

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, February 25, 2003 8:30 A.M.

Lincoln, 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 and requested that those present introduce themselves. Board members present: Barbara Walker, Dorothy Westin-Yockey, Bob Burns and Bill Orester.

Staff in attendance: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Jan Ludwig, Bill Brown, Carlos Servan, Bob Deaton, Cheryl Livingston, Josie Rodriguez, Fatos Floyd, Candy Laursen, Robert Newman, Nancy Flearl, Jane Lansaw, Glenn Ervin, Mike Rains, Sahar Husseinii, Jeff Altman, and Wendy O'Connor.

Members of the Public: Brad Loos, Fritz Yockey, Tom Samson, Bette Hopkins, Shirley McMillan, Ronnie Finley, Sarah Anson, Jim Longbine, Cassandra Oaks, Chuck McGee, Ron Henry, Dave Samson, Todd Hartshorn, Vicki Rasmussen, and Roy Hoblely.

Announcement Concerning Public Comments: Chairman Walker stated that if Commissioners are in a discussion someone from the public would like to comment on and time permits, the Chair will honor a request to speak at that time.

Correction in Agenda: Chairman Walker pointed out that she had made a mistake in the agenda. The item "Meet With Commission Staff" should read "1:00", not "1:30".

Minutes of the November 9, 2002: The minutes did not appear on NFB-Newsline ® due to a glitch that will need to be worked out. Orester moved and Burns seconded to approve the minutes. The vote was unanimous.

Report from the Chairman: Nichelle Ferreyra submitted a letter of resignation from her position on the Board of Commissioners to Van Zandt and Walker. Chairman Walker read the letter and noted that both she and Dr. Van Zandt wrote to Nichelle thanking her for her service. This leaves a position open. Walker reminded anyone interested in being considered to fill out an application and get it to the Governor's office.

Legislation: Walker talked about interaction with the Legislature concerning LB611. She encouraged people to use discretion and to think about consequences when making contacts with Senators. Van Zandt's response to the issues and concerns was thought out, taking a lot of time. If there are such concerns, though, Walker requested for people to be sure to go through the appropriate channels. The Board is accessible and if there are problems she encouraged people with concerns to come to the Board of Commissioners. On February 13, 2003, she attended the hearing on LB 611 that was to abolish the Commission. Everyone testified against the bill except for Senator Tyson, who introduced it, and one consumer. Both used only "rumor, hearsay, and anecdotes" in stating their positions. The Health and Human Services Committee voted 6 to 0 (one person was absent) to kill the bill the following morning. Walker thanked everyone who helped to kill it through testimony, letters, calls, presence at the hearing, etc. Those testifying against LB 611 were: Barbara Walker, Roy Holey, Steve Speicher, Amy Eidenmiller, Dr. Van Zandt, Carlos Servan, Lleana Messer, Ryan Strunk, Ryan Osentowski, Dave Samson, Nye Bond, Darrell Walla, Mike Floyd, a letter from Annie Kersten, and Brent Heyen.

Report from the Executive Director: Rules and Regulations: We are still working on the Rules.

Case Service Statistics (Field and Center Outcomes): Dr. Van Zandt reported that NCBVI continues to serve increasing numbers of clients each Fiscal Year.

Staff Changes: Dr. Van Zandt introduced Wendy O'Connor, new staff person in training, who was hired for the apartment resource position and also welcomed Mary Davis who has returned from maternity leave.

Emergency Preparedness: We have reviewed the plan we began in the Fall of 1999 on emergency preparedness for each office. We have also developed a plan that the apartments will use in case of an emergency.

Social Security Reimbursement: In 2002 we generated \$311,872. In 1999 we generated \$56,553. Burns initiated a discussion of the process for receiving reimbursements.

Proposed State Legislation: Van Zandt updated the Board on a previously-discussed proposal by the State Treasurer for handling State accounts. She has made sure the accessibility issue is at the forefront in discussions concerning this matter. Another proposed bill has to do with performance audits. It's doubtful that it will advance, since there would be costs in its implementation. There is also a bill concerning dog guide training carried over from last year.

Communication: Getting notice of Board meetings out to more people; remind people to call our toll free number 877-809-2419. There was discussion concerning getting public notices to members of the Visually Impaired Peer Support (VIPS).

The Board recommended that, in addition to those methods already in effect, notices be aired on Radio Talking Book and placed in the VIPS Newsletter. It was consensus of the Board that everyone be encouraged to do their part in getting informed by calling the toll free number to find out when the meetings are scheduled. Bob Deaton requested that Van Zandt, Walker and Orester speak to the VIPS group on May 14 as a part of its convention and public forum.

Old Business:

Materials Update: Chairman Walker listed the materials Commissioners have received since the November 9 meeting. There was one request that we meet on weekends so people working during the week could attend. Chairman Walker informed the person that the Board wanted to meet with staff and this seemed to be the best way to do that. She said that, while meeting during the week isn't likely to be a trend, it is hoped that the Board will, from time to time, meet with Commission staff.

Budget Update: Van Zandt reported in detail about the budget and the upcoming Appropriations Committee Hearing on February 27. There was extensive discussion with input from the public. Unicameral Appropriations Committee Senators were listed and everyone was encouraged to contact them.

