill Orester will serve as vice-chair for the coming year. It was determined officers will be elected annually.

How do we want minutes handled? The Chair asked the board if they wanted to take the offer from the Commission to make Jan Ludwig available, as secretary, to take the meeting minutes. It was moved and seconded to accept that offer. Maya Samma will serve as secretary for executive sessions. Dr. Van Zandt asked the board, "Could she provide someone else on the Commission staff at times when Jan Ludwig is not available." The motion was amended to accept that offer and the vote was favorable.

Set meeting dates and locations: Orestor moved we meet the first Saturday of August, November, February and May or such other times that the majority of the Commission deem appropriate. Burns seconded. The vote was unanimous.

The Chair asked the board if they would like to tour the Center and invite the Governor to join in the tour. It was decided that Friday is the best day. September 22, or September 29, 2000, was chosen as possible dates for the tour. Pearl Van Zandt will check with the Governor's office to see if that date will work for him. If the Governor is not available, we will meet 9/22/00.

Fatos Floyd invited the Commissioners to the Center's Thanksgiving meal on November 16th. The invitation was accepted and the body will meet at that time. Avenues for public notice: Walker was pleased to find the public notice posted on Newslines. Discussion followed and the board encouraged an e-mail list be generated for notice to public, possibly by use of list serves off the WEB page. Pat Fisher, a public participant, offered his expertise and will be in contact with Walker and Kelly Coleman in the Omaha office, to help make this happen. Public notices will be announced through such media as the Omaha World Herald, Lincoln Jr Star, Newslines and Radio Talking Book.

Acknowledge receipt of materials: Walker thanks staff for getting information to them. Orestor requested information on the vendor program. The Chair also requested the VR & IL manuals to be sent to the Commissioners. Minutes of the Rehabilitation Council and a list of SRC members will to provided as requested. Van Zandt asked whether it would be appropriate to send the Commission minutes to her staff The Chair's only concern is to make sure they realize the minutes received have not been approved and would not be approved until the next meeting. Maya suggested the minutes be stamped "Draft".

Identify need for further materials: Van Zandt offered to make available the finalized budget to the Commissioners. Bums asked for the previous budget as well, for comparison.

Report from the Director: Van Zandt made reference to the funding information document given in the SRC meeting earlier in the day. The term Job Coaching was questioned. Van Zandt explained we have support staff doing some of the job coaching work but most of the time we contract out.

This year we applied for an In-Service Training Quality Award. We were awarded the grant in amount of \$57,955 for five years beginning October 1, 2000. The Transition grant was awarded, requires no match, in the amount of \$275,000 each year for five years beginning 10/01/00. Deaf/Blind Grant is a non-federal grant from the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC). Year one we will receive \$50,000; year two \$40,000 and decreasing \$10,000 each year of the 5 year project. Services now (deaf/blind) are good in Omaha but we need to do better in Lincoln. Trust fund includes bequests of two large amounts. Discussion and questions were generated. Walker asked for information on the In-kind support. We also have a family who wants to provide the Commission with proceeds from a trust and at the end of their life we would get half of the original amount. It's a nice way to generate some funds. We are trying to work out the snags with DAS.

There is also a possibility of creating a fund referred to as Friends of entity, to serve as the fund raising arm of the Commission. There has to be something set up and would be less red tape. Van Zandt will check with similar Commissions to see what they have done to make this work. A report will be available at the next meeting. Van Zandt recommend Commissioners read through and come up with ideas on how to make it possible for "best services" to be available. Walker emphasized the need to keep it in the front of our minds and how we can affect them. Van Zandt asked what sorts of reports do you want from her. Following discussion it was suggested that each Commission meeting will have a specific focus, the next meeting's (September, 2000) focus will be on the Nebraska Center for the Blind. By setting this up in advance will be one of the things the Commissioners can do to help the staff prepare for this focus. Business Enterprise Program (BEP) will be focused during the (November 2000) meeting. The (May, 2001) focus will be on the Transition position.

New Business: As Chair, Walker stated, "One of our charges is to hire a director." She requested the board go into executive session. Following Executive Session: Maya Samms reported, "We decided to put Pearl into that job." Van Zandt accepted and thanked the Commissioners for their confidence.

Carlos Servdn reported his findings from the Attorney General's office that only 25% of public meetings can be a video conference meeting. Video Conference is available in Lincoln.

The Chair reported that we are all mindful of the Commission staff salary issues. Not all are aware of the pay scale and information was requested on that issue. Van Zandt assured them she would provide that. All the board is willing to participate in working in this area. Bums said, "As soon as the facts are put together we can go to work in this area and the sooner the better." Walker asks for patience so that we can become informed and begin to take some steps. Orester confirmed, "We need to build our own facts."

Nancy Flearl, a staff member and a public participant, reported she has had positions turned down three times due to low salaries. She has documentation available.

Van Zandt explained the Federal Government is moving toward staff having their masters in Rehabilitation. Van Zandt doesn't think the Fed's will hold us to having the masters in Rehab but we are working with staff to get their master degrees.

Public comment - Orestor moved for public comment time be half way through the meeting but comments related directly to the issue at hand be recognized by the Chair with a limit of three minutes. Bums seconded. Discussion followed. Westin-Yockey requested a call for the question. Vote was taken. Motion passed. Regarding having information available to the public. Walker reported there needs to be one copy available for the public that can be copied.

Discussion followed on the State Plan. Van Zandt asked if the Commissioners wanted to be involved in the writing of the plan, signing, etc. Presently the State Plan is signed by Van Zandt and a committee out of the council works in conjunction with Van Zandt in the writing of this plan. There was a board consensus to continue with this process and have the Chair of SRC make a report to the Commissioners of the plan. The Chair requested several questions to the Director regarding staff, programs, the workings of a one-stop-shop and whether the Commission is considered a Designated State Agency (DSA). Walker did request an organizational chart. David Robinson will be completing this chart. Van Zandt suggested we may need to cover the State Plan during a training session. A major segment of the Plan addresses comprehensive system of personnel development. RCEP has issued funding to develop personnel. The general agency could have received 85% of the total; however, NCBVI may receive a better split after Van Zandt communicated with Frank Lloyd, Director of the General Agency.

Adjournment at 4:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jan Ludwig,

Staff Assistant

Barbara Walker, Chairman of Commissioners