

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES
Saturday, November 9, 2002 9:00 A.M.
Omaha, Nebraska

(Meeting is available on tape.)
APPROVED

Call to Order and Introductions: Barbara Walker, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m. At this time she announced that there is an FM listening device available for listening to the proceedings.

Walker read the note Nichelle Ferreyra sent saying she would not be able to attend due to obligations with school. She needs to do research with her colleagues. Walker excused her from today's meeting.

Commissioners present were:
Barbara Walker, Chairman, Lincoln; Bill Orestor, Lincoln; Dorothy Westin-Yockey, South Sioux City; and Bob Burns, Omaha.

Commission staff in attendance were:
Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director, Lincoln; Carlos Servan, Deputy Director, Lincoln; Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor, Omaha; Kelly Coleman, Vocational Rehabilitation Technician, Omaha; and Sara Schmidt, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Omaha.

Members of the public were: Craig Groff, Omaha; and Fritz Yockey, South Sioux City.

Walker welcomed everyone.

Announcement Concerning Public Comments: Walker encouraged the public to seek the floor during discussions. Public participation outside of the designated comment period would be at the discretion of the Chairman.

Walker also mentioned that Jan Ludwig's health is as good now as it has been of late. She went on to say that we're certainly hoping that she will get through treatment with minimal suffering and we're grateful for Ludwig's and Coleman's setting up the equipment for today's meeting. Walker expressed thanks to Kelly Coleman for taking the minutes today, thanks to Nancy Flearl for having coffee and water available, and thanks to all that Commission staff do to help to make these meetings run smoothly.

Minutes of the July 20th, 2002 Meeting: Walker requested action on these minutes. Orester moved the minutes to be accepted and Burns seconded the motion. All were in favor and the minutes were approved.

Report from the Chairman:

Chairman's and Executive Director's Reports are being made available and will be attached to the minutes after the meeting. Van Zandt envisioned what was being requested to be an outline format. Walker confirmed it's being a summary list.

Walker wrote a thank you letter to Sally Van Zandt and a generic one for others for memorials received in O. Dean Van Zandt's name.

On August 6th she sent a thank you to Senator Foley for all the work he did. She testified before the Legislature on behalf of the Board of Commissioners concerning the proposed budget cut. She wrote to Senator Mike Foley afterward thanking him for all the work he did.

Walker stated that two out of three times we avoided a cut and several Legislators expressed on the floor their regrets concerning our budget. Ultimately, the cut did happen but they now know who we are and what our needs are.

Walker attended a Nebraska Information System (NIS) town hall meeting. Accessibility is still a problem; however, Jonathon Ross will work with JD Edwards in Denver from Monday, November 11th until Wednesday the 13th of this upcoming week.

Congratulations to Van Zandt for being elected the new president of the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) and an officer in the Council of State Agencies for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR). She will be attending the NCSAB/CSAVR meetings in Seattle, Washington the week of November 18, 2002.

Congratulations to our Commission staff who will present papers they've written at the New Mexico Workshop on Residential Centers.

Congratulations also to Carlos Servan and Jeff Altman, who will be involved in the Institute on Rehabilitation Issues; and to Nancy Coffman, who was interviewed on KPTM regarding technology.

Van Zandt said we try to provide people with notice of these things. However the TV station called at 3 to meet at 5 for an interview and the interview was aired at 8. It was a quick, late notice but very nice.

Walker thanked Van Zandt for the note of appreciation for bosses day and said the Commission Board appreciates the working relationship with Van Zandt and staff. The Commission Board wants to work closer with staff to move forward.

Report from the Executive Director:

1. Mission statement: We've had lengthy wordy statements in the past. It was discussed at the management retreat and discussed and bounced around through emails the following:

"Empowering blind individuals, promoting opportunities, and building belief in the blind".

Orester moved and Westin-Yockey seconded to change the Mission statement to read as above. The motion passed. Coleman will make that change on the web site.

2. Case Services Review:

During the last year, 67 clients were closed 26; 32 were closed unsuccessful; 19 were closed before an IPE was developed. There were 99 people total 68% were successful (had IPE written) and 32% unsuccessful.

3. Center Statistics:

Fatos Floyd's records from 1996 through September 2002 show there have been 89 fulltime clients in Center training; 50 have completed training and are in competitive employment; 10 are homemakers; therefore, 56% of clients are in competitive employment and 22.5% are still students at the Center.

4. SS Reimbursement

Successful Closures for FYI 2003: which is just from October 1, 2002, we have received \$49,429.81. Last year the total for the full year was \$312,000. The two years before that were \$144,000 and \$136,000. Orester stated the \$312,000 stands for itself and tells us the staff is doing a great job.

5. Budget:

All have seen the biennium budget. Even though the state funds were cut by \$29,700 for the current fiscal year, we are still going to be able to match Federal dollars. We are able to garner \$38,000 from the Low Vision Clinic, Third Party Agreement. We have a full match through all of our grants throughout fiscal year 2003 to state fiscal year 2005. We still need to remember that it's not cash that we can spend, IL is with non-dollars, soft in-kind match. Every dollar of soft match is 1 less that we can spend for clients.

6. Scottsbluff Office Move:

The Scottsbluff office relocated within the same building. They moved on October 7th and have less space, but old cost was \$17,745 and new cost is \$12,905. The first year is about the same as the old cost due to network costs and new furniture.

