

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired  
Public Meeting Minutes  
Saturday, May 17, 2003 9:00 am  
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 and requested that those present introduce themselves. Board members present: Barbara Walker, Dorothy Westin-Yockey, Bob Burns, Nancy Oltman and Bill Orestler. Staff in attendance: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Bob Deaton, Tammy Luebbe, Robert Newman, Nancy Flearl and Jody Fraction. Members of the public: Fritz Yockey, Jo Genit, Sherry Manthe and Jim Jirak.

Announcements Concerning Public Comments: Chairman Walker stated that if Commissioners are in a discussion and someone from the public would like to make a comment, if time permits, the Chair will honor a request to speak at that time. Meetings are taped and anyone can request a copy of the tape.

Deaton acknowledged Nancy Oltman as a new Commissioner who was appointed by the Governor very recently. Walker responded that welcoming Nancy and recognition of her appointment was the next item to be considered. Oltman stated that it is a privilege and honor to be selected as a member of the Board of Commissioners.

Walker announced the availability of copies of the agenda.

Minutes of the Board Meeting February 25th, 2003: Orestor moved and Burns seconded approval of the minutes. The vote was unanimous and the meeting minutes were approved.

Report from the Chairman. Chairman Walker stated that due to computer problems she did not have a copy of the outline of her report. The first item of her report was to again welcome Nancy Oltman to the Board of Commissioners.

Walker reminded people that there will be vacancies coming up at the end of 2003. She then officially congratulated Dr. Pearl Van Zandt on receiving the ACBN Carl T Curtis award. Feb 27, 2003 Walker participated in the appropriations committee budget hearing with testimony on behalf of the Board of Commissioners.

There have been problems putting information on the information channel of Newsliner which is why the minutes were there so late and the meeting announcements and agenda didn't get up this time. This is being resolved according to Ryan Osentowski. The Denver post is now on Newsliner.

Walker reminded the Board of the discussion of VIPS at the last meeting. Orestor and Walker participated in the public forum and in a discussion with the VIPS Board during their Convention in Kearney on May 14. Burns was also in attendance as a workshop presenter and was able to participate in portions of both the forum and the meeting with the VIPS Board. Walker asked the VIPS for suggestions and a decision about a location for the next Board of Commissioners meeting. Recommendations were Kearney, North Platte, and Grand Island. In a voice vote, Grand Island was chosen.

Other items discussed were a request for a compilation of Commissioners' bios and information about the creation of the Commission, representation of VIPS on the Commission Board, and various ways of informing VIPS members of upcoming Commission Board meetings.

Report from the Executive Director: Dr. Van Zandt welcomed Jody Fraction, who started with the agency November 15th, 2002 and thanked her for taking the minutes of the meeting today. She also introduced Tammy Luebbe, who is in training now to be our new Apartment Resource Counselor in Lincoln.

Rules and Regulations: Van Zandt reported that the revisions for Chapter 3, Business Enterprise, were sent on May 9th to Lynn Melson, Assistant Attorney General and to the Board Members. Van Zandt called Ms Melson on Thursday to make sure she had received the materials and to get an idea of what her time frame would be (probably at least a month). We don't know if we need another public hearing until she tells us. Our goal is to have the other two chapters to her soon for her to review. Van Zandt gave an overview of the "problems" in Chapter 3.

Case Service Statistics: We have kept track of our clients completing Center training since 1996. We have had a total of 93 full time clients. Of those 93, 70% are now employed; 59% are competitively employed and 21.5% are still students. 11 % are homemakers and only 8.5 % are not working. Last year, 709 Vocational Rehabilitation clients and 750 Independent Living clients were served altogether by the Commission.

Staff changes: Wendy O'Conner is no longer with the agency. Tammy Luebbe was hired to fill that position and is in training now. Kelly Coleman has been promoted to an Orientation Counselor position in Omaha. Coleman has worked on maintaining the Webmaster duties. Sheila Gawrych in Kearney has now been trained to take over as Webmaster.

Budget: Thursday NCBVI was presented a donation from the Grand Chapter of Nebraska the Order of the Eastern Star Macular Degeneration Fund for \$9,000. They are still accepting donations and will send new donations to us. We also received \$3,500 from the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska for Newsline(r). Also, the American Council of the Blind state convention will make a \$200 donation to the Friends of the Commission.

Old Business: Materials update: Chairman Walker listed materials received by Commissioners since the February meeting. Afterward, Burns moved that in the future the materials list be attached to the minutes rather than being read during the meeting. The motion was seconded by Orestor. The vote was unanimous in favor of the motion. Two items which led to discussion were correspondence about voice-activated phones and the resolution of the matter of Dr. Van Zandt's informing Commissioners rather than seeking their approval for sick leave and vacation time.

Budget Update: Van Zandt reported that it is possible that a special session of the Legislature may be held. At this point, the most current numbers are in the LB407 amendment 1111 budget proposal. The State would provide \$531,539 for fiscal year 03/04 and \$531,068 for fiscal year 04/05. At this point, we are able to match Federal dollars, but will have to make some cuts such as, hopefully only for one time, cutting Home Teaching Plus and 'Round-Tuit and possibly both voluntary and involuntary staff furloughs. We are looking at any ideas anyone might have.

Web Site Update: During April there were 1,769 successful requests on our server, 58 distinct files requested, with an average success request per day of 59.

Friends of the Commission Update: Walker reported that she contacted Michael Floyd, President of Friends, about their communicating with former members of the former State Rehabilitation Council and that is being considered. Other suggestions were discussed.

NIS Update: Van Zandt talked about ongoing communications and continuing efforts to make the Nebraska Information system accessible to the blind.

Staff Survey: The Board agreed to attach the finalized version of the survey to the minutes.

Commission Board and Staff Meeting: Revisions to the survey were made at this meeting. Commissioners expressed their gratitude to the staff for participating in constructive interaction.

Public Comment: Although there were comments from the public throughout the meeting, there were none during this time.

New Business:

Attaching Outlines to Minutes: After some discussion, the Board voted unanimously to no longer require that the Chairman and Executive Director either bring written outlines to meetings or attach them to the minutes.

Focus Topic for Next Meeting: Vickie Rasmussen is available to talk about the Client Assistance Program at our November meeting. The decision was made to revisit the Nebraska Business Enterprise for the next focus topic.

Terry Harris will have a written report. Van Zandt expressed concern about Harris's schedule. The Board agreed to consider rescheduling the meeting if a conflict exists.

Location, Date and Time of Next Meeting: The next meeting will be in Grand Island, as determined by VIPS. The Board voted unanimously to meet on August 2, 2003 at 10:00 AM. Places suggested were: Village Inn, Perkins or Holiday Inn (Jan Ludwig will research).

Other Business: Van Zandt stated that she has been called for Jury Duty and has to be available for the month of June 2003.

Van Zandt responded to an e-mail message from Commissioner Burns regarding how complaints received about Nebraska Business Enterprise are handled. In general, there can be a complaint about vending sites, and sometimes that complaint goes to the building and other times it goes to the Commission. If the vendor has a complaint about the agency, then other procedures are used. The vendors are all required to have a sign at their businesses giving a number at which they can be reached for someone to voice a complaint. Communication is the most important part of business interaction when you have a complaint.

Burns informed the Board that Mopix at AMC is up and running. You can get information at [www.mopix.org](http://www.mopix.org). He suggested contacting theaters regarding not only making this accessible to the blind but also to let them know that making movies accessible is appreciated. The dedication is set for June 2, 2003 at the 7:00 PM showing. The featured movie is Finding Nemo. AMC Theatre is located at the Oakview Mall, 144th & Center in Omaha.

Executive Session: Staff and public dismissed. (30 minutes)

Topics discussed: Staff Survey Results and Executive Director's Evaluation

Meeting Reconvened: Chairman Walker reported that suggestions included having a suggestion box at the Commission and compensating educational support. Van Zandt asked if survey results can be shared with staff. Nancy Oltman offered to compile the results of the survey. They will be attached to the minutes.

Adjourn: Adjournment at 2:00pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Jody Fraction

NCBVI

Staff Assistant

Barbara Walker, Chairman

NCBVI Board of Commissioners

## Minutes of the May 17, 2003 Meeting:

Minutes were approved with one correction. Chairman Walker pointed out that the Board had neglected to include the motion for Dr. Van Zandt's raise in the minutes, since it had been made in Executive Session. It should have been made in the public part of the meeting. Since Chairman Walker did get the language of the motion to the proper people, this mistake didn't cause the raise to be affected, but such a motion should have been made and voted upon in open session. Burns moved, and Westin-Yockey seconded, that the motion and the vote be added to the May 17, 2003 minutes. The motion carried unanimously. Chairman Walker provided a print copy of the language to add to the minutes when they are removed from draft status.

## STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

GENERAL COMMENTS: I reviewed 19 surveys from the staff. Not all surveys were fully completed; whether by choice or by accident is unclear. When generalizations were made, I did my best to try to understand the intent. There are therefore some discrepancies in the amount of answers (i.e.: not all questions will add up to 19 answers).

The following survey is intended to help us, the Board of Commissioners, to get a reading on the pulse of NCBVI through its staff.

Ratings are as follows: 1 strongly agree, 2 agree, 3 don't know, 4 disagree, 5 strongly disagree.

I understand what my job responsibilities are.

Rating 1 14

Rating 2 3

I have the training and support I need to do my job.

Rating 1 8

Rating 2 8

Rating 4 1

I understand the objectives of NCBVI.

Rating 1 12

Rating 2 5

I think that NCBVI is run efficiently.

Rating 1 6

Rating 2 9

Rating 4 1

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

Rating 1 9

Rating 2 3

Rating 3 3

Rating 4 3

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

Rating 1 11

Rating 2 5

Rating 3 1

Rating 4 1

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

Rating 1 12

Rating 2 4

Rating 3 1

Rating 4 1

8. 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.

Rating 1 7

Rating 2 7

Rating 3 3

Rating 5 1

I like working for NCBVI.

Rating 1 13

Rating 2 4

Rating 3 1

The Executive Director sets the right goals for NCBVI.

Rating 1 9

Rating 2 7

Rating 3 1

The Executive Director seeks input from the staff.

Rating 1 11

Rating 2 4

Rating 3 2

Rating 4 1

The Executive Director is fair.

Rating 1 14

Rating 2 4

The Executive Director is a good manager.

Rating 1 12

Rating 2 6

The Executive Director sets the right priorities for NCBVI.

Rating 1 8

Rating 2 8

The Executive Director believes in equal opportunity for the Blind

Rating 1 16

Rating 2 1

The Executive Director does not show favoritism.

Rating 1 11

Rating 2 4

Rating 3 2

The Executive Director is a hard worker.

Rating 1 15

Rating 2 2

18. If there is a dispute with the Public, I trust the Executive Director to listen to all sides and make a reasoned decision.

Rating 1 13

Rating 2 4

19. NCBVI is on the right track.

Rating 1 8

Rating 2 8

Rating 4 1

20. Promotions at NCBVI are based on qualifications.

Rating 1 8

Rating 2 5

Rating 3 3

Rating 5 1

21. NCBVI has a good budget process.

Rating 1 5

Rating 2 9

Rating 3 2

Rating 5 1

Please list any suggestions or ideas for addressing any problems or concerns you have identified here.

Additional Comments:

(Since we stated in the message to staff that comments would be kept confidential, we have not included them here.)

