

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
PUBLIC MEETING
Lincoln, NE
Saturday, May 6, 2006

Approved Minutes

(Note: Tapes of the meeting are available through NCBVI Offices)

Call to Order and Introductions: Bill Orester, Vice Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:07 am at the request of Chairman Loos, who called to say she would be late due to difficulty with transportation. Commissioner Loos arrived shortly thereafter and chaired the remainder of the meeting.

Commissioners Present: Bill Orester, Lincoln; Bob Burns, Omaha; Darrell Walla, Omaha; Nancy Oltman, Hastings and Barbara Loos, Lincoln.

Commission Staff in Attendance from Lincoln: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director; Bill Brown, Business Manager; Val Peery, Administrative Assistant; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director of Independent Living; Carlos Serván, Deputy Director of Voc Rehab; Fatos Floyd, Nebraska Center for the Blind Supervisor; Connie Daly, Lincoln District Supervisor; and Sahar Hussein, Orientation Counselor.

Members of the Public Present: Hubert Paulson, Lincoln; Wes Majerus, Lincoln; Mary Susan Orester, Lincoln; Brad Loos, Lincoln; Ryan Osentowski, Lincoln and, for a portion of the meeting, Jeremy Ritchey, temporary staff member, Lincoln, with clients from the Nebraska Center for the Blind who served lunch--Wayne Ives, Elgin; Henry Bartenbach, Omaha;

Hector Miranda, Lincoln; Sarah Carter, Omaha; Laura Benda, Lincoln; and Kim Richards, Chadron.

Announcement Concerning Public Comments and Tapes of Meetings, Lunch Arrangements and Other Logistics: No announcements were made.

Minutes of the February 4, 2006 Meeting: Motion was made by Burns to approve. Orestor seconded the motion. The vote to approve the minutes was unanimous.

Focus Topic - Budget Training: Bill Brown discussed financial aspects of NCBVI and Sahar Hussein, computer instructor at the Nebraska Center for the Blind, gave a demonstration and training on using JAWS to read Excel spreadsheets.

Board took a short break to recognize Oltman's birthday.

Public Comment: Discussion concerned use of Basic Support funds to send clients to consumer conventions or other training events.

Report from the Chairman:

Loos reported that she testified at the budget hearing on February 7 and participated in a conference call on February 23 with RSA regarding the monitoring report.

Loos reported that she and other Commissioners attended State Staff meeting on April 4, 2006 and added that Commissioners enjoyed being included in the staff appreciation.

Loos stated that she attended the Committee of Blind Vendors meeting on April 14. She had, as directed by the Board, responded to Randy Swanson's response regarding Braille on vending machines. Loos reported that, as the Board continues to work with vendors concerning Braille on vending machines, it is helpful to have Van Zandt's spearheading of a task force within the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) to address this issue on the national level.

Loos stated that the Board has sent a letter to the Governor regarding the provision of interpreters for Deaf-Blind Awareness week.

Loos stated that she has not participate in the State Rehabilitation conference calls but still receives the information and being part of the network is positive.

Loos stated that the Board appreciates receiving the anniversary letters for staff. During this time period, recipients included: Dottie Wilmott, Kelly Coleman, Jennifer Miller, Shane Buresh, Betty Buresh, Jeff Altman, John Schmitt, Cheryl Livingston, Larry Mackey, Cindy Zimmer, Josie Rodriguez,

Sherrie Bruegman, Bob Deaton and Larry Roos. The Board is aware that Jennifer Miller has left employment, and wishes her well.

Loos reported that the Board had received the new Time Certification form. She expressed appreciation for the Center reports, community projects, and reports from the Webmaster. Commissioner Walla's biography is now on the website. She stated that she is happy that Walla's appointment and Oltman's reappointment were confirmed by the Legislature. Loos stated that she has updated her own bio and encouraged other Commissioners to check theirs for possible revision.

Loos reported that the Board received exchanges with the Hawaii agency on residential training centers and feels it is a good idea to continue these types of exchanges.

Loos stated that the Board is happy to hear that senators have toured the Nebraska Center for the Blind.

Loos expressed the Board's appreciation to Dr. Nyman and Peery for finding and placing an article concerning the history of NCBVI in the new Commissioners packet. She also appreciated Burns's updating past motions of the Board.

Loos stated that the Board had received the information regarding the Assistive Technology Partnership grant that NCBVI will be receiving and this is exciting.

Loos acknowledged receipt of Michael Floyd's letter of resignation from Friends of the Commission and hopes that the group will be able to continue its good work.

Public Comment: There were no additional comments.

Break: The Board took a 10-minute break.

Report from the Executive Director:

Van Zandt reported that, for this fiscal year, to the end of April, we served 509 Voc Rehab clients, with 39 successful closures and we served 370 Independent Living clients, with 111 successful closures. This is a total of 879 clients served. Van Zandt stated that the Center's numbers are very good and that since tracking began in 1996, the Center has served 136 individuals. The Center has 81 in competitive employment, 18 homemakers and 27 students. Only 10 are not working. She reported that 90.25% are employed (74.3% competitively employed and 16.5% are homemakers), 19.8% are students, and only 7.4% are not working. This is the lowest unemployment we have had in the last ten years.

Van Zandt reported that there are two voluntary furloughs still in place. Amy and Shane Buresh have a new baby boy (Betty Buresh is the proud grandmother) and Bill Brown is the proud new grandfather of a baby boy.

Van Zandt reported that vendor, JoLynn Hurley, passed away so there is an opening at the State Capitol. The bid process has begun with current vendors having first chance to bid on the facility.

Van Zandt reported that the Mentoring Project is doing well. A few people have dropped out, but others have taken their place.

Van Zandt plans to attend the Independent Agency Directors' meeting on Wednesday, May 10 th. The Assistant Attorney General, Dale Comer, is to be the guest speaker. The meeting will be held at 8:15 in the Governor's Mansion and she invited Commissioners to attend.

Van Zandt reported that she was one of the guest speakers at the ACBN State Convention which was held in Bellevue, NE. She also attended and was asked to speak at the NCSAB Spring Conference which she reported was a great opportunity.

