

NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

Public Commission Board Meeting

May 15, 2010; 9:00 a.m.

North Platte, NE

Approved Minutes

Call to Order and Introductions:

Julie Johnson, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and she welcomed everyone to the meeting.

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

It was noted that public comments are always welcome regarding the agenda items. Hubert Paulson recorded the meeting and the recordings are available on the website. Pizza will be delivered at noon.

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was available. The Act was available in both print and Braille format.

Commissioner Walla read the agenda items and introductions were made.

Commissioners Present: Mike Hansen, Designee of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska, Lincoln; Nancy Oltman, Hastings; Julie Johnson, Chairperson, York; Darrell Walla, Omaha; Jim Jirak, Vice Chairperson, Designee of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, Omaha.

Commission Staff Present: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director, Lincoln; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director-IL, Lincoln; Jamie K. Forbis, Orientation Counselor, North Platte.

Public Present: Hubert Paulson, Lincoln; Chris Turner, North Platte; Della Johnston, North Platte; and Dan Bird, Plattsmouth.

Minutes of the February 6, 2010 Commissioners Meeting:

Commissioner Oltman moved to approve the Minutes of the February 6, 2010 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Jirak seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and it was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Evaluation of the Executive Director and Review of the Staff Surveys:

Chairman Johnson noted that apparently 28 staff participated in this year's survey. Discussion was held on a few comments submitted by staff. Chairman Johnson suggested excluding a few comments which identified specific individuals on staff. Anonymity of people making comments is assured; the same courtesy needs to be extended to anyone who is a subject of those comments. The Board did consider all comments made by staff members on the survey.

NCBVI Staff Survey

1. The executive director believes that it is respectable to be blind.

Overall Score: 4.75

2. The executive director listens to concerns from staff.

Overall Score: 4.0

3. The executive director responds to concerns from staff.

Overall Score: 3.6

4. The executive director listens to concerns from consumers.

Overall Score: 4.29

5. The executive director responds to concerns from consumers.

Overall Score: 4.0

6. The executive director identifies priorities.

Overall Score: 3.9

7. The executive director ensures that identified priorities become completed tasks.

Overall Score: 3.7

8. The executive director negotiates creatively to hire quality staff.

Overall Score: 3.5

9. The executive director negotiates creatively to fund exemplary service delivery.

Overall Score: 3.75

10. The executive director delivers progressive steps toward true equality for blind Nebraskans.

Overall Score: 4.1

Additional calculations were made regarding the Executive Directors performance and are as follows:

16. I feel that I can go to the executive director with a problem.

Overall Score: 4.2

20. The executive director demonstrates equal opportunity for the Blind.

Overall Score: 4.5

21. The executive director sets the right goals for NCBVI.

Overall Score: 4.0

22. The executive director sets the right priorities for NCBVI.

Overall Score: 4.0

23. The executive director is a good manager.

Overall Score: 4.0

24. The executive director is a hard worker.

Overall Score: 4.5

25. The executive director seeks in put from the staff.

Overall Score: 3.8

26. The executive director is fair.

Overall Score: 3.8

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

Overall Score: 4.3

28. Promotions at NCBVI are based on qualifications.

Overall Score: 3.4

29. I think that NCBVI is run efficiently.

Overall Score: 3.6

30. NCBVI is on the right track.

Overall Score: 4.2

31. NCBVI has a good budget process.

Overall Score: 3.75

The Commissioners discussed how to keep the link for the results of the survey from being distributed to others. Chairman Johnson stated that it was the responsibility of the Commissioners to keep this from happening.

Dr. Van Zandt discussed social networking sites and how these sites can be used for job searches and business contacts. This discussion was generated from one of the staff comments on the survey. The Commissioners discussed how use of state equipment was monitored in regards to personal phone calls and personal business done on the computer. Dr. Van Zandt responded by stating that policies are sent out on a regular basis outlining the proper use of state equipment. If at anytime suspicious activity is detected steps are taken to look into the matter.

Dr. Van Zandt expressed her thoughts on the survey. She stated that it had been a busy year with the stimulus money and with the struggles with the Business Enterprise Program. A team has been created to come up with new ways of managing the Business Enterprise Program. The team members are Bill Brown, Dave Robinson, Carlos Servan and Pearl Van Zandt along with BEP Staff Members Don Ward and Jan Stokebrand.