Web site Update: There are more than 2,028 hits each month on the NCBVI site now. The Nebraska Center for the Blind video, THE LIFE YOU CHOOSE, is also available there.

Friends of the Commission Update: No report. Van Zandt stated that the Friends Treasurer contacted NCBVI and was given the information he needed. Just before the end of the year, a couple had around \$8,000 to contribute and Friends was suggested as an avenue for that contribution.

There was discussion concerning how to enhance Friends. The Chairman was asked to suggest to its president, Mike Floyd, that he contact those from the former State Rehabilitation Council who expressed interest in remaining involved that they do so through Friends. Dr. Van Zandt said that Carlos Servan is the Commission's liaison, but the agency itself should not be the driving force behind Friends.

NIS Update: Discussion of Portable Document Format (PDF) files in NIS and the converting of such took place. Walker informed the group there is a translator out of the University of Wisconsin that works for some of them. The address follows: pdf2txt@sun.trace.wisc.edu. Another, which seems to have slower response, is: pdf2txt@adobe.com. Accessibility of NIS is coming along fairly well. The HR piece is up and working. NIS is expected to go live March 1st. If it does not work properly, it will not go live. Concerning training for the staff of the Commission and any other staff within the state that use speech, the Advanced Navigation of the Internet was the first session offered and there were about five participants from other agencies in addition to NCBVI staff. Jonathan Ross, Bill Brown, and a couple of NIS people were involved in this and the training is being done downtown in the NIS Center. The second phase will be on the Employee Self-Service, to be scheduled later, since it is not available to any State employees yet. The third phase will be the parts of NIS uniquely used by individual State employees, so will be set up on an individual basis.

Executive Directors Evaluation Questionnaire: Discussion was held on the 20 questions put together by Burns. A few changes were made as follows: Ten was changed to "If there is a dispute with the public, I trust the Director to listen to all sides and make a reasoned decision. Twelve became "If I have a problem that I have not been able to resolve by going through the ordinary organizational chain of command, I could take my concerns to the NCBVI Board of Commissioners." Burns stated that some of the questions are not directly aimed at the Director but it gives us, as Commissioners, a pulse of the agency. This tool will help the Board evaluate the Director yearly.*

At 11:30 AM arrangements were made for lunch to be delivered.

Commission Goals: Van Zandt issued her goals for which Walker expressed thanks. Burns said that they were good and we can fine tune in another year if need be.

Commission Board and Staff Meeting: It was decided to open discussion by introducing the questions on the survey. Brad Loos was acknowledged and stated it's good to have access to the Board and blind people need to take a role themselves and find out what's going on. Blind people need to do their part as it is a two-way street.

Past Written Focus Reports: Commissioners did receive the one on Transition. Still missing are those on VR, IL, and Technology. From here on, the Board will request a written report at the time of the presentation. Consensus was not to continue to seek past written reports, given the Board's intent to revisit those focus topics in the near future.

Public Comment: There was none.

New Business: Orestor brought up the fact that he doesn't think it is necessary for Van Zandt to request permission to use her vacation time. Van Zandt will check with Brown about this. Burns reported the AMC Theater is preparing to make descriptive movies available in Omaha. Burns will provide information to Van Zandt and then to the Web site. When it opens, there will be a big promotion.

Issues and Concerns Document: Covered earlier.

LB 611: Covered earlier.

Focus Topic for Next Meeting: The Board invited Vicki Rasmussen to talk about the Client Assistance Program (CAP) at the next meeting and then to have Business Enterprise Vending as the focus at the meeting following that.

Location, Date and Time of Next Meeting: Omaha, May 17, 2003, 9:00 AM. Burns requested that Van Zandt and Walker give the VIPS people the opportunity to choose the location of the Board's subsequent meeting.

1:30 PM Meet With Commission Staff: Corrected to 1:00.

Adjourn: Adjournment at 12:20 PM

*Note: The original questionnaire is attached to these minutes. At the afternoon meeting with Commission staff, further revisions and time lines for the questionnaire/survey were recommended. There is not yet available a document resulting from that discussion.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jan Ludwig,

Staff Assistant, NCBVI

Barbara Walker, Chairman

NCBVI Board of Commissioners

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT
February 25, 2003

Nichelle Ferreyra's Resignation from Commission Board

Interaction With Legislators

February 13, 2003 Testimony Before Legislature

Thank You to All Who Helped Kill LB 611

Survey QUESTIONS FOR STAFF OF NCBVI

1 strongly agree 2 agree 3 don't know 4 disagree 5 strongly disagree

I understand what my job responsibilities are.

I understand the objectives of NCBVI.

If I have a problem I feel I can go to my supervisor for help.

I feel that I can go to the Director with a problem.

The Director sets the right goals for NCBVI.

The Director seeks in put from the staff.

The Director is fair.

The Director is a good manager.

The Director sets the right priorities for NCBVI.

If there is a dispute with the Public the director backs me up.

The NCBVI is on the right track.

If I had a problem I could go to the NCBVI Board for help.

There is a system at NCBVI for me to make suggestions.

I think that NCBVI is run efficiently.

The Director believes in equal opportunity for the Blind

Promotions at NCBVI are based on qualifications.

The Director does not show favoritism.

The Director of NCBVI is a hard worker.

I like working for NCBVI.

NCBVI has a good budget process.