Van Zandt reported that she had been interviewed by someone in West Virginia and nominated for a study about best practices in employers who provide personal assistant services to staff, including drivers, readers, and interpreters.

Van Zandt stated that she has visited with other NCSAB Directors about a voc rehab organization for State Rehab Councils, to see if there is interest in a similar group for blind agencies. Some agency Directors are definitely interested. She will be pursuing the idea and setting up an initial conference call with other agencies after she has had a chance to inform others and has their commitment for involvement.

Van Zandt reported that the first report for the In-Service Training Grant was submitted on-line. As soon as she converts it to a Word document, she will send it to Commissioners.

Van Zandt stated that the Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP) had requested a list of equipment we'd like so a lengthy list was provided to them from staff and Commissioners. She reported that they supported the entire list and are proposing to their Board to give us approximately \$60,000 to purchase equipment for loan and demonstrations. They plan to propose the \$60,000 amount to the Board of Education at its May 12 th meeting . Van Zandt stated that an additional \$5,000-\$6,000 would be provided for setting up all the equipment items on ATP's website.

Van Zandt stated that Project Independence (PI) will be held in Lincoln from July 23-27, 2006. PI will have partial support from the Nebraska Foundation for Visually Impaired Children. She stated that WAGES (Work And Gain Experience in the Summer) would begin on June 25 th. Van Zandt reported that the Enrichment Foundation has agreed to donate \$11,150 for the Omaha participants. We have currently received \$5,750 and will receive the second half midway through the project, once a written report has been submitted. Funding from the Workforce Investment Board may fund the salaries of the WAGES students. The Youth Council makes the determination and, although it's not certain that we'll receive funding, we should know by June 7 th.

Van Zandt reported that NCBVI has been invited to co-sponsor the National Conference of the National Association of Parents of the Visually Impaired (NAPVI). The conference will be in Omaha in 2007, and will also be co-sponsored by the Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI). She stated that this would be a great opportunity for educators and parents to get to know our staff and to be part of this event.

Van Zandt stated that she had received a call from an attorney in Kearney regarding our budget, sub-grants and what the qualifications are for becoming a Commissioner. She is in the process of writing a letter and intends to include our statutes, job description of the Commissioners and budget materials. She plans to send the information to the attorney next week.

Van Zandt mentioned that the State Staff Meeting, held April 4-6, was very successful. She thanked the Commissioners for attending and stated that she and staff appreciated their interaction.

Van Zandt stated that the Omaha State Office Building still has conference rooms available and mentioned that we might want to consider going back there in the future unless the Board preferred where we held the last Omaha meeting.

Van Zandt stated that we have purchased new digital recording equipment and we will be using it at the next meeting.

Public Comment: Discussion concerned dates for WAGES and PI and reasons for their concurrence.

There was also discussion regarding the vacant Apartment Resource position and the rationale for reclassifying it. How the additional money received from the deficit request would be spent was also discussed. Frustrations and concerns regarding the older blind not being represented on the Board were raised. It was announced that the Buresh baby has been named Noah Shane Michael Buresh.

Old Business:

Budget Update: Van Zandt reported that recently the constraints placed on staff have been lifted somewhat concerning using vehicles, drivers and counselors in the field, but that we will not have an accurate assessment of costs and their impact for a couple of months. Computing actual costs is difficult to determine as gas prices have quadrupled. After the budget impact is measured, we will consider other changes.

Website Update: Loos reported that the Board had received the Webmaster's report. Van Zandt stated that the Webmaster included some emails that contained the names of individuals who had requested information. It was decided that, in the future, prior to sending his report, the webmaster delete individual names from personal inquiries.

Lunch break: During the lunch break, Wes Majerus demonstrated a Kurzweil-National Federation of the Blind (K-NFB) handheld reader. The Board reconvened at 12:55 pm.

Friends of the Commission Update (including report from Orester concerning meeting with Friends): Orester reported that he contacted the IRS and was informed that the rule has changed with respect to the concern he has previously raised regarding the Friends not following the Bylaws. Orester stated that the IRS no longer does routine checks on non-profit organizations unless either there is a complaint or the organization fails to file a report. He stated, therefore, that the Friends of the Commission organization is in compliance. Orester also stated that he was sorry to hear of Mike Floyd's resignation. Loos thanked Orester for checking with the IRS.

NIS Update: Van Zandt stated that the new version (which had been on hold because of accessibility issues) has been implemented and asked Majerus to report. Majerus stated that, prior to going live, they implemented JAWS scripts and had some problems with tables but these issues have been resolved and he thought the updated version was going well.

NFB-Newsline® Update: Osentowski reported that there are currently 1,061 subscribers. He stated that the Associated Press has been recently added and how exciting this is, as it updates constantly. Osentowski reported that as articles come in, they are date stamped so readers can read current articles first.

New Commissioner Packet Update: Van Zandt stated that a physical packet has not been made, as Commissioners have wanted documents electronically and can access most things through the website. She has developed a checklist of items and will revise as needed for new Commissioners. She is also working on a website menu. Van Zandt informed the Board of her willingness to put a physical packet together if a new Commissioner requests a packet in Braille, large print, or print. Van Zandt stated that she was open to suggestions of items to be included. It was decided that the statutes creating NCBVI and the Commissioners' job description should be included.

Burns suggested that a fact sheet be prepared to give to all new Senators as we will have twenty new ones next year. Van Zandt informed the Board that she does write welcome letters to new Senators and invites them to tour the Center, but agreed that a short list of key point items would be a good idea to give to all new legislators. Burns stated that one goal is to get funding for the older blind as Nebraska has no state-funded program. Loos stated that consumers need to educate the new Senators also.

Status of Braille on Vending Machines: Loos stated that the following three topics are all related so would discuss them together and then would have public comment. Loos reported that this topic was discussed at the April meeting of the Committee of Blind Vendors and the sentiment was that Burns or someone would do Braille at one of the Omaha sites. Burns stated that the local NFB Chapter could Braille some machines. Loos stated that it would show "good faith". Both she and Van Zandt learned that some of their labelers weren't working. Steps, including contracting with J. B. Translations for whole sets of labels and possible replacement of labelers are being taken. Van Zandt also reported that on a national level, a task force has been formed with directors from Nebraska, Minnesota, Connecticut, Mississippi and Illinois. Their first conference call is scheduled for Monday, May 8. Loos stated that she appreciated Van Zandt's efforts and mentioned that it would be good to have training for vendors in the use of Braille. Loos stated that she appreciated the Center students' Brailleing the lunch items and also appreciated Oltman's Brailleing her birthday coffeecakes. Van Zandt reported that only a few vendors responded to her request regarding Braille on their machines. She will review the spreadsheet and send the information to Commissioners.

Status of Randolph-Sheppard: Van Zandt reported that the Randolph Sheppard Act is under attack and there is legislation that could go to Congress. It is very important that blind agencies and other parties work together in promoting the strengths of the Randolph Sheppard Act. Van Zandt stated that she would keep everyone informed as information is received. Loos said she had personally responded to one of the comment periods concerning the legislation.

Public Comment: In response to an inquiry, it was reported that vendor Dave Hunt is working part-time and doing well. There was further discussion regarding the temporary position and reasons for reclassifying the apartment manager position. A question was asked about the status of former Commissioner, Dorothy Westin-Yockey, who was injured last November. Loos stated that the last time she had spoken with Dorothy's sister, she was reported to be doing well.

New Business:

Committee of Blind Vendors Meeting, April 14, 2006: Discussed earlier.

RSA State Visit in August: Van Zandt stated that she had received a note from our state liaison, George Kosovich, informing her that he may or may not continue to be our state liaison. One other individual will be coming to Nebraska the week of August 14th to visit us and several other entities. Van Zandt plans to work with the general agency to coordinate meetings and help set up a schedule. Van Zandt asked when the Commissioners would be available and it was determined that a late afternoon conference call would work the best and that the Commissioners from either Lincoln or Omaha would try to attend in person, depending on the physical location of the meeting.

State Plan: Loos stated that the Board had received the revised draft Van Zandt had sent. Van Zandt stated that she had not removed any language, but added some concerning our goals and priorities. Loos inquired about the language concerning services provided to minorities. Van Zandt will review it and possibly revise it based on the discussion. Van Zandt asked the Board about the advisability of contracting with someone for a Comprehensive Needs Assessment. She has spoken with Dr. Elton Moore, Director of a program in Mississippi, who provides this service for state agencies.

She stated that they understood blindness and thought they would be a good resource. The consensus was to wait on contracting for this until definite expectations are known. Walla moved to accept the State Plan and Orester seconded. The Board's vote to approve the State Plan was unanimous.

Commissioners' Participation in State Staff Meeting, April 4, 2006: Loos stated that website updates and the staff survey were discussed. Walla mentioned that the drug information was very informative. Loos stated that the interaction with staff was very good.

Staff Survey: Loos apologized for the lateness in sending out the survey to the other Commissioners for review. It was decided that the survey should be added to Van Zandt's checklist of items for new Commissioners and that it will be sent to staff next week and due back by Friday, May 26 th. Oltman volunteered to compile the information. No revisions were made.

Executive Director's Evaluation: The Board discussed possible dates to discuss Van Zandt's evaluation. It was decided that Peery would schedule a conference call for Monday, June 12, 2006, from 7:00 to 9:00 pm. Peery stated that she would send the Board an email when the conference call was set up and also a reminder prior to June 12 th.

Focus Topic for Next Two Meetings (August, Counselor/VR Client Relationship and How It Works; November, Workings of the Business Office): Van Zandt reported that Candy Laursen, North Platte District Supervisor, has reserved the conference room in the North Platte State Office Building for August's meeting. Transportation was discussed but no definite arrangements were made.

Public Comment: There was clarification of a matter concerning an open Board meeting at the ACBN Convention that had been thought by some to be closed.

Final Announcements (including Date and Location of August Meeting): Loos stated that the next Board Meeting will be held August 5, 2006, in North Platte. Loos stated that she appreciated everyone's input and thanked everyone for attending this meeting. She also thanked the Center staff and students for providing lunch.

Adjourn: The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm by a unanimous vote.

*ADDENDUM: The NFB Newsline report omitted that the UPI is also available via Newsline. It was moved and seconded that this correction be made and the minutes be approved. Loos stated there were no objections so the correction passed.

Respectfully Submitted,
Val Peery, Administrative Assistant

Barbara Loos, Chairman
NCBVI Board of Commissioners

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE
BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
Budget Process
Presented by Bill Brown, Business Manager
May 6, 2006

The budget process at the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) is a joint effort of all staff at the Commission. Obviously some staff is more involved than others, but we believe that anyone who has needs or ideas has opportunity to influence the process through the chain of command.

As Business Manager, it is my belief that I am the custodian of the budget and the finances of NCBVI. While I am a part of the process, the key players in the process are the program staff. They are the people who serve our clients and the clients are the reason we are here. In the budget process, I try to translate the priorities of the agency into the dollars available. Both of these variables move at times and can be unpredictable so that sometimes it makes the process confusing and what would appear to be unstable.

The fact of the matter is, however, I see it as my part to keep my eye on these areas and create dialog to make sure we serve as many of our priorities as possible without spending more money than we have available. It is also my job to make sure that monies are spent in a manner within the State and Federal accounting guidelines. While I have quite a bit of experience with the rules and regulations of the grants, I depend on the program staff to make the determination when it comes to appropriateness of expenses for each of the grant regulations.

PRIORITIES

Priorities are the biggest and most difficult issues to deal with. Budgeting is allocating scarce resources over priorities you have established. Those expenditure priorities are a part of the dialog that is ongoing in the agency.

Client service budget items are the most complicated and most vulnerable of our budget items. We do not control who walks in the door for services. We cannot and we will not attempt to. We try to manage the entire agency statewide on a case service basis. We look at our total case service expenditure pressures monthly to analyze our need to adjust our participation, fees, or scope. This cannot be done with much accuracy as the regulations generally dictate that items needed to fulfill the job goal need to be provided. Some of the factors involved in the process dictate the grant by which funding can be provided and funding in one grant may be less available than others. Yet, during our first 5 years of existence, we have never run into a situation where we could not provide needed services.

Operation of the agency is the other part of our expenditure priorities and is a more easily controlled issue. However, it is no less controversial. We have to answer the questions of where the greater need is for staff, supplies, services, outreach, or equipment. These priorities are more easily dealt with as each is very predictable in cost. Personnel decisions are very predictable, although they have a health insurance component that is variable. Personnel are also the most expensive part of our budget both from a total dollars stand point as well as an incremental factor. Adding, hiring, and implementing a new staff member, depending on the type of position, cost a minimum of \$30,000. Those costs then become recurring from year to year unless our priorities dictate that we eliminate a position. Last year we discovered how traumatic those decisions can be.

We also need to be available to our clients, communicate with each other and other agencies, and have the tools necessary to conduct our business and report to our federal partners. These are all factors in looking at our operations budget.

We must also be cognizant of the long term even though our agency is short term funded. Equipment in the agency must be up to date and working, in order to avoid staff down time.

FINANCE

NCBVI finances are distributed over a matrix of grants and funds. Grants refer to the objective of the services. Funds refer to the source of the monies.

Grants can be from two sources; federal grants which may require matching non state financial participation, and private grants we receive from other entities including the recent Helen Keller National Center Grant, National Federation of the Blind Mentoring grant, and the Enrichment Foundation grant for WAGES.

Our primary grant is a federal grant from the United States Department of Education called the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Grant (Basic Support.) This grant is issued to the State of Nebraska with a matching ratio of 78.7 percent federal to 21.3 percent non federal match. Match for the Basic Support grant must be cash match, meaning that in kind match is not allowed. Match from certain 3rd party agreements with other State Agencies can be used as match as long as the program is administered by the agency, serves Vocational Rehabilitation Clients, and does not supplant the normal services of the grant.

In kind or soft match is match of effort or other non cash services. Basic Support only allows for cash match spent on Vocational Rehabilitation Services as defined by the Code of Federal Regulations, 34 CFR 365. These are the regulations that govern our Basic Support Program.

We also have 2 Independent Living Grants from the United States Department of Education; one for Older Individuals who are Blind (over 55) and one for the State Independent Living program. In kind match is allowed to match the IL grants. We used in kind match for the first 4 years of the Commission's existence as we did not have sufficient cash match. We used private services paid by VIPS and Radio talking Book to match our first few OIB grants and we used the trust fund and Katherine D. Robinson fund Interest to match our State independent Living Grant during that time.

We also receive a Supported Employment grant from the US Dept of Education. It is a grant to serve our most severely and multiply handicapped clientele. It is a grant that is used based on clients that qualify. Sometimes we do not have clients that qualify and during our earlier years did not spend this entire grant. During the past couple of years we have spent all of this grant and more. This grant has no match requirements.

We received two special projects grants from the US Dept of Education in 2000 for transition and innovative In Service training programs. Those were 5 year grants with no match requirements. We took advantage of their power to stretch the envelope of services to the blind. Unfortunately these grants expired on September 30, 2005. The Legislature did not pick up much of the funding of these grants which led to the majority of the budget issues we experienced last year.

Let us now address funds. We utilize 4 of the 5 different types of funds allowed in State Government. We use State General funds which are your state tax dollars from income and sales tax. These funds are used specifically to match our federal funds from the federal grants. Over the years with increases in General fund Appropriations in 2001, 2005, and again in 2006, we have become much less dependent on non cash and cooperative agreement match funding. Match is still an issue as we had to disengage from our providers of non cash match in order to satisfy our service priorities with our budget cuts last year.

We also are appropriated funding from Cash Funds which are funds generated by the agency or our vendors. Our source of Cash funds is primarily our Nebraska Business Enterprise vendors who contribute 13% of their gross profits to this fund. We use their Cash fund, or set aside as it is more commonly known, as match for federal dollars in the Randolph Sheppard program. The federal funding used is the Basic Support Grant. We use Set Aside funds on a match ratio of 21.3 percent set aside to 78.7 percent federal basic support funds.

The third type of funding NCBVI uses is Federal Funds. These are our grants as referred to above and even these must be appropriated by the Legislature.

Social Security Reimbursement funds are federal funds. They are funds sent by the Social Security Administration (SSA) to reimburse us for costs of rehabilitating a Social Security recipient. In order to qualify for this funding we must rehabilitate and our services must contribute to one of their clients or recipients becoming gainfully employed at a level that qualifies them to go off SSA cash benefits at the established Substantial Gainful Activity (SGA) level for at least 9 months of a 12 month period. We can use these reimbursement funds to further our Vocational Rehabilitation Program. This money cannot be used for match.

The last funding source we have is our Trust funds. These funds are primarily funds received from private sources and include donations, bequests, memorials, private organization grants, etc. This money can be used as match as long as it is spent on Vocational Rehabilitation or Independent Living clients for services consistent with their program. We use Katherine D. Robinson memorial monies, Helen Keller National Center monies, donations of all amounts from this fund to pay for primarily items that we give to new referrals as an aid to their adjustment to Independent Living for both IL plans and Vocational Rehabilitation Plans. These funds can be spent without appropriations established by the Governor and Legislature.

It is our job in the Budget process to look at these factors to establish how much we have available to stretch over the priorities we have established.

PLAN

The plan is the melding of the priorities and the finance pieces of the process into a living document. This plan, through the use of spreadsheets, is a document that we can interrogate and change with relative ease. It also gives us flexibility to deal with some of the less predictable items throughout the year. It is a living document that adjusts as our needs adjust.

Budget documents are done on a State year and Federal fiscal year basis. We generally use the federal fiscal year, as it is the source of our funding for the master plan. That plan generally runs from October 1 through September 30. It must conform within the parameters of the State budget appropriation process. We must always remain within the amounts that the Legislature and Governor set forth.

Obviously the State Budget is a major part of our planning. While we make this budget to comply with the State fiscal year of July 1 through June 30, the working relationship that we have with both the executive and legislative budget offices allow us to build a flexible plan. While State and Cash fund appropriations can only be changed by the legislative and executive process, the federal appropriation can be adjusted administratively if we show federal fund availability and give them a plan on how we plan to finance it if the increase requires matching. Any adjustment must be approved by both branches of government.

TIMELINES

The timeline of this process is a two year cycle. I will use the upcoming cycle to illustrate.

The next state budget will go into effect July 1, 2007 and will end June 30, 2009. We will start the process this July 2006.

We will begin the process this July with discussions regarding the budget with the Board, Supervisors, and Deputy Directors. At this time we will also look at what priority issues we need to add, change, or delete. I will develop a continuation plan or spreadsheet that simply looks at what the costs and revenues will be if everything goes as it is at that time and look at where that takes us in terms of a bottom line amount.

At your August board meeting we plan to discuss any recommendations you may have. After that, Pearl and I will look at all the recommendations and the input from staff. We will then develop a plan and put it in the state budget system using the guidelines that they issue.

July 1 st they will send us a publication that gives us guidance for many of the expenses that are dictated by the State Department of Administrative Services. We are required to do our budget based on no increase in salaries or benefits. This is an area that hurts us as the executive and legislative branch recommendations compensate for the increases to our salaries and budget in terms of the state funding but do not compensate for the cost to us (usually about 80%) that is to be picked up by the federal funding. And generally, those funds have been identified in the budget to pick up other costs. We try to keep that in mind. But if they give us a 3 to 5 percent increase in salary cost, generally they only fund about .6 to 1 percent increase. In order to compensate, we have to adjust our federal funding after the final plan is adopted.

In addition to the state budget, another exercise called a budget modification plan is required and presented. This exercise asks us to identify our changes to the budget if there is a designated percentage decrease to our State funding level. This is a very difficult process in that it is part of public record and requires that we be very critical. Priorities are identified and amounts are assigned to bring the budget down to the prescribed level of state funding. Last funding cycle the budget modification exercise required us to show how we would fund the agency if we were only funded at 95% of the level in 2005. This affects all types of funding since most of our federal grants require match. Lack of match could forfeit federal dollars too. Maintenance of effort is involved in this process also.

By law our state budget is due September 15, 2006. Prior to submission we will advise the Board, usually through the board Chair, of our budget recommendations as far as funding level is concerned.

From September 15, 2006 through January 1, 2007 we will most likely be contacted by both the legislative and executive budget analysts to answer specific questions regarding our budget.

Generally the Governor's recommendations will be announced during his State of the State address around January 20, 2007. That will give us an idea of where the executive branch is with our funding.

Legislative hearings are generally held in February for us to discuss our budget with the Appropriations Committee. Their recommendations generally come out between March 15 and April 10 so we know what their recommendations will be to the Legislature. This is very important as the Legislature generally holds fairly close to the committee's recommendations. The Budget bill can be voted upon by the Legislature any time after that (generally around April 10) but generally does not happen until the end of May which is towards the end of the 90 day (long) session.

The governor is presented the budget and has line item veto power over any provisions of the budget. The Legislature has an opportunity after that time to override his veto. Overrides require 60% of the legislators to vote yes.

This process concludes about June 5, 2007 and the budget goes into effect on July 1, 2007 so there is not much time to adjust. Since most of our money comes from federal sources, however, the impact of cuts has some modification.

After the budget is in place the agency has opportunity to request deficit appropriations which are due on November 15 of each year. These recommendations are addressed each year separate from the regular budget process. They are generally limited to unforeseen issues that require review of the budget.

The federal budget process is much more fluid and less controllable. To be brief, it is an annual process that does not begin in earnest until August or September and many times after that; the budget period is October 1 through September 30. Our agency is fortunate in that our Basic Support Grant is identified as a mandatory program with a cost of living adjustment clause. This generally means that we will be funded but we do not know when or how much. Federal funds cannot be spent prior to a budget bill being passed.

Congress usually passes stop gap funding for short periods of time, entitled “continuing resolutions”, but the Grant Award Notifications or checks for these grants generally are delayed 3 to 4 weeks and usually are not passed until right before the period begins. Many times we do not receive awards for the funding until after the funding period has ended.

Our state partners are generally pretty good about allowing us to utilize large proportions of our state funding at the beginning of the year until the federal government can resolve a budget, but since state funding is less than 20% of our total budget, this gets very interesting after December 15th each year. The past 2 years it has been after January 15th before our federal funding that began the previous October 1st is resolved.

In the meantime our living document is interrogated, modified, and questioned through the year. As you can see, this is not a process that happens for a week and goes away. It requires a great amount of time and energy on the part of all staff to make it work and make it effective for the citizens we serve.

Some Excel Commands

After opening the Excel sheet, it is best to go to the top of the document by pressing Control+Home. If you do not hear A1, your friendly neighborhood spreadsheet maker forgot to unfreeze his panes. This is a visual enhancement. To unfreeze the pane, press Alt+W to go to the Window menu. Press the Down Arrow until you hear unfreeze pane and press Enter. Then, when you press Control+Home, you should be at the top row and column.

The spreadsheet is made up of rows and columns. The rows go up and down, and they are numbered. The columns go left to right, and they are lettered. If you hear Jaws saying a1, then, you are in row one, column A.

To move down the rows, use the Up and Down arrow keys. To move between the columns, press the Left and Right arrow keys.

The spreadsheets are not always set up to read from the top to the bottom. You might find blank rows and columns. To reach the edge of the data, or the last or first column or row with data, press Control with the arrow keys. For example, if you went down to A2, Column A in row 2, and you found that to be blank, you could press Control Right Arrow to find out if there is any data on that row.

In a budget spreadsheet, you might find a row with columns for the months. You want to locate the first column of months, and set that to be your column title. This will announce the month as you arrow to the right to hear the different amounts. You set your column title by pressing Control+Alt+Shift+C.

You will also want to find the first row that contains the budget years. Press Control+Alt+Shift+R to set your row title. When you arrow down, Jaws will announce what year you are viewing, no matter what column you happened to be on.

Sometimes, an excel workbook has more than one sheet of information. To move between the sheets, press Control Page up and Control Page down.

Some cells may contain too much information to grasp in one read, and you can get into an edit box where you can read it one line, word, or character at a time. To do so, press the F2 key. When finished, you must press the Escape key to get out of the edit box. Keep in mind that if you type anything in any of the cells by accident, the data will be erased because the entire cell is automatically highlighted when it is in focus. You can undo this action by pressing Control+Z. It is unfortunate that not all sins could be so easily undone. If the author of the spreadsheet protects his or her document, and you push a letter by accident, you will get an error message to indicate that you are not allowed to make any changes. Simply press Escape to get out of that message box.

Sahar Hussein

MATERIALS LIST
May 6, 2006 Meeting

02-05-06—Jirak: File Request (wants Aug. 3, 2003 minutes, lost during transfer; has follow-up)

02-05-06—Nyman: Notice of meeting and minutes (for Friends of the Commission; has follow-up)

02-06-06—VZ: Another question (concerning posting minutes on listserv; has follow-up)

02-06-06—Peery: Approved Board Minutes (for November 19, 2005 meeting; has follow-up)

02-06-06—VZ: Brailleing Machines (to Burns concerning volunteer Brailleists at specific vending location)

02-06-06—VZ: Braille on Vending Machines (to NBE vendors to gather information)

02-06-06—VZ: FW: RSA 107 Report (has follow-up)

02-06-06—VZ: Technical Assistance Circular (to Mr. Kosovich, asking for electronic copy)

02-06-06—Loos: [commission-board] Bio from Darrell

02-06-06—VZ: FW: Meeting Re: 107 (exchange with Kosovich; has follow-up)

02-06-06—VZ: Exchange between Hawaii and NCBVI (concerning residential component of training center; has follow-up)

02-06-06—VZ: [commission-board] Braille on Vending Machines (forwarding message from Randy Swanson)

02-06-06—VZ: FW: Audit Finding (message from Bill Brown about bank reconciliation in NIS)

02-06-06—VZ: FW: Braille on Vending Machines (message from Gail Crowe)

02-07-06—VZ: FW: Braille on Vending Machines (message from Terry Harris clarificating information about Crowe's operation)

02-07-06—VZ: Happy Anniversary Dottie! (to Dottie Wilmott)

02-07-06—VZ: [commission-board] Letter of Appreciation (to Brent Heyen and members of Nebraska Center for the Blind Alumni Association thanking for \$500 donation to Center; has follow-up)

02-07-06—VZ: [commission-board] Letter of Appreciation (clarification of its going to staff and Board, since a staff member wondered if received by mistake)

02-07-06—VZ: Letter to the Auditor (required letter, needs signature of Board Chairman; has follow-up)

02-07-06—Loos: [commission-board] Testimony at Budget Hearing (before Appropriations Committee))

02-08-06—VZ: Test (testing email; has follow-up)

02-08-06—VZ: [commission-board] Supported Employment (has follow-up)

02-08-06—VZ: [commission-board] Commissioner Terms (sending Ferreyra's and Oltman's term information to Jirak)

02-08-06—VZ: FW: Update on NIS (concerning delays in release until accessibility is achieved; has follow-up)

02-08-06—VZ: [commission-board] (Pearl's handouts to Appropriations Committee at hearing on 2-7; has follow-up)

02-09-06—VZ: [commission-board] Braille on Vending Machines (from Tom Scheideler)

02-09-06—VZ: [commission-board] Commissioner Terms (sent to Jirak; has follow-up)

02-09-06—VZ: [commission-board] Testimony at Budget Hearing (sending Loos's testimony to staff)

02-09-06—VZ: [commission-board] Budget Response Timeline (for Appropriations Committee; has follow-up)

02-10-06—Carlow: [commission-board] Revised NCBVI 2006 calendar (has follow-up)

02-10-06—VZ: [commission-board] Happy Anniversary Kelly (to Kelly Coleman)

02-10-06—VZ: [commission-board] Accessibility and PeopleSoft One Enterprise One 8.10 (concerning NIS; has follow-up)

02-11-06—Jirak: Commission Website (it is up-to-date; has follow-up)

02-13-06—Loos: [commission-board] bake sale and Raffle (sending message from Zierenberg about OCAA event)

02-13-06—VZ: RSA Technical Assistance Circular on "Integrated Setting" (has follow-up)

02-15-06—Loos: [commission-board] Teleconference - February 23 (concerning 107 Monitoring Review)

02-16-06—Peery: Mike Adams Mother (concerning her funeral; has follow-up)

02-16-06—Peery: Clarification - Peru. Nebraska (concerning Corinne Adams's funeral)

02-17-06—Peery: More information on Mike Adams Mother (has follow-up)

02-17-06—Peery: Draft Minutes from Commissioner Meeting - February 4, 2006 (has follow-up)

02-21-06—VZ: [commission-board] Time Certification

02-21-06—VZ: Re: Fw: reappointment to NCBVI Board (response to Nancy Oltman who sent letter for confirmation hearing from Senator Burling; has follow-up)

02-21-06—VZ: [commission-board] Teleconference - February 23 (has follow-up)

02-21-06—VZ: [commission-board] Appropriations Committee tour the Center (has follow-up)

02-21-06—VZ: [commission-board] Memo concerning next vendors meeting (has follow-up)

02-21-06—Loos: [commission-board] Some history (sending message from Nyman with material located by Peery for possible inclusion in Commissioner packet; has follow-up)

02-21-06—VZ: [commission-board] Braille on Vending Machines (resending message of Feb. 6 to include her correct email address)

02-21-06—VZ: [commission-board] regarding funding for PI Proposal (responding to Teresa Fischer, President, Nebraska Foundation for Visually Impaired Children, who proposed granting \$1000 for NCBVI's Project Independence summer program; has follow-up)

02-22-06—VZ: [commission-board] Letter to Impartial Hearing Officers (has follow-up)

02-22-06—VZ: [commission-board] Happy Anniversary Jennifer! (to Jennifer Miller)

02-22-06—VZ: [commission-board] Happy Anniversary Shane! (to Shane Buresh)

02-22-06—VZ: [commission-board] Happy Anniversary Betty! (to Betty Buresh)

02-22-06—VZ: [commission-board] Happy Anniversary Jeff! (to Jeff Altman)

02-23-06—VZ: [commission-board] ACBN - The New Look (has follow-up)

02-23-06—VZ: [commission-board] Center for Personal Assistance Services (PAS) Seeks Promising Practices (concerning commending employers for accommodations; has follow-up)

02-23-06—VZ: [commission-board] Appreciation (to Senator Burling for recommending Nancy Oltman's confirmation as a Commissioner and inviting him for a tour)

02-23-06—VZ: [commission-board] Appreciation (to Senator Brashear for recommending Darrell Walla for confirmation as a Commissioner and inviting him for a tour)

02-23-06—VZ: [commission-board] ACBN Website - a question answered (concerning link to NCBVI; has follow-up)

02-24-06—VZ: [commission-board] Update on NCBVI Funding (has follow-up)

02-24-06—VZ: [commission-board] Tour Thank you letters (to Senators Price, Kruse, Cudaback, and Engel; has follow-up)

02-24-06—VZ: [commission-board] NBE Vendors Committee Meeting (postponed from March 3 to April 14; has follow-up)

02-25-06—Loos: [commission-board] response to Randy Swanson.doc (draft; has follow-up)

02-26-06—Loos: Fw: Comments for Your Consideration (to Susan Pollack, Department of Defense, concerning joint policy statement about vending)

02-27-06—VZ: [commission-board] Happy Anniversary John (to John Schmitt)

02-28-06—VZ: [commission-board] Letter from Altman to Lincoln Mayor (concerning O Street construction; has follow-up)

02-28-06—VZ: [commission-board] CCD Older Blind budget request (to Deaton and Servan about what Council of Citizens with Disability is doing about Federal budget)

02-28-06—VZ: [commission-board] Letter to Mayor Seng (concerning 48 th & O Street construction; has follow-up)

02-28-06—Jirak: [commission-board] Focus Topics Now Online (also mentions place of February Board meeting not being correct; has follow-up)

03-01-06—Peery: [commission-board] Separate documents (resending documents with correct city of February meeting)

03-01-06—VZ: [commission-board] letter to Fortenberry (concerning Centers for Disease Control initiative about blindness)

03-02-06—VZ: [commission-board] Integrated employment (letter to Director of Outlook Nebraska; has follow-up)

03-02-06—vZ: [commission-board] Time Certification

03-02-06—Loos: [commission-board] Correction of Meeting Placeq (both web and NFB-Newsline® have made the correction; has follow-up)

03-02-06—Loos: [commission-board] response to Randy Swanson (sent to Pearl to send to all vendors)

03-02-06—Loos: [commission-board] Response From NCBVI Board of Commissioners (to Randy Swanson)

03-03-06—VZ: [commission-board] NBE Meeting Agenda (requesting that Simons and Harris add two items about Braille on machines)

03-03-06—VZ: [commission-board] NCBVI Board Response (sending letter to Randy Swanson to other vendors)

03-03-06—Loos: [commission-board] Hand In Hand Deaf 4-8-06.doc (sending letter from Poff and response to Board)

03-03-06—VZ: [commission-board] Spring Conference (to Deaton concerning presentation she has been asked to make and funding of her going)

03-03-06—VZ: [commission-board] (sending profile of Outlook Nebraska; has follow-up)

03-03-06—VZ: [commission-board] Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (sending message that it has been discontinued)

03-03-06—VZ: [commission-board] Low Vision Purchases (to NCSAB Exec)

03-07-06—VZ: [commission-board] State VR In-Service Training (84.265A) (has follow-up)

03-07-06—VZ: [commission-board] [Everyone] Emailing: staff listing cell numbers.txt (including suggestion from Glenn Ervin; has follow-up)

03-07-06—VZ: [commission-board] Happy Anniversary Cheryl (to Cheryl Livingston)

03-08-06—VZ: Fwd: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Salary Survey (has follow-up)

03-08-06—Jirak: [commission-board] Website Comments & Question (concerning liking our site and wondering if there is something similar in Wisconsin; has follow-up)

03-09-06—VZ: [commission-board] News Article from Dr. Van Zandt (from Lincoln Journal/Star; has follow-up)

03-09-06—VZ: Want List (Assistive Technology; has follow-up)

03-09-06—Peery: [commission-board] Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Salary Survey (resending, since VZ email having problems so original didn't read well with JAWS; has follow-up)

03-09-06—F. Floyd: Hector's article

03-10-06—VZ: [commission-board] Regarding our conversation and the 48th & "O" street project (includes communication between Jeff Altman and Karl Fredrickson, Director of Public Works and Utilities)

03-12-06—Jirak: [commission-board] [ncbvi-announce] Lincoln Journal Star Article on Budget (has concerns raised by Sally Baird; has follow-up)

03-13-06—VZ: [commission-board] Braille on Vending Machines (response from Randy Swanson)

03-15-06—VZ: [commission-board] Moving Forward (recognizing and thanking people for helping increase funding of NCBVI; has follow-up)

03-16-06—VZ: [commission-board] You never know who you will run into... (Jennifer Miller and students ran into Senator Cudaback at Walgreen's; has follow-up)

03-16-06—VZ: [commission-board] Time Certification (using new form)

03-16-06—VZ: [commission-board] Time Certification Revision (explanation of new form)

03-16-06—VZ: [commission-board] Ticket to Work Report

03-16-06—VZ: [commission-board] Thank you Senator (to Senator Cudaback)

03-17-06—VZ: [commission-board] Transition team report for 2004-2005 (has follow-up)

03-17-06—VZ: [commission-board] Comments from other States about purchasing Low Vision Equipment (has follow-up)

03-17-06—VZ: [commission-board] [rehabnet] Microsoft's National College Recruitment Program (includes internship and employment possibilities with Microsoft)

03-20-06—Loos: [commission-board] Time and Time Frame for Board (concerning State Staff Meeting; has follow-up)

03-20-06—Jirak: [commission-board] Uploading issues (has follow-up)

03-20-06—F. Floyd: test (seeing if her email works)

03-21-06—F. Floyd: Daryl's article

03-21-06—VZ: [commission-board] Convention (to president of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska about her doing public forum)

03-21-06—Mindrup: [commission-board] NFBNMembers Message (concerning additions to NFB-Newsline®, saying all need to use this kind of thing to influence employers)

03-22-06—F. Floyd: Center evaluation (sent 87, 88, 89, 90, 91,

03-22-06—VZ: [commission-board] Time and Time Frame for Board (includes draft agenda; has follow-up)

03-23-06—VZ: [commission-board] Firststar Fiber policy change (has follow-up)

03-24-06—Mindrup: [commission-board] NFBNMembers Message (same as previous concerning NFB-Newsline®)

03-25-06—Mindrup: [commission-board] star journal (suggestions for change)

03-28-06—VZ: [commission-board] Assistive Technology Inventory Listing Project for Reuse and Recycle of Equipment (has follow-up)

03-28-06—VZ: [commission-board] Assistive Technology Inventory Listing Project for Reuse and Recycle of Equipment (with revised cover letter)

03-28-06—VZ: [commission-board] Questions about NCBVI (responding to Sally Baird)

03-28-06—VZ: [commission-board] ACB-N Convention (saying she will be speaking there)

03-29-06—VZ: [commission-board] Happy Anniversary! (to Larry Mackey)

03-29-06—VZ: [commission-board] Time Certification (period ending 3-31)

03-31-06—Orester: [commission-board] state staff meeting (confirming the place; has follow-up)

04-01-06—Loos: [commission-board] Letter to Governor (to Orester, concerning deaf-blind ceremony letter; has follow-up)

04-01-06—Loos: [commission-board] Workforce Innovations Conference (forward from Jennifer Sheehy of message from Ed Anthony concerning conference in Anaheim, CA, July 11-13, 2006)

04-03-06—Peery: [commission-board] Location of State Staff - Super 8 Motel 2545 Cornhusker Hwy (has follow-up)

04-03-06—Peery: State Staff meeting agenda

04-03-06—Loos: [commission-board] Transportation?

04-03-06—F. Floyd: Hector's community project

04-04-06—VZ: [commission-board] Governor Heineman's letter w/ line-item reductions to LB 1060 (NCBVI budget request cut by half)

04-04-06—Loos: [commission-board] NCBVI veto impact (exact language from letter; has follow-up)

04-04-06—Loos: [commission-board] To Governor concerning deaf-blind (sending to VZ and Peery to send to Governor on NCBVI letterhead)

04-04-06—Loos: [commission-board] Copies of Letter to Governor (asking to have Wiedel and Poff copied; has follow-up)

04-10-06—F. Floyd: Vanessa's article

04-10-06—VZ: [commission-board] Per Diem (concerning per diem for State Staff meeting; has follow-up)

04-10-06—VZ: [commission-board] Tracking State Employees with Disabilities (has follow-up)

04-10-06—VZ: [commission-board] ABC Memo: Take Our Daughters And Sons To Work Day

04-12-06—VZ: [commission-board] Focus Topic May Meeting (concerning computer specifications of Board for training; has follow-up)

04-12-06—VZ: [commission-board] State Plan Draft

04-13-06—VZ: [commission-board] Happy Anniversary Cindy! (to Cindy Zimmer)

04-13-06—VZ: [commission-board] Apartment Resource Counselor (closing the position; has follow-up)

04-13-06—VZ: [commission-board] Good News (grant information; has follow-up)

04-14-06—VZ: [commission-board] Time Certification

04-15-06—VZ: [commission-board] Enrichment Foundation Partnership Materials (concerning a grant; has follow-up)

04-18-06—VZ: [commission-board] 33rd Institute on Rehabilitation Issues (IRI)

04-18-06—VZ: [commission-board] Dates on Enrichment Contract (correction; is part of the partnership follow-up)

04-19-06—VZ: [commission-board] State plan guidance (includes updated documents)

04-19-06—VZ: [commission-board] Board Meeting Agenda and another item RE: our Focus Topic (has follow-up)

04-19-06—VZ: [commission-board] Temporary Voc Rehab Tech to Handle Apartment Resource Duties (has follow-up)

04-20-06—Peery: Agenda Item (from Pearl, concerning RSA state visit in August; has follow-up)

04-20-06—VZ: [commission-board] Tax Incentives (article concerning new State law encouraging philanthropic contributions)

04-20-06—VZ: [commission-board] Change with the New State Funds

04-20-06—VZ: [commission-board] Lunch May 6 (Center students will provide; has follow-up)

04-21-06—VZ: [commission-board] Follow up from February Meeting (her “to do” list; has follow-up)

04-21-06—Brown: Financial Information Through March 2006 (has follow-up)

04-23-06—Loos: [commission-board] May 6, 2006 Draft Agenda (has follow-up)

04-24-06—Peery: Public Notice

(for May 6 Commission Board meeting)

04-24-06—VZ: [commission-board] New Leadership Within ACB of Nebraska (President is now Jim Jirak)

04-24-06—VZ: [commission-board] Successful Food Bank Contributions in Lincoln (has follow-up)

04-27-06—Brown: Budget Process presentation 5/6/2006 (has follow-up)

04-29-06—VZ: [commission-board] Time Certification

05-01-06—VZ: [commission-board] Vending Machines with Accessible Labels (concerning NCSAB’s commitment to work on this; has follow-up)

5-01-06—VZ: [commission-board] Happy Anniversary Josie! (to Josie Rodriguez)

05-01-06—VZ: [commission-board] Laptops (asking if Commissioners have them to bring for the training; has follow-up)

05-02-06—VZ: [commission-board] Vending Machines Work Group (concerning group from NCSAB)

05-02-06—Jirak: [commission-board] Webmaster Report (has follow-up)

05-03-06—VZ: [commission-board] Happy Anniversary Sherrie! (to Sherrie Bruegman)

05-04-06—VZ: [commission-board] Happy Anniversary Bob (to Bob Deaton)

05-04-06—VZ: [commission-board] Happy Anniversary Larry (to Larry Roos)

05-04-06—Husseini: [commission-board] Excel Commands (has follow-up)

05-04-06—Loos: [commission-board] NCBVI Survey -Important- (last year's survey for consideration)

05-05-06—Djernes: [commission-board] Website item. (concerning ne.gov security issues)

05-05-06—Burns: [commission-board] Complete list of NCBVI Commission important past motions (has follow-up)

05-05-06—VZ: [commission-board] FY2007 State Plan (has follow-up)

05-05-06—VZ: [commission-board] Employee Recognition Plan

05-05-06—VZ: [commission-board] Resignation (Mike Floyd resigning as president of Friends)