

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
PUBLIC MEETING
SATURDAY, MAY 19, 2001 1:00 P.M.

APPROVED

Call to Order and introductions

Commissioners present were: Barbara Walker, Chairman; Bob Burns; Bill Orester; and Dorothy Westin-Yockey.

Commissioner absent: Maya Samms, due to death in family.

Others present were: Commission staff--Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director; Karen Mosier, Transition Coordinator; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director of Independent Living; Carlos Serván, Deputy Director of Vocational Rehabilitation; Jan Ludwig, Staff Assistant; Candace Laursen, Supervisor of North Platte District; Denise Johnston Rauterkus, Transition Counselor in North Platte; and Members of the Public--Roy Hoble and Michael Floyd, Lincoln; Della Johnston, North Platte; and Avis Wiest, Ogallala.

Minutes of the February 24, 2001 Meeting: Minutes have been available on the NCBVI Web Page. There were no corrections, additions, or comments on the minutes. Orester moved for approval, Burns seconded and the minutes were approved.

Transition Program Overview: Carlos Serván and Karen Mosier presented the Focus Report for today's meeting. Serván reported on the receipt of a \$275,000 Transition Federal Grant to support this program. Mosier gave a very informative overview of each component of this year's grant-sponsored activities. Burns asked about the possibility of our looking at interest free loans to clients for computers and other equipment. In this way the money would come back, so we could make use of it for future clients. Van Zandt will visit with Bill Brown to look into this type of project and report at the next meeting.

Also, it was suggested this might be something the Friends of the Commission might want to get involved in. Cooperative agreement possibilities were also discussed. Ludwig will e-mail the Transition Newsletter to the Commissioners.

Report from the Chairman - Walker reported the following: Between February and now, we have attended meetings with the budget and Statewide Cost Allocation (SWCA) people in order to come up with some creative ways to receive funding. The issue of what, if anything, can be done regarding the transfer of funds from the Health and Human Services System (HHSS) to the Commission has also been revisited during this time. Development of the Friends of the Commission is progressing and we look to this entity as a means to gain funds. We appreciate being kept abreast of staff changes. Van Zandt offered to also include in the updates the new hires. Burns requested an organizational chart which can be reissued each time there is a staff change.

Report from the Executive Director: Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living reports were made available via Braille, large print and/or disk. Rehabilitation Services Administration representative from Kansas City will be here this next week doing a Monitoring of Section 107 Review of the FY 2000 data compared to the 1999 data.

Staff updates: Amy Connery and Peg Halverson are no longer with us. We hope to make a decision on one of the three candidates for the Communication Instructor position in the Center this next week. James Juarez has been hired as Transition Counselor for Omaha. On May 7 th, Larry Roos started training to fill the Rehabilitation Counselor position in North Platte. Char Shives from Omaha is retiring May 31st. Carol Frink will fill that position, starting May 21st. Cizette Ingram has given notice of her resignation on August 3, 2001, so that position will be open. Information was given about applying to become a Commissioner. There will be two positions expiring at the end of the year. We will be making that information available to each office.

Dave Robinson's written report was given as follows: Van Zandt closed out year 2000 with 240.89 hours accrued vacation leave. To date, she has used 71 hours of vacation leave in 2001. Between the vacation she has earned and used this year, her balance to date is 239.19 hours. Projecting, she will need to use 82 hours vacation or she will lose these hours as we can only carry 280 hours over into the next year. Revision of the I.E.P and the 26 Closure Letter have been completed. We are, therefore, now in compliance with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) requirements. Due to information gained from a recent audit of the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Burns moved that if the Executive Director of the Commission needs to make a trip within the state and there is no state car available, reimbursement will be made for the mileage on the personal vehicle used. Orester seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

Old Business

Materials Update: Walker stated she appreciates the results of the follow-up surveys from the Center, as well as ongoing documents sent to help keep the Board informed.

Budget Update: Van Zandt reported our requested budget was approved and the Governor did not cut any line items. However, things are very tight. Grant expenditures were given. The State Rehabilitation Council recommended to the Commission that the \$20,000 of basic support that we have been contributing to Radio Talking Book (RTB) be eliminated. Following a lengthy discussion on this issue, Burns moved and Orester seconded that we ask RTB to present its case at the next meeting and then the Board can determine whether or not to cut the \$20,000 basic support money donated to RTB. The motion passed. The Commission staff was asked by the Board to conduct a survey of current and recently closed clients on the listenership of Radio Talking Book and report back to the Board at the next meeting.