7. Staff Changes:

Sarah Schmidt will finish Center training on Dec. 6. Deb Clarke left on September 4th. Lisa Taylor resigned on Nov. 4th. Mary Davis is on maternity leave; she had a baby girl, Nicole. She will be gone 2-3 months. We will hire a substitute through State Temporary Service (SOS), in Lincoln to fill in for Davis.

Longevity of employment was acknowledged by Governor Johanns during a ceremony honoring Nancy Flearl and Connie Carlow for 20 years; 25 years for Dan Hill; 10 years for Cindy Zimmer; 15 years for Larry Mackey, Jan Ludwig, Nancy Coffman, Jean Wurtz and Bob Deaton.

8. NIS:

The State Legislature decided to fund the Nebraska Information System (NIS), which will run state budget, payroll, benefits, and administrative services. NAS and NES, the current two systems, are not accessible and it's been a huge effort on the part of consumers and the Commission to make sure this is accessible to all. In the beginning stages, J.D. Edwards said it was accessible but we have finally made them aware that it is not accessible. Jonathon Ross is going to Denver to work with the company this week and hopefully tweak out the problems. Van Zandt stated it's not easy on him because he is so committed to clients and the NIS project is taking a lot of that time away from his working with clients. Ross was acknowledged for the commitment he has put into this issue.

9. In the works:

Dottie Wilmott, Candy Laursen, and Connie Daly will work together as a team to send out a newsletter three to four times per year. It will be available in large print, Braille, disk, tape, and email formats.

10. Web site:

The Link to Thought Provoker by Robert L. Newman is now set up. We now have 17 on our Mailing list; need to use it more often.

Activity report from past month showed 1,288 total hits. There were 237 last week.

11. State Staff Meeting:

It is currently scheduled for the 3rd week of Feb 18th, 1:00 P.M., 19th, and the morning of the 20th in Lincoln. We would like the Commission board to attend and participate. We will work out the details. The Commission Board will try to make this work after checking with Nichelle.

12. Executive Director Evaluation:

Van Zandt is investigating different approaches. Bob Burns recommends specifically setting a few goals that are important and briefly stating how they can be met. He suggested a six-month semi-progress report, and then at the end of the year seeing how the goals were handled and whether or not they were met.

13. Rules:

We met with Lynn Melson the Assistant Attorney General, and went point by point through each rule. We need to move closer to state statutes in some areas. We may need to start over on the blind vendor rule. There is no definite deadline. However, we would like to have the process completed by the next Board meeting.

Nebraska Center for the Blind Video

A video was put together to provide something that would supplement and, in some cases, replace Center tours. It would also be useful in staff training and public education. The Board watched the descriptive version of the video. Walker stated that it deserved a round of applause and thanked everyone who worked on this. The cost to develop was \$7,000. In Service Training grant money was used to fund this project. The plan is to develop one with captions. Sale may be a possibility and we may charge about \$20 to \$25. There are already those who want to purchase the video.

Focus Topic: Informed Choice.

Executive Director Van Zandt and Deputy Director Servan initiated discussion of this topic and there was then interaction concerning how the Commission helps blind people exercise truly informed choice.

Break for 10 minutes at 11:10.

Resumed at 11:20

Old Business:

Materials Update: Walker listed materials received between July and this meeting.

Budget Update: Continued efforts, such as the Diabetic Alternatives Project Grant, were discussed.

Web site Update: See Executive Director's Report.

Friends of the Commission update: Commissioners have been receiving minutes of Friends meetings.

Executive Director's Evaluation Questionnaire: There was discussion of a twenty-question document Burns put together and sent to Commissioners.

Due to computer problems with Internet Nebraska's server, Walker received the information late and didn't have it to read at the meeting.

Materials will be disseminated for the next meeting and possibly fine-tune after discussion with Commission staff for feedback during the State Staff Meeting in February. Interaction about anonymous input will also take place there.

Commission Goals:

Walker expressed the need to have Executive Director Van Zandt's Commission Goals available in order for the Board to do its job effectively.

Walker requested the goals by the February meeting.

Van Zandt agreed to accomplish this.

Burns suggested some possible goals. Some brainstorming ensued in which Burns raised the issue of new hires immediately going through the Center, then starting their jobs.

He wondered about giving them some experience with their actual job either before they take their Center training or as part of it. Is there a better way of giving them a taste of their job to find out if there are problems before we put them through the Center? Van Zandt said the Commission's strategic thinking is very pro-active and staff are always looking at how the system can be improved.

The intense Center training affords many opportunities for both problems and strengths to be discovered.

Commission Board and Staff Meeting: This will take place on February 18 at 1:00 P.M. in Lincoln.

Focus Reports: There was discussion concerning past written focus reports. Focus reports have been received from Fatos Floyd and Terry Harris. Walker had questions about numbers in Terry's report. Van Zandt said she would follow up on that and would talk with other past staff presenters about submitting written information.

Public Comment: There was none.

New Business

Location, Date and Time of Next Meeting:

The next Board of Commissioners meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 18, 2003 at 8:30 a.m. in Lincoln, Nebraska. Approved by all.

Westin-Yockey moved to adjourn and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Kelly Coleman
Vocational Rehabilitation Technician
NCBVI Omaha Office

Barbara Walker, Chairman
NCBVI Board of Commissioners