

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Public Meeting
Saturday, February 24, 2001 9:00 A.M.

APPROVED

Call to Order and Introductions

Commissioners present were Barbara Walker, Chairman, Bob Burns, Maya Samms, Bill Orester, and Dorothy Westin-Yockey. Also present was Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director of the Commission for the Blind and Visually, Jan Ludwig, Staff Assistant of the Commission, Jim Jirak, State President of ACBN, Carlos Serván, Deputy Director of Vocational Rehabilitation of the Commission, Jo Gent, Michael Floyd, Past President of NFBN, Peg Halverson, Elaine Kavalak, Shirley Peterson, Robert Newman, Connie Daly, Fatos Floyd and Fritz Yockey.

Minutes of the November 3, 2000 Meeting

As the minutes were not available on the Web page, Orester expressed the need for the minutes to be read. Walker suggests that future minutes might be shorter by using attachments of the meeting focus presentations. Also, if a report is brought to the meeting in writing, that report will be attached and not be a part of the minutes proper. The main things needed in the minutes are actions taken, decisions made that may impact in the future. The beginning of the minutes will be marked Draft until there has been approval. Van Zandt stated as a point of information: There were 1,000 subscribers signed up to

Newsline® and since then we have learned a more accurate number might be 600.

Minutes of the January 2, 2001 Emergency Meeting

The minutes were read. Orestor moved to accept the minutes, Westin-Yockey seconded and the approval of the minutes was unanimous.

Transition Program Overview: Carlos Serván and Karen Mosier

Due to the amount of materials included in today's agenda, it was agreed to move this item to the end of the agenda and determine at that time whether to include this or postpone until the next meeting.

Report from the Chairman

Walker reported the Newsline ® outreach coordinator is now Ryan Osentowsky. Osentowsky and Mr. Chrisman at the National Center for the Blind in Baltimore, are working to put in place a better process in getting items up on Newsline ® by using an FTP format.

Walker and Dave Hunt have been collaborating on placement of Braille on vending machines. Burns encouraged the vendors do some problem solving to come up with a solution in getting either Braille or other markings on their machines. Ultimately, the manufactures will come up with a solution, but in the meantime vendors need to work together and share their ideas with one another. Then if vendors will share this information nationally some lobbying may be done.

Each Board of Commissioner was confirmed on February 9, 2001. Walker did attend the confirmation hearing but due to weather conditions, the other four Commissioners were represented by their Senator from their respective Districts.

Serván, Van Zandt, and Walker attended the Millennium Symposium on Improving Services to the Blind at the National Center for the Blind in Baltimore on January 17-19, 2001. There was representation from 17 states which was by invitation only.

Walker, Van Zandt, Serván, have met with several Senators concerning legislation, specifically LB 788 and 443, affecting the Commission this session. The Governor met with Hunt, Serván and Van Zandt regarding LB 443. On February 22, 2001 there were seven who testified in opposition at the hearing of LB 788. On February 23, 2001, Walker, Bill Brown, and Van Zandt attended the budget hearing for the Commission. Brown and Van Zandt testified.

Report from the Executive Director

Van Zandt reported the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) meeting is rescheduled for March 3, 2001, due to the cancellation of the February 10th meeting because of weather. In combination with the SRC meeting, there will be a Public Forum session on March 3, 2001, via Video Conference at several sites across the state. The State Plan is due 4/1/01, and Public Forums are needed in order to complete this plan. A State Staff meeting will be held in Lincoln on March 20-22, 2001. We will be addressing two primary topics. One topic is Informed Choice and the other is Services to Older Blind Persons.

The Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program (RCEP) has agreed to fund the training for Regional Center Directors on June 20-22, 2001, scheduled in Lincoln. It will be held at the Center and Stephen W. Carveth Building next door to the west of the Center. Fatos Floyd is coordinating this event and invited the Board of Commissioners to attend.

New staff hired are: Amy Buresh, Rehabilitation Counselor in the Lincoln District; Shirley Petersen, Lincoln District Transition Counselor; Peg Halverson, Computer and Typing Instructor in the Center; Amy Connery, Rehabilitation Counselor in North Platte District; Elaine Kavalak, Orientation Counselor in the Omaha District. Jan Brandt, is now working out of the Kearney office due to lack of office space within the North Platte office.

Van Zandt reported on numbers served through both the Vocational Rehabilitation track and the Independent Living track. Serván reported work is continuing with the Departments of Corrections and Health and Human Services to encourage hiring blind people.

Old Business

Materials Update: Walker reported on materials the Commissioners have received since the last meeting and encouraged the other Commissioners to be sure to read these materials to be appraised.