NIS Update: Van Zandt reported the contract has been let to the J.D. Edwards Corporation partnering with IBM. Jonathan Ross has been in contact with those involved and he feels NCBVI's concerns are being addressed. However, we do need to stay abreast as to its accessibility. Tom Conroy can be e-mailed at tconroy@notes.state.ne.us

CPQ Update: All CPQ's are in. Van Zandt reported that she spoke with a representative of Personnel and he said within the next month they would be working on their review of the NCBVI CPQ's. Along with a letter, Van Zandt completed an Excel spreadsheet which compares position, salary ranges and pay grades of Vocational Rehabilitation General agency and other states that she will be sending to the Board.

Website Update: Van Zandt reported that it is now set up so people can e-mail the Board. It was questioned about the chance of receiving a virus and Van Zandt will talk to Ross about this issue.

Friends of the Commission Update : Articles of Incorporation have been filed with the State of Nebraska. The Foundation needs to sign up directors to be on the Board and then have its first meeting. Volunteers showing interest during the Council meeting were Roy Hobley, Gina Miller, Sherry Manthe and Jim Jirak. James Faimon has also shown interest.

NBE Update: Accessible marking on vending machines was discussed at the Vendors' Committee meeting. Don Ward and Terri Harris are working with vendors on this issue.

DigitalNews Update: Van Zandt reported on an informational telephone meeting about funding for Newsline® including Stacy Groff, Bill Brown, John Scott of the Scott Family Foundation in Omaha and herself on May 8 th. Mr. Scott asked specific questions about budget. He is interested in the Commission as a whole. He also requested to be informed following the budget approval outcome which Van Zandt did complete on May 16, 2001.

Legislative Update: LB 788 and 433 were killed in Committee and LB 496 is still in committee.

State Plan: The State Plan draft was sent to RSA and approved.

NCBVI Policies: Van Zandt stated we have been reviewing other existing policies set forth in Administrative Services. We met with Vocational Rehabilitation's Attorney, Kristin Petersen, who is very knowledgeable in this area. She went through the whole process with us and it was very informative. We need to make sure we do not put anything into rule that ties us too closely to something that we might want to change next year because we would have to repeat the process. Gerri Harris, our Regional Services Administration representative in Kansas City, encouraged us to go slowly with it.

Public Comment: Van Zandt stated that earlier Della Johnston informed her that the North Platte contingent had to leave and she had something she hoped to bring before the Board but would call Van Zandt on Monday. Walker replied that if people have something to address, they need to let the Chairman know so we can accommodate their wish to comment outside of the time specifically set aside for that purpose. It was suggested that a Note to the Public concerning procedure for public input be printed at the top of the agenda each time.

It was discussed, at Van Zandt's suggestion, to have an additional public comment time or maybe there could be something on the Commissioners' page of the Website regarding getting items on the agenda under new business.

New Business

Executive Director's Evaluation: Following discussion, it was determined to request information of the NCBVI staff who daily work with the Executive Director. The Board will provide the form including the five duties used in evaluating, and request a reply back to the Board by June 1 st. Ludwig will e-mail the evaluation form to staff and also set up a conference call for June 13 th, 7:00 P.M. so the Board can average the scores and complete the evaluation process. Bob Burns will inform Maya Samms. The Board has empowered Walker to meet with Van Zandt before June 30, 2001, to review the results of the Board's evaluation of the Executive Director. Burns moved the salary raise for the Executive Director will be tied to the outcome of the evaluation during a June meeting each year and also will include the July 1 and January 1 (inflationary) salary adjustments. Orester seconded and the motion carried.

Signage for identification of NCBVI Offices: City ordinance prohibits more than one sign marking a building in Lincoln. Van Zandt did inform the Board we are in the process of having new ADA compliant signs done to place inside the building.

Telephone Waiting--Messages vs. Music: This is not available through Communications.

Financial Participation Survey: Burns suggested that this item be carried over to the next meeting and be put at the beginning of the agenda. Deaton will forward the results of an NCBVI staff memo he has compiled regarding the survey.

Focus on Field Services will be considered for presentation during the next meeting. Van Zandt, Deaton and Serván will do some planning and determine whether to include both VR and IL field services during the same presentation.

Burns reported that the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) put together a committee consisting of Orester, Floyd and Jirak, to begin researching the process to phase out the SRC. There was discussion and concern of losing valuable representation that we have on the SRC now. There was discussion about creating a Technical Advisors Group which could participate in the Board of Commissioners meetings. Burns moved The Board of Commissioners support the Council's decision to dissolve the State Rehabilitation Council. Orester seconded the motion and the vote was unanimous.

Location, Date and Time of Next Meeting: Burns moved and Orester seconded to hold the next meeting of the Board of Commissioners in Lincoln July 28 th, 2001, at 9:00 A.M. The motion carried.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 5:55 P.M.

Respectfully Submitted

Jan Ludwig, Staff Assistant Barbara Walker, Chairman

NCBVI Board of Commissioners