Chairman Johnson asked Dan Bird to read a letter from the Department of Administrative Services. The letter directed the Commission to freeze the salaries of top management.

Discussion by the Commissioners followed regarding the raise freeze and whether or not the freeze would be appropriate with the current budget issues.

Commissioner Hansen inquired if raises would be given to other top level managers within the agency.

Dr. Van Zandt reported that with the current budget it would not be responsible to grant raises at this time.

The Board of Commissioners offered their individual comments relative to the performance of the Executive Director.

Commissioner Hansen – The executive director and business staff do an exemplary job of competently tracking the financial situation. The executive director encourages team work among the staff and creates a friendly and supportive work environment. The executive director makes an effort to attend consumer conventions and meetings.

Commissioner Oltman – The executive director believes in blind people and this is the cornerstone of what we do.

Commissioner Jirak – The executive director is always open to new ideas.

Commissioner Johnson – Nebraska continues to be in the forefront for services to the blind of the United States. The executive director's belief in the blind is outstanding. Perhaps the Commission can work on team building within the agency.

Commissioner Oltman moved to retain Pearl Van Zandt as Executive Director at the current salary due to budget concerns.

Commissioner Walla seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and it was unanimous in favor of the motion.

A break was taken at 10:35 a.m.

Meeting resumed at 10:55 a.m.

Public Comment:

Bob Deaton – Bob stated that morale between staff is a lot better over the last few years. He feels that the agency is stronger as a team than ever before.

Chris Turner – Chris suggested the Commission create a page on Facebook to reach out to more consumers.

Dr. Van Zandt - It would be taken under advisement.

Report from the Chairman:

Chairman Johnson reminded the Commissioners of the policy on communications that are sent to staff. All emails must be reviewed by the board before being sent to staff.

Chairman Johnson presented at her local VIPS group about the Standing Tall and Taking Charge conference. Several of the VIPS members from the York group attended the conference. Chairman Johnson also presented at two of the local Lions clubs and is now a member.

Chairman Johnson requested funds to attend the 2010 National Federation of the Blind national convention in July. It is her intent to attend the American Council of the Blind national convention in 2011.

Commissioner Hansen moved to approve the request of Chairman Johnson to attend the 2010 NFB national convention. Commissioner Jirak seconded the motion. Chairman Johnson abstained. The other four commissioners were unanimously in favor of the motion.

Report from Commissioners on Event Attendance:

Chairman Johnson attended the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska state convention in April. Highlights of her attendance were given and her full report has been included in the minutes and is as follows.

Summary of Attendance at the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska
State Convention; April 23-25, 2010

By: Julie Johnson

Thank you to everyone for allowing me the opportunity to attend the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska convention in Fremont. I had a very nice time, learned a lot and had a chance to meet and speak with many people I hadn't met before. The experience was very valuable to me in assisting me with a greater understanding of the needs of blind and visually impaired Nebraskans.

On Friday we attended the Fremont Dinner Train. It was a lot of fun. The opportunity to visit with people in a casual atmosphere was very nice.

Saturday morning was the beginning of formal convention events. There were speakers on many topics from self employment producing white canes, to skydiving, to resource teachers in public schools as well as the national representative who spoke about ACB initiatives nationwide. There was also a presentation by the museum curator of the Fremont May Museum. It was very informative. I especially enjoyed gaining a better understanding of what is most important to ACB members in Nebraska.

Later that morning Dr. VanZandt and I spoke about happenings within NCBVI. Dr. VanZandt spoke primarily about agency budget, programs and future plans including ARRA funds. I spoke about what the Commission board does, when we meet, who the Commissioners are and invited everyone to attend board meetings. We then answered questions from the audience.

In the afternoon Nancy Snyder from the League of Human Dignity spoke. Brian Charlson from the Carroll Center also presented.

These presentations were followed by the business meeting. Between the afternoon events and the banquet was some free time. I spent most of this time talking with the students from the center at NCBVI.

Saturday evening was the banquet. The banquet address was given by Kim Charlson, the ACB national representative. She shared several funny anecdotes of sitting at the head table in previous years before moving on to her address. She truly believes in what she is doing both in her work at Perkins as well as within the ACB.

The banquet was concluded by Nancy Flearl receiving an award presented by ACBN for her outstanding work in the field of blindness. It was a great way to end a great evening. Congratulations to Nancy!