Budget Update: Van Zandt reported that with the fully matched funds, that we're confident we will have for this year, will be 3.5 million dollars and expenditures budgeted for this year is 3.6 million dollars. So even fully matching with Federal funds we are "very much stretched". Burns emphasized this is an important year for the Commission "in its new beginnings", to make a difference in years to come. Burns asked whether the Board of Commissioners should write a letter to DAS to encourage a different look at our statewide cost allocation. Van Zandt will talk to Brown about this and have him e-mail the board as to concerns that could be raised in a letter from the Board. Van Zandt will keep the Board posted.

NIS Update: Jonathan Ross is continually keeping the accessibility issues up front in the minds of those working in the Nebraska Information System.

Comprehensive Position Questionnaire (CPQ) Update: Van Zandt reported Dave Robinson, Ludwig, and Dottie Wilmott, are completing their CPQs. The letter written by Walker will need to be rewritten with an appropriate date.

Website Update: The Website address is www.ncbvi.state.ne.us and is up and running. We need to put up the bios. Westin-Yockey did submit her bio and it was determined to go ahead and put up the two we have and then follow with the other three when they are received. The Commissioner's personal e-mail addresses will not be used, but Commissioners could be e-mailed collectively on the page and replies made from there as well.

Friends of the Commission Update: Samms provided a disk with the Articles of Incorporation and the Bylaws. Michael Floyd was named the Incorporator. Van Zandt agreed to print the document which names Michael Floyd as Incorporator and that will be filed with the State of Nebraska. The Federal Identification number is received by filing a SS4 form. Orester has received a portion of the forms needed and will continue to get the necessary paperwork completed. It was learned that State funds cannot be used to establish the 501(c)(3). Michael Floyd offered to provide those funds which may include a filing fee, a per page fee of the articles of incorporation, a corporate seal and a public notice fee to proceed with this process. The Board wanted him to know he could be reimbursed as the corporation receives money. This was agreeable and the board thanked him for his generosity. Special attention is being taken in naming the Directors so there will be no conflict of interest. Orester did express concern to having Pat Fisher as a Director because of a possible conflict of interest. There is time, but Walker requested the Board to be thinking of individuals who may be qualified to serve as Directors. Once the Tax Exempt Status is ratified, it will be time to move forward.

Public Comment: Mike Floyd reported that Mr. Osentowsky does have the FTP connection completed so this should facilitate communications. M. Floyd requested to read a letter from Kris Cox regarding the final rule employment outcome. There is concern that the Secretary of Education, the Honorable Secretary Paige, may overturn the final rule outcome. This letter is available upon request from either Michael Floyd or NCBVI. Jim Jirak raised concerned about the time frame for the SRC meeting. Fatos Floyd brought up the issue of the funds from LB 433. The intent of the bill is not to use that money as a Federal match.

New Business

Legislative Update: This item was covered earlier.

DigitalNews Information: Stacy and Craig Groff - The Groffs were unable to attend today's meeting. Van Zandt did report that she has been in contact with Stacy and there seems to be an interested party. If there is some information that might be beneficial in regards to fund raising, Walker would like to see a document put together and made available to the Board.

State Plan: Van Zandt reported that she, M. Floyd, and Bob Burns have met regarding changes of the State Plan via conference call. Van Zandt reviewed several of the Attachments. One of the Attachments is requiring to determine how people across the state can be reached who may need services. Suggestions were offered (i.e. a survey available on the Website and/or the use of the telephone). The Board was in agreement with Van Zandt's progress. She will complete the Plan and provide to the Board of Commissioners and the SRC for their review.

NCBVI Policies: NCBVI Policies need to be completed by July 1, 2001. The weather policies which was sent to the Board is agreeable. State Personnel's rules and regulations are followed in determining leave time to attend funerals of staff and/or staff's families. Westin-Yockey asked if a client or an employee could sue a Board member of the Commission. Orester explained that the Commission could be sued but not the Commissioner.

Adjustment to Blindness and Visual Impairment Thought Provokers: Robert Newman. Newman has a Website called Adjustment to Blindness & Visual Impairments where he spends 16 to 20 hours of his own time and has been doing this since September of 1998. Right now he has 39 thought provokers and 8 short stories. He now has 410 members on his peer counseling discussion forum all over the world.

Van Zandt will be speaking at the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska's (ACBN) convention on April 21 and 22, 2001, which will be held at the Best Western Airport Inn in Lincoln. The National President, Charley Crawford, will be attending and he has also confirmed he will tour the NCBVI Center.

Walker stated the Accounting and Disclosure information that was received indicates that as of right now we are not obligated to do anything; however, this may change in the future.

Location, Date and Time of Next Meeting: Burns moved to have the May 5, 2001 meeting of the Board of Commissioners in Kearney to begin at 1:00 P.M. Orester seconded and the motion was approved.

Consensus was to have the Transition focus as a part of the May 5, 2001 meeting.

Adjourn: The meeting adjourned at 1:35 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted

Jan Ludwig, Staff Assistant

Barbara Walker, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners