

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
(NCBVI)

Board of Commissioners Public Meeting

November 17, 2007; 9:00 a.m.; Lincoln, NE

Approved MINUTES

Call to Order and Introductions: Nancy Oltman, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and she welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Chairman Oltman offered a special welcome to Governor Dave Heineman who was in attendance at the meeting to recognize Barbara Loos, Bob Burns and Bill Orester, the three Commissioners who have served since NCBVI was formed in 2000. They are going off the board because their terms have expired. Governor Heineman presented these Commissioners with Admiralships of the Great Navy of the State of Nebraska and thanked them for their years of service. Governor Heineman stated that the work of the Commission does not go unnoticed and he is proud of the work that the Commission does. Executive Director Pearl Van Zandt also presented the Commissioners with a Braille Admiralship. Van Zandt thanked Sahar Hussein and Dottie Wilmott for their work on the Braille Admiralships.

Announcements Concerning Public Comments, Meeting Recordings,
Lunch Arrangements and other Logistics:

Commissioner Loos read the agenda items and introductions were made.

It was noted that public comments are always welcome regarding the agenda items. Chairman Nancy Oltman provided lunch. Hubert Paulsen recorded the meeting.

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

Commission staff present: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director, IL; Carlos Serván, Deputy Director, VR; Fatos Floyd, Training Center Supervisor; Connie Daly, Lincoln District Supervisor; Nancy Coffman, Program Specialist/Technology; Amy Buresh, Voc. Rehab. Counselor II; Shane Buresh, Orientation Counselor; Eric Sandberg, Apartment Resource Aide; Mitzy Buchanan, Communications Instructor; Dottie Wilmott, Staff Assistant; Jan Stokebrand, NBE Accounting Clerk; and Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant, all from Lincoln; and Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor, Omaha.

Members of the public present: Governor Dave Heineman, Lincoln; Dr. James Nyman, Lincoln; Karen Anderson, Omaha; Wes Majerus, Lincoln; Noah Buresh, Lincoln; and Diane Ditmars, Pickrell.

Minutes of the August 11, 2007 Commission Meeting:

Two corrections to the August 11, 2007 Minutes were made.

The first correction is ".Burns moved, Orester seconded, that Nancy Oltman be elected Chairman of the Board of Commissioners. The result of the roll call vote was three affirmatives (Burns, Walla, and Orester) and one

abstention (Oltman). Burns moved, Orestor seconded, that Darrell Walla be elected as Vice Chairman of the Board of Commissioners. A roll call vote was taken, which passed unanimous in favor of the motion."

Secondly, the minutes stated that Chairman Nancy Oltman sent out the staff surveys to several states who were interested in what kinds of questions were on it. The minutes should state "Van Zandt will send it to several different states who were interested in what kinds of questions were on it."

Orestor moved, Burns seconded, to approve the August 11, 2007 Minutes with corrections. A roll call vote was taken and it was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Focus Topic: Partnership Between Educators and Rehab Service Providers:

Van Zandt had sent to the Commissioners a document which is the result of a process that NCBVI and other partners have been working on for better understanding between staff and other groups and consumers. Diane Ditmars, a teacher at Lincoln Public Schools, and Karen Anderson, a college student, were invited to speak about the topic.

Ditmars asked if there was anything specific that that Commission wanted to know. She shared thoughts of what other teachers told her and noted that she does not speak for other teachers. She stated that the teachers do the best they can with the experience they have and noted that everyone has had different experiences which results in differences of opinions. Ditmars stated that most school teachers do not know who or what the

Commission is. She added that teachers do not know why the Commission is fanatical about teaching Braille, why it is a proponent of sleep shade training, why it uses the term blind for low vision persons, do not understand cane travel training and do not understand the use of a long cane versus a folding cane. Ditmars stated that teachers do understand that students will be better learners if they are taught early. She added that teachers do not see the same end picture that Commission staff may have. Ditmars noted that teachers need to have a good picture of what happens after high school and added that teachers feel that Commission staff does not know the school environment as well as they could. Ditmars stated that there are a lot of school requirements to be met by teachers.

Shane Buresh stated that transition to blindness needs to begin at an early age, and added that duration of time is very important.

It was noted that the basis of a partnership is a respectful relationship between persons. Ditmars stated that the bottom line is that teachers do not know what the Commission does and therefore they do not call the Commission. Ditmars stated that having consistent staff working with the schools would help in developing a relationship between teachers and the Commission. This would also aide in developing positive experiences. It was noted that there is confusion between the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) philosophy and Commission philosophy. Ditmars stated that most teachers are not negative about the work of the Commission, but they simply do not know the Commission.

Walla noted that teachers are under a lot of pressure because parents can take teachers to court. Walla asked if teachers feel pressure that academics should come first because of the push to raise test scores and the No Child Left Behind Act. Ditmars responded saying that teachers do feel a lot of pressure.

One of her goals is that the Commission would take the expanded curriculum and teach some of it at the Commission. Loos stated that she likes this approach and likes being a part of the team. Loos added that she believes strongly in educating blind children.

Karen Anderson was present to speak to the Commission. Anderson noted that she graduated in May from Burke high school in Omaha. Anderson stated that in school she was not discouraged from participating with Commission but she was also not encouraged. Anderson stated that a difference in philosophy is definitely true, but noted she was never asked to choose and she uses alternatives that are best for her. Anderson stated that she envisions teachers and the Commission working together.

When asked what could be done differently, Anderson stated that schools could teach better independence. Anderson noted that she never had to order her own books until she went to college. Anderson also noted that she was never pushed to learn cane travel and that she always had a sighted guide with her. Anderson stated that students should also be required to read out loud and learn how to cook.

Burns noted that if children are given a choice they will likely choose the easy road for learning. Commissioner Burns asked Anderson for her thoughts on this. Anderson stated that she did not learn slate and stylus until the fourth grade. Anderson noted that her mom is also blind and they had to fight to get someone to teach slate and stylus to her. Anderson noted that some teachers do what is easy for them.

Van Zandt asked what Commission staff could do to help. Anderson noted the importance of communication.

Anderson encouraged the Commission to talk to the students and to the parents because the parents will ultimately shape the type of person the student will grow up to be. It is important that the parents understand the process.

Ditmars noted that a Teacher of the Visually Impaired (TVI) in the public schools has a lot of checklists and she noted that students are very individualized. Ditmars stated that schools have no standard of what a blind student needs to graduate and that there is no standard for students to learn Braille as tests may be read to students. Ditmars noted that most colleges use E-text, which is may be a faster way to read than Braille.

Van Zandt noted the need for ongoing training for teachers, NCBVI staff, Department of Education staff and everyone involved. It was also noted that it has not been identified how the training will be done.

Carlos Serván reported that in general the group is talking about putting together a conference for teachers and Commission staff. Loos requested that she be kept updated on the process and results of the protocol.

Oltman thanked Diane Ditmars and Karen Anderson for their presentations.

Public Comment: Nancy Coffman asked what the Commission can do to help teachers understand that the picture of a blind person at age 27 should be the same as it is for a sighted person. Ditmars stated that she feels it is important for teachers to have the Commission's presence as professional blind adults to set a role model and that teachers should be exposed to the training that the Commission staff receives.

Dr. James Nyman asked what advantages has she has had with exposure at both ends. Ditmars stated that a training piece would be a very valuable experience, plus it connects teachers with the Commission.

Van Zandt stated that the potential of the protocol will open up new opportunities and will establish what the Commission does. Van Zandt noted that the Commission has a responsibility to work with families of all ages and that the Commission is a bonafide entity that should be involved with the children. Ditmars stated that there is a difference between working in the school and in addition to the school; that the Commission should provide additional training to the students. The Protocol Guide, under the Section called "Recommended Practices" will give a basis for communicating.

Hubert Paulsen asked if student teachers are introduced to the Commission. Ditmars stated that at this point, not really. Ditmars suggested having a class at the University wherein teachers can receive credits for a blind training class. Van Zandt stated that she will look into this.

A break was taken at 10:30 a.m. The meeting resumed at 10:45 a.m.

Report from the Chairman:

Chairman Oltman thanked Van Zandt for sending the Commissioners the anniversary letters for the staff and the work they do as well as the client evaluations and opinions. Oltman stated that she enjoyed hearing the experiences of the clients.

Oltman recognized and thanked Val Perry for her services to the Commission and she thanked Lea Dietrich for her work and for the packet she developed for Commissioners. Oltman noted that the information is helpful. Oltman reported that the Commission recently filled a couple of staff positions: the Older Blind Program Specialist, Deanna Jesse; Communications Instructor, Mitzy Buchanan; and Administrative Assistant, Kathy Stephens. Oltman thanked Lea Dietrich for the work she did on the agency website and for other assistance she offered to the Commission.

Oltman reported that there was a conference call with Blind Services State Rehab Counsel (SRC) networking group. Oltman stated she was on the phone call which was chaired by Commissioner Loos. Loos gave a report on the conference call. Loos stated the call covered two issues. (1) Where the group wants to go, and (2) how to make that happen. The National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) is funding the phone calls. The conference calls are scheduled to be held the first Monday every two months and the next one will be held on December 3, 2007. Each conference call will consist of having a question to be discussed. The question for the December 3 conference call will be about staff surveys and client satisfaction surveys. There will also be some discussion about how to get a specific group together and how to make it possible for everyone represented to give and receive feedback from the meetings. It was noted that this is a new process.

Oltman reported that Commissioners received the new brochure. Oltman reported that the Commission will be using office space on third floor and expanding on first floor. Oltman reported that the Commission has developed new packets that new board members will receive when they start on the board. The packets contain a lot of information about the agency. Oltman stated she is excited about the new logo contest which will conclude the end of November. A decision of the winner will then be decided. Oltman congratulated Fatos Floyd and the Blind Corps group who went to Turkey to offer training. Oltman reported on the employment seminar which was held in Topeka Kansas and attended by Floyd and Center students. It was noted that the Commission received letters on how wonderful they did. Oltman offered congratulations to Jeff Altman regarding the article he wrote on how to help clients. Oltman reported that Van Zandt participated in the Proclamation of Disabled Employees, including the blind.

Public Comment - Nancy Flearl stated that she did want to take this opportunity to thank Diane Ditmars and Karen Anderson for coming to the meeting today. Flearl stated that she has learned a lot from the teachers over the years and differences in teaching adults and children. Flearl stated that she is happy to be a part of the Protocol process and she noted that she has seen a difference already in the services.

Report from the Executive Director:

Van Zandt stated that NCBVI's field services have served 1,177 people this year. There are 550 people in the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) track. Since October 1, 2007, 59 people have successfully closed their cases with employment (51 closed unsuccessful).

In the final quarter of Federal Fiscal Year, 20 clients became employed. Three of these were Center clients. In the past year, Center clients have gone on to the following jobs:

Child care worker, Telephone Service Representative, Translator, Mental Health Counselor, Support Analyst, Factory worker, customer services rep, residential advisor, Voc Rehab Counselor, and 2 Independent Homemakers.

627 were served by Independent Living (IL): 153 successful closures since 10/1 (27 closed unsuccessful; 5 were deceased).

Lincoln District finished another placement class. The clients learned about networking, filling out job applications, interviewing, disclosure, workplace attitudes and finished with a mock interview. They held the third of four sessions of group training (GATE). Two of the clients who started in GATE are now in the Center. The Commission closed a Rehabilitation Counselor, Mechanic assistant, Real Estate agent. Many more are still in Follow up status. A client volunteered to reorganize the kitchen. The Commission is hiring one of their clients through SOS (state temporary services) to answer phones when needed.

Omaha District held special training for staff in Job Placement, led by Consultant Buna Dahal. She trained Lincoln District last year and will probably come back to North Platte District later.

North Platte District held a very successful FYI (For Your Independence) Program in September. Clients attended a Senior Blind workshop at NFB Convention Oct. 5 th . All districts are helping cover the Kearney caseload since both the VR and OC positions are now vacant. A combined office meeting will be held in December.

153 Full-time Clients Completed Center Training from 1996 to November 2007.

89 achieved Competitive Employment; 19 Home Makers; 35 are still students. Of the clients who have completed training and schooling, 91.5% are employed (competitive employment & homemaker), 75.5% are competitively employed, 16% are homemakers, 22.8 % are students, and only 6.5 % are not working.

Van Zandt reported that the Center has many activities last quarter, including carving pumpkins, making Halloween costumes and preparing a Halloween luncheon. Some Center staff members and clients also attended the Nebraska State Fair and had entries in Baking. Center staff and clients attended the State NFB Convention in North Platte, the Applejack Festival in Nebraska City and are holding a Family and Friends day in place of the Center Thanksgiving buffet this year. Center clients & Fatos Floyd also attended Employment Workshop at Kansas Blind Services in Topeka.

Van Zandt gave the following staff update: Eric Sandberg completed training, Val Perry left on September 3, Jean Wurtz left on October 31, Sahar Hussein started again in official permanent capacity on August 31, Mitzy Buchanan started on September 4, Kathy Stephens started on September 24, Deanna Jesse was promoted to Program Specialist for Older Blind Services on October 1, interviews have been held for the VR Counselor position in Kearney; the OC position will not be filled at this point, due to small numbers of clients in that area.

Governor's Awards: Employee of the Year Jan Brandt, Supervisor of the Year Connie Daly.

Van Zandt gave the following report on General work, projects, and activities:

The new Older Blind Services project was launched and actively working to establish ways to help keep individuals in their own homes and out of nursing homes. The project will also collect data about the total number of people receiving Medicaid waived services, the number of blind & visually impaired consumers receiving such services, and the total number of blind & visually impaired who are at risk of nursing home placement.

Van Zandt reported that she attended the NCSAB national meeting and that she was elected Treasurer.

Winnerfest program was held for 13 teens, focusing on leisure time activities.

Mentoring grant activities included self defense training & the White Cane Banquet.

The Commission is submitting a grant proposal for continuation of PILBO, requesting \$23,000 (\$20,000 for technology and \$3,000 for administrative charges).

Candy Laursen & Vicki Rasmussen are still working on the survey for clients throughout the Rehab process. The draft is done and they'll be discussing it with Carlos Serván for fine-tuning.

Twelve staff members attended an excellent Regional Employment Conference in Kansas City, Missouri.

The Commission collaborated on a Proclamation for Disability Employment Month with the Governor, the Department of Labor, Voc. Rehab., and HHSS Veterans Services.

White Cane Proclamation Day and White Cane Banquet, which are statewide events, were attended by several Commission staff and clients.

Transition Team continued work on protocol & recommended practices for rehab and educational entities serving children from birth through young adulthood (age 26).

Certifying VR Counselors - procedures were developed & disseminated; 13 applications are now on file.

eForce - Dottie Wilmott & Robert Newman have been testing every screen to note technical, procedural & accessibility issues. A programmer from the State Chief Information Office will work to implement all the necessary changes to the system.

A policy was issued to all staff restricting the purchase of technology requiring more than an hour or two of technical instruction for IL consumers unless by contract with vendors, due to the limitations of staff time for the ongoing support often needed.

A three year application for OIB (federal older blind services) funds was submitted to RSA in late September.

A committee is revising job descriptions for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Orientation Counselors, and Rehabilitation Technicians. Technology positions are being evaluated to determine how much time is being spent on what kinds of needs, to see how we might improve & enhance services and make the best use of the Technology Specialists' time.

Carlos Serván has met with each District to set placement goals & develop strategies to increase full time employment outcomes. These meetings will be held twice each year in each District.

Lincoln office space is expanding and much work has been done to finalize the lease, arrange for remodeling in the new third floor space and on first floor, and ordering work stations to replace furniture in most offices that is decades old. The Norfolk office will also get new workstations. Staff in other offices can get updated furniture on request, especially chairs or other items for ergonomic needs.

Bill Brown attended the national RSA Financial Management Conference.

NBE is actively setting up for the new Zorinski Building, Omaha, by mid-January; has made a bid on a new City Law Enforcement facility, Grand Island, early January if accepted; a new facility at Shizuki capacitor factory, Ogallala, possibly for late December. The State Department of Roads continues to update rest areas, so some of the NBE facilities are closed for

months at a time. Braille menus are on the machines at one facility and more are being made for others.

Public Comment: There were no comments.

Report from Blind Corps, Turkey:

Fatos Floyd, Connie Daly and Nancy Flearl gave a report from the Blind Corp regarding the training which was held in Turkey.

Floyd reported that three years ago, she, Connie Daly and Nancy Flearl visited and toured Turkey. They also worked with people on cane travel instruction and worked with the Turkish Airlines Call Center, which now has about 200 disabled employees, including 35 who are blind. Blind Corps was formed as a non profit group in 2005 to take rehabilitation knowledge and experience to developing countries as volunteers.

Blind Corps recently returned from a training provided in Turkey. The volunteer professionals were Fatos Floyd, Michael Floyd, Connie Daly, Nancy, Flearl, Robert Newman and Buna Dahal. Staff used vacation time for this travel. Blind Corps raised money to provide training equipment, canes, slate and stylus, etc. Lots of organization was done ahead of time. As people heard about the project they began coming to the training. The training was very intense and the evaluations they received were great. The participants began coming to the training on October 15, 2007. More and more individuals came to the training as they heard of it. By the end of the training event, there were approximately 52 participants. The training began on October 16 and concluded on October 30. The training took place from 8 a.m. till 11 p.m. each day. Floyd reported that all the participants were incredibly hungry for knowledge and that blind and sighted individuals participated in the training under sleep shades. In addition to the training, Blind Corps made presentations about blindness to many other organizations and Foundations in Turkey.

Floyd reported that all of the Dignitaries' and Mayor came to the event. Daly added that they were on TV and there were pictures in the newspaper. She stated that it was an awesome experience. Daly noted that one thing that touched her was that during seminars the participants would talk about how blindness is not the issue, but society's attitudes about blindness is the issue. Daly added that this is a universal truth.

Nancy Flearl added that she too felt that the trip to Turkey was a life changing experience. Flearl noted that when people first came to the training many of them were using sighted guide and by the end of the training they were using their canes and performing many tasks by themselves.

Floyd reported that at the end of the training they received a crystal plaque entitled "Futures in Blindness."

Floyd reported that there is a lot of interest from other countries to receive this training and noted that officials from Turkey want them to come back to train school teachers and officials. There is also an interest in opening a Rehab Center for the Blind in Turkey. They also talked about inviting our Governor to Turkey for a visit. They are also thinking about sending some of their top educators in Turkey to attend Center Training in Lincoln for three months.

Burns asked for thoughts on how to expand the Blind Corps training. Floyd stated that Blind Corps is willing to provide training wherever there is an interest. Floyd noted that they are trying to recruit additional individuals to join the Blind Corps.

The Commissioners thanked Fatos Floyd, Michael Floyd, Connie Daly, Nancy Flearl, Robert Newman and Buna Dahal for their work with the Blind Corps.

Old Business:

Budget Update

Van Zandt reported that the Commission received Social Security Administration (SSA) Reimbursements in amount of almost \$475,000 in October. The Commission has been spending some of that money over the past few months and will use it primarily for one-time costs. The Commission's basic budget depends on some SSA funding; some years the Commission receives SSA funds, other years we do not. The Commission has ordered workstations for staff in Lincoln and Norfolk and will remodel the Lincoln Office to better utilize space. The Commission has also leased additional space in Lincoln to accommodate new staff and functions. The Commission will be spending some funds on new Vending opportunities in Grand Island and Omaha.

New staff includes Braille Instructor Sahar Hussein, when Mitzy Buchanan finishes her Center Training and becomes the Computer Instructor in Lincoln. In North Platte, a half time Orientation Counselor, and a half time NBE Accountant Clerk in Lincoln.

Van Zandt reported that Case Services expenditures remain fairly high at this time. The Commission is still paying bills for fiscal year 2007 every week. Van Zandt noted that this is not unusual. Van Zandt then answered questions about the budget from Loos.

Loos noted that our Transition Counselor positions had been affected budget-wise and inquired if this has impacted the consumers. Van Zandt stated that although the Commission does not have identified Transition

Counselors anymore, each office has one or two staff who are the primary people who work with the school systems. Daly stated that in Lincoln, the Transition Counselor now carries the Transition age case load. Flearl added that in Omaha, the Transition age caseload is divided among several counselors because of the large amount of cases. Flearl noted that counselors also work with teachers as mentors and role models.

Van Zandt reported that the Wages program will continue, with some funding from other entities. The Commission sees this as a very important program.

Website Update

Van Zandt reported that Lea Dietrich worked on entire website to develop the Commission Board Training Packet, resulting in many positive changes to the website. Nancy Coffman also assisted with many of the updates. It was discovered that emails to the Webmaster have been going to a box which needs to be manually accessed. There are many emails waiting for a reply. These emails are currently being responded to and the problem has been fixed. Van Zandt stated that Web Reports will be provided to the Board monthly. If users find something that is not user friendly on the website, they are encouraged to offer suggestions for revisions.

Friends of the Commission Update

Dr. James Nyman spoke on behalf of the Friends of the Commission. Dr. Nyman noted that the original purpose of Friends of the Commission was to find ways for people to make contributions to assist the Commission.

He reported that the group has not been highly functional as there are not a strong set of commitments at this time and the group is in need of leadership. Roy Hopley is President, but has had health issues. Nyman noted that he is the Secretary. He reported that Friends of the Commission is participating in the logo contest. The "Friends" website is not yet activated.

Van Zandt reported that the logo is the main project of Friends of the Commission at this time. Van Zandt stated that Friends of the Commission continues to try to find a way for automatic donations from individuals and added that there may be a fresh approach to contacting trust attorneys for contributions.

Van Zandt reported that in previous years, Friends of the Commission provided tuition funds and does provide funds for emergency situations which are greatly appreciated.

NIS Update

Wes Majerus reported that open enrollment is currently underway and it appears to be going well. Majerus continues to report defects he finds through testing or that are reported to him. He is working with Oracle and NIS to look into JAWS 8.0 and later support for NIS. Majerus stated that as a full time employee of CIO, his current duties are not solely to work with NIS. Still, he is willing to keep the Commission informed of updates and changes in NIS specific to accessibility with JAWS.

Van Zandt stated that she appreciates Majerus attending the meeting today. She reported that one of the biggest challenges is to figure out what in NIS is a barrier to users as a result of the accessibility issues and what is a barrier because of NIS itself. Van Zandt noted that while there are advantages to the NIS system, sometimes it is not user friendly both visually and non-visually. All staff now must complete their own open enrollment each year. Van Zandt stated that updates to the accessibility of NIS will need to occur on an ongoing basis because NIS and JAWS are always being updated.

NFB-Newsline Update

Oltman reported that Jamie Forbis contacted her, but technical difficulties prevented Oltman from receiving the report. Loos did receive the report, noted that it was sent to all the Commissioners, and read the report for the record. Van Zandt requested that Oltman ask Forbis to also send the report to her in the future.

A lunch break was taken at 12:35 p.m. The meeting resumed at 1:05 p.m.

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Complaints or Issues:

Van Zandt reported that there were four CAP cases this past quarter. Two individuals requested and were assigned a new counselor. Two complaints were related to JAWS scripting in employment settings, which were resolved by contracting out for the service.

Statewide Needs Assessment Survey:

Van Zandt reported on the final survey results. Van Zandt reported that 20 people (42%) participated in staff survey, 16 people (42%) participated in the Status 28 (Closed Unsuccessful) survey, 19 people (40%) participated in the Status 26 (Closed Successful) survey and 30 people (41%) participated in the Transition survey (current clients ages 19 - 26).

Staff Survey: the top three responses were read for the record. Van Zandt noted that 75% or more of the staff responded that there was critical or moderate improvement needed in: (1) Improving placement services by developing and strengthening relationships with local employers and community organizations, (2) improving outreach to unserved and underserved consumers, and (3) enhancing services in rural areas.

Of the Closed Unsuccessful group, 15 individuals (all but one) reported that they were unemployed, 20% to 33% reported that they received job search assistance or job placement, a small percentage reported that they received assisted technology. A majority of the group reported that most helpful to them were instructions in cane travel, low vision aids and daily living.

Van Zandt reported that 57% of the individuals in the unsuccessful group reported that they needed, but did not receive, training in low vision aids and devices, computer technology and techniques for exploring career options.

Of the Closed Successful group, 58% of the individuals were employed at the time of the interview. Of the 42% who were not employed, 4 were closed as homemakers. Van Zandt noted that the Rehab System does include Independent Homemaker as an employment goal; therefore, in terms of official closures, 78% were employed. Van Zandt reported that of those not working at the time of the survey, 4 had been closed with competitive employment, but had lost their employment or left it for some reason. Van Zandt reported that very few, 16% to 21% of those surveyed with successful closure said they received job search assistance or job placement service. Van Zandt stated that this is something that the Commission will want to look at more closely.

Van Zandt reported that for the successful closures, some of the most common services reported were assistive technology, training in assistive technology, cane travel and help in connecting with successful blind people.

Van Zandt gave a report on the Transition Survey which includes individuals up to age 26. For those who were still in school, most were attending college, 11 of the 30 (37%) stated that they were employed and 17% were looking for employment. The majority thought they would encounter barriers due to transportation. Some of the other anticipated barriers were employer attitudes, attitudes of other people, and handling blindness issues on the job or in college.

Van Zandt reported that the most used services by the Transition group were funding for school, training for work, summer programs for students, counseling and job seeking skills. When asked about their greatest need from the Commission, 30% stated funding for college or technology. Some of the other areas mentioned were ordering books, getting around on campus, using materials and alternative media and assisted technology. Van Zandt reported that the Commission will use this information as a working document. Van Zandt noted that the efforts in many of the areas have already been implemented or initiated.

Van Zandt asked the Commissioners for their thoughts and ideas on the report. Oltman stated that she was happy to hear that the Commission had such a good response from individuals (40% response).

Van Zandt reported that the Commission does on-going surveys. Many of the on-going surveys are done by phone. Van Zandt noted that the Commission also has satisfaction surveys and currently has surveys for older blind and surveys for the under 55 years of age.

Public Comment: There were no comments from the public.

Meet and Greet with Family and Friends of Current Clients:

The Board attended the Meet and Greet with family and friends of current clients at 1:25 p.m. The meeting resumed at 2:05 p.m.

Review and Possible Revision of NCBVI Staff Survey:

Oltman stated that staff had indicated that they wanted to be able to solicit more comments on the annual staff survey. Burns suggested adding the following question to the survey: "If there is one thing you could change about the commission, what would it be?" After discussion, Orestor moved to add this question to the end of the survey; Walla seconded. A roll call vote was unanimous in favor of the motion.

New Business:

State Audit

Van Zandt reported that the Federal Single Audit was conducted. The feds contract with State Auditor's Offices to assure compliance of basic grant administration with federal accounting requirements. The finding was that the Commission is not properly reporting Time Certification for administrative personnel. The Commission has requested guidance from RSA to develop a new format that will be compliant.

New Name for the Orientation Center

Commissioners discussed a new name for the Orientation Center. Loos stated that at the last Commission meeting in August, there was no mention of the Center's name being changed. She asked that the issue be revisited because it had not been discussed with the Board and she was not convinced that the name should be changed.

Van Zandt apologized for not bringing the matter to the board. Van Zandt reported that the timing had to do with an article, the website and an effort to make everything consistent. Van Zandt agreed that a name is important and the name change should have been discussed with the Board. Van Zandt stated that the Board and staff can certainly decide together on the name of the Center. Van Zandt suggested changing the name of the Orientation Center to The Nebraska Center for the Blind. Van Zandt stated that she is in support of a name that people will actually use. It was consensus that the former name of the Center is too lengthy. Loos moved, Orestor seconded, to change the name to Nebraska Center for the Blind. A roll call vote was taken and was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Focus Topics for Next Meetings:

February 9, 2008 - Omaha - Workings of the Business Office

May 10, 2008 - Lincoln - Nebraska Center for the Blind

August 9 and November 22 - to be announced

It was agreed to schedule focus topics in February when new board members are in place. Suggested topics include Older Blind Services and Working with Employers.

Public Comment: Connie Daly and Nancy Flearl thanked the Commissioners who are leaving for their service. Daly mentioned that Shane and Amy Buresh had wished to express their thanks also.

Van Zandt expressed her appreciation to the Commissioners for all their work for the Commission. Nancy Oltman asked for assistance as she serves as Chairman of the Board.

Possible Executive Session :

A possible executive session was scheduled to discuss the annual survey responses from staff. It was decided to hold the discussion in open session.

Loos had compiled a list of the concerns that were received and she read the list. She stated that there were concerns raised about transition services being continued in the way that they were. Loos reported that the comments of supervisors earlier today indicate that those services are continuing as needed.

Loos reported that comments were received regarding the structure of supervisory staff. Specifically, a concern about too many deputy directors and supervisors given the size of the agency. Burns suggested that Van Zandt review individuals' job descriptions at next state staff meeting so that staff has an understanding of what everyone does. Burns also mentioned that Nebraska is a big geographic state and many out state staff have more travel time to get to their destinations, while caseloads in the east may be larger due to higher population.

Loos stated that staff always has concerns about how money is spent. Loos noted that standards have been developed and are being worked on. Loos reported that there were comments about favoritism. It was noted that this can be expected and it does not seem to be out of hand. Burns pointed out that favoritism is a perception.

Walla stated that some people are not comfortable with surveys because it is assumed that it will be known that they wrote them. Van Zandt stated that if someone has an issue, she would hope that staff would bring it to her or their supervisor's attention.

Loos reported that there were comments about not much training being offered for positions other than counseling. It was noted that employees can inform their supervisors of any training they would like to attend. Flearl stated that in the past, each staff person has been allowed \$300 for each employee for continued growth. Flearl noted that some staff members simply choose to not use this opportunity.

Loos and Oltman stated that the many staff comments which were very positive had been reported during the August Board meeting. Comments from staff should be emailed to Chairman Oltman at any time, not just through the annual survey.

Final announcements:

Oltman thanked everyone for their help today and stated that she is excited to serve as Chairman of the Commission Board. Burns asked to be kept in the loop as to what the Commission is doing. Van Zandt stated that she will attempt to keep all past board members informed of Commission activities that are not confidential. Van Zandt encouraged the Commissioners to subscribe to the list serve because many of the items that go to the board and staff are posted on the list serve.

Van Zandt reported that Peggy King of the Governor's office will be coming to tour the Center on November 28. Also, John Hilgert, the Director of HHSS Division of Veteran's Services will tour the Center on December 11.

Adjourn:

The meeting was adjourned at 3:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant

Nancy Oltman, Chairman

NCBVI Board of Commissioners

COMMISSION MATERIAL LIST - AUGUST THROUGH NOVEMBER 2007

8/24/07 (VanZandt) Finalized minutes from the August 11, 2007
Commission Board meeting

8/27/07 (VanZandt) Further corrections to minutes of August 11, 2007
meeting (will be corrected next meeting)

8/28/07 Forbis' Request for vote for Debra Bonde in "Stand on a Better
World" award---her cause Seedling Braille books

8/29/07 NCBVI website lift serve electronic application for executive
appointment from Governor's office. Also Val Peery's acknowledgement of
August 31, 2007 as her official last day of employment at NCBVI

8/29/07 VanZandt Vendor's Committee recommendation for vendor on
Omaha route

8/30/07 Bob Deaton History of Nebraska Rehabilitation Center documents

8/30/07 VanZandt sending invoice for teleconference call SRC to Greg
Trapp, President NCSAB

8/30/07 VanZandt invitation to Attorney General's office to attend vendor's
meeting to discuss public law statute

08/31/07 VanZandt Notified that Sahar Hussein hired to be braille instructor

9/4/07 VanZandt Notified that Jean Wurtz will be leaving the Commission employment in November

09/04/07 VanZandt Monthly website statistics

9/11/07 VanZandt Announced that a new Administrative Assistant, Kathy Stephens, was hired

9/14/07 VanZandt NBE balance sheet for August 2007

9/14/07 VanZandt Letter of appreciation about Ryan and Randi Strunk and their employment in Hawaii Rehabilitation Center

9/17/07 Deaton announcement of acceptance of Deanna Jesse to be the Older Blind Specialist

9/18/07 VanZandt Proclamation in October for Disability Employment Awareness month

9/18/07 Brandt NLS pilot download program expansion

9/18/07 VanZandt An article written by Jeff Altman about center activities and travel instruction

9/19/07 RoseAnn Ashby, Nebraska Liaison RSA monitoring of Nebraska VR and IL programs with results links and survey evaluation of report link

9/21/07 VanZandt more information on wage adjustment for NCBVI staff

9/24/07 VanZandt Increase of match for retirement of blind vendors

9/26/07 VanZandt Vendors Committee meeting minutes

9/26/07 VanZandt Commission staff participation in KSVI employment seminar

9/28/07 VanZandt Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation News Update

10/1/07 Val Peery September Web Server statistics

10/4/07 VanZandt NBE Balance Sheet reports for September 2007

10/9/07 Hubert Paulson Index to recording of August 2007 Commission Board meeting

10/11/07 VanZandt Report of the statewide needs assessment survey

10/19/07 VanZandt Announcement of the Logo contest for the Commission

10/19/07 VanZandt Announcement of new RSA liaison, Regina Luster

10/24/07 VanZandt Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor For The Blind State Certification

10/26/07 VanZandt final statistics of clients served in both V R and I L tracks, for fiscal year 2007

11/7/07 VanZandt Data on transition services

11/9/07 VanZandt Combined gross profit and loss figures

11/9/07 VanZandt Monthly net profit by vendor

11/7/07 VanZandt NBE Comparison For Fiscal Years Starting With 1998

11/7/07 VanZandt NBE balance sheet

11/8/07 VanZandt Year end client data report

11/8/07 VanZandt New brochure

11/13/07 VanZandt IL and technology

11/14/07 VanZandt Focus topic for Board meeting "Partnership between educators and rehabilitation services"

11/15/07 VanZandt eForce update

11/16/07 VanZandt IL skills workshop

11/16/07 Jamie Forbis NFB Newslite report

11/17/07 Bob Deaton Consumer satisfaction survey