The auction fundraiser was that evening. There were lots and lots of donations. I spent a lot of this time visiting with people that I hadn't gotten to talk to during the day.

Sunday morning was the conclusion of the business meeting. Fundraising plans and the next year's convention arrangements were discussed. The convention adjourned before lunch.

Commissioner Hansen was unable to attend the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska state convention due to family issues.

Commissioner Walla was not able to attend the NCSAB Spring meeting. He apologized and expressed his intent to attend in the near future.

Commissioner Oltman attended Tuesday afternoon of the Commission state staff meeting. She found the break out sessions very helpful and appreciated the opportunity to attend.

Commissioner Hansen attended the entire Commission state staff meeting. Although parts of the meeting we dealt with internal issues such as email storage he felt it was a very worthwhile experience.

Commissioner Jirak attended the Standing Tall and Taking Charge older blind conference. He felt it was an outstanding conference and definitely worth the time and money.

Executive Director Report:

Dr. Van Zandt verbally gave highlights of her report. The entire report of the Executive Director is to be placed in the minutes, so it is inserted below.

Executive Director's Report – May 15, 2010

We are working on agreements with Missouri & Kansas for clients from elsewhere to attend our Center. When our clients request attending training out of Nebraska, they need to provide rationale in writing and now will be required to have a tour & 3-day stay at our Center.

During the fiscal year to date, 583 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients were served in all statuses. 53 were closed having achieved their employment goals. 28 were closed without achieving employment. In the Independent Living (IL) track, we served 756 clients in all statuses. 211 were closed successfully. 47 were closed without achieving their goals.

Official case closures come after a period of time, but here are jobs that clients started during this past quarter:

Travel Agent

Child Care

Administrative Assistant

Stocking

Housekeeper

Country Club Locker Room Attendant

Customer Service Representative

Salesperson

The total Full-time Center Clients Served from 1996 through April 2010 is 176. Eighty seven percent achieved their employment goals; 102 are in Competitive Employment; 23 are Home Makers; 33 are Students. Only 10 percent are not working.

Center Activities included a Banquet activity for etiquette training, participation in International Day, Art Sculpting, decorating Easter eggs, attending the ACB-N State Convention.

Field Report:

Winnerfest was held April 4-6, with fifteen participants (8 boys-7 girls)

Pathways home teaching videos are an ARRA (stimulus funds) project. Seven modules are being produced and are very near completion. Deanna is the primary coordinator for the project; she and a committee have done a great job on this. Center clients and staff made 'Oscar' statuettes to give the volunteer actors at a red carpet showing at State Staff Meeting. The actors are all blind consumers who use the skills and techniques every day.

'Standing Tall and Taking Charge' held May 4-6, was a major training event primarily for senior blind Nebraskans. The planning committee included Deanna Jesse, Cheryl Poff, Candace Laursen, and Bob Deaton. Approximately 225 people attended. Comments during and after were very positive. A survey will be conducted to assess the program's effectiveness.

Angie Hoff took a lead role in forging a closer working relationship with DDS and VR on behalf of a supported employment client in the Panhandle.

The service agreement between NCBVI and the supported employment provider may prove to be a model for future contracts with other providers of services on a broader scope. We are working on this.

Project Independence (PI) participants will be staying at Union College with day programming at the Lincoln office - June 20-24.

Becky Manning finished her internship with UNL - graduation Day was May 7th - She earned a BA degree in Social Work.

We completed hiring the WAGES staff. They will get training from the center for two weeks prior to the program. This year a coordinator has been hired as a part of the temporary staff. We will have 12 participants this summer at the program. The U. S. Congress has not approved any monies for Youth programs this year, so NCBVI will pay for the wages participants earn.

Case reviews were completed in the North Platte (NP) district.

Susan Rocker, TACE Center, provided training to the NP VR counselors on April 2 regarding Career Planning. All districts and the Center are working with her on this training.

The Placement Committee is ready to have the 2010 Placement Conference on May 19-20.

Omaha District

We have been doing a lot of job development, with some promising OJT's (On the Job Training) leading to employment outcomes. One is an individual that wishes to be an event planner for conferences. Ameristar is working at the corporate level to develop a position that will start as an OJT and transfer into a full-time position.

Staff members attended the recent ACBN State Convention.

We are working to hire some additional drivers in Omaha, it presents a challenge as people are always interested in guaranteed hours, but we will continue to search. We presently only have 2 drivers.

Norfolk had a group teaching in April with 6 participants. It was a wonderful group with everyone gaining a great deal from the program. Omaha's group will continue to meet this month with their last session on May 20th.

The Norfolk office worked with the South Dakota and Iowa agencies serving blind and visually impaired to provide an open house for employers in the Sioux City area, April 21st. There were a number of employers from Delta Airline, HyVee, etc. It was a great opportunity for employers to learn of technology and day to day services that are available to individuals that are blind and visually impaired.

The TABS (Teens Adventure in Blindness) is participating with the United Way in a joint project for youth volunteer day on April 24th. The focus is on literacy and our youth will be educating the public on Braille. This event drew media coverage and a great deal of positive feedback.

Hand and Hand, the deaf blind support group, met in April and plans are being developed with the Governor's Office on the Proclamation for Deaf Blind Awareness Week.

Staff are busy working on planning committees and with consumers in preparation for WAGES and PI.

We have had an increase in requests for in-services from agencies and retirement communities.

Larry Oleson attended training on JAWS Scripting the week of May 3rd.

The Omaha State Office Building has a new director of the facility, he has been here a while, but he has instituted a lot of changes. He has worked hard to bring wellness programs to Omaha and works at having events in the building for workers in all offices and agencies to get to know one another. We have mandated fire drills, tornado drills and emergency evacuation. In May we will be meeting with Homeland Security to test vulnerability and security measures in the building. There has been a great deal of crime in downtown Omaha; they are trying to step up security and police presence.

Eight clients attended FYI in North Platte April 12-15. One participant required a Spanish-speaking interpreter; provided by a volunteer currently completing her training at the Nebraska Center for the Blind. This client and volunteer interpreter also attended the older blind conference in Kearney.

Lincoln District Activities

We set up internships at Sheldon Art Gallery in clerical work and several at Suburban Extended Stays as a housekeeper. We set up job shadowing at St. Elizabeth's hospital for a couple of clients.

Our job class had presentations from a Life Coach on setting goals, from the Chamber of Commerce on Networking and a tour of the One Stop career center in Lincoln.

We held the GATE program with 4 participants. That class will be completed in May.

We opened a lot of Independent Living cases to accommodate individuals attending Standing Tall and Taking Charge.

Connie has had training in systematic assessments as a part of our work with Project Search. Saint Elizabeth's is working with the Waverly and Norris school districts and one of our clients will be a participant next year.

Business Office

Kathy is beginning to work on yearly inventory (bar code scanning). She started with the Center for the Blind and will move on to every office. Don Ward also does inventory on all NBE vending machines.

Kathy is assisting Pearl with NCSAB activities. She completed registrations and hotel arrangements for ACBN Convention in Fremont. She is working on arrangements for National ACB and NFB Conventions.

Worked with Nebraska.gov to implement the on-line staff survey.

Attended Open Enrollment Seminars.

Attended State Staff Meeting in Lincoln. Bill and Kathy conducted a presentation on email at State Staff.

Toured Homestead National Monument with Carlos and other staff/clients. They are working to make the monument accessible to blind and visually impaired individuals. They are developing talking screens to describe the displays that are in the monument. This was very interesting and educational.

Assisted with the State of Nebraska Food Drive.

Attended the Nebraska.gov Partner Event.

Bill is working on Enterprise One 9.0 (formally NIS), which went live on March 23, 2010. Most of the changes are cosmetic, but there were some functionality enhancements to the system.

We are currently working with the Enterprise One team to remedy a payroll issue we discovered. The issue doesn't prevent anyone from being paid, but requires a lot more manual entries to payroll, that had been automated.

The issue evidently affects four or five other agencies, as well, so we are not alone, but confident of a resolution.

Open enrollment is complete and ran from April 19 to May 14, 2010. Employees made their benefit choices for the benefit year commencing July 1, 2010 and running through June 30, 2011.

Premiums for two of the health plans decreased, one stayed the same and one increased.

Bill, Carlos, Pearl, Don and Jan Stokebrand are working on BEP Issues:

The National Guard camp at Ashland, contracted with Horta; Set Aside Reporting, Organization and Management of NBE, Retirement accounts for vendors, and a bid for Chadron (we have learned that we will not get that facility).

Bill is developing an Internal Control Plan, is working on Procurement Routing Issues, adapting the accounting system to Enterprise One upgrade. We are working on State Budget Fund and Federal Appropriation issues with Dept. of Administrative Services Budget Office.

CAP gave a presentation to the Center Clients. She will do this routinely from now on, a few times each year. CAP information was included in the Kearney conference for older blind.

Lunch was taken at 11:55 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 12:50 p.m.

Old Business:

Budget Update

Dr. Van Zandt reported that case expenditures were down for April. NCBVI is still over budget for 2010 case services, but its better then earlier projected. Currently \$100,000 Social Security funds are available and must be used by September 2010. The agency recently received just under \$83,000 from Social Security reimbursements from two different clients.

Chairman Johnson asked if the Social Security funds could be used on any expense.

Dr. Van Zandt reported that the funds could be used for anything allowed by state law and the Rehab Act.

Commissioner Jirak asked if the Social Security money came from clients being successfully employed.

Dr. Van Zandt reported that the Social Security reimbursements come from clients who received Social Security Disability and then become employed and met the substantial income guidelines. A request is then submitted to the Social Security Administration for reimbursement of all the funds spent on a client and if the request is approved NCBVI receives 100% reimbursement of the money that was spent.

Commissioner Hansen asked when the reimbursements are submitted if staff time is included.

Dr. Van Zandt stated that staff time is included in the formula for reimbursements.

Dr. Van Zandt continued her report. Approval was granted for \$10,000 from the investment Foundation grant which will be used to purchase equipment for IL clients in the Omaha area.

Della Johnston inquired about the Friends of the Commission.

Dr. Van Zandt reported that the Friends of the Commission are still active and meet quarterly. A small amount of funds are available from the Friends of the Commission and used on emergency basis for clients.

Dr. Van Zandt reported that another 5% cut will be implemented for all agencies. In the budget bill, which was passed in the recent session, agencies are required to develop an Agency Efficiency Review Plan which will include:

Consolidating existing programs within the agency

Opportunities for streamlining existing services

Reforms needed to reduce the number of employees and number of layers of management within the agency

Review of all mandates and requirements imposed on the agency and results on eliminating or changing the mandates and requirements

The structural and operational changes needed for the agency to move from a five day to a four day work week (32 hour work weeks)

Chairman Johnson asked what the time frame was for completing this plan.

Dr. Van Zandt stated that the plan had to be to the Clerk of the Legislature by September 1, 2010.

Commissioner Hansen asked if the 32 hour work week would affect state benefits.

Dr. Van Zandt replied that she wasn't sure how benefits would be affected.

Commissioner Walla wondered if the Commission could respond stating that it would be impossible to have such a plan due to the services that need to be provided.

Dr. Van Zandt stated that the agency has to be responsible given the realities of the budget. Points will be given on how this will affect services to clients, but the agency will also try and suggest ways to make it work. Dr. Van Zandt welcomes any and all suggestions.

Commissioner Johnson suggested having more group teaching programs in the Lincoln and Omaha areas.

Dr. Van Zandt reported that tours were taken of the North Platte office as well as the adjacent Voc Rehab building to see about making a move to reduce the cost of rent. The business office will continue to review options.

Chairman Johnson commented that the move would give the North Platte office more space and allow for more efficiency.

Bob Deaton expressed his concerns about storage space in the VR facility.

DAS/NIS Update:

Dr. Van Zandt reported that the Nebraska Information System (NIS) is now EDGE. Recently open enrollment health benefits were completed using EDGE. EDGE is more accessible for JAWS users and its overall a more user-friendly system.

NFB-Newsline® Update:

Outreach Coordinator Jamie K. Forbis gave verbal highlights of her report. The report has been included in the minutes and is as follows.

Nebraska NFB-Newsline®

May 15, 2010

By

Jamie K. Forbis, Outreach Coordinator

At the first of the year NFB-Newsline® announced some new features. These new features have been greatly appreciated by subscribers. The new voices have opened more doors to those who were unable to understand the Eloquence voice. With the ability to email individual articles of interest subscribers have enjoyed greater flexibility. Another new feature added in March is the ability to change favorites via the website. Previously subscribers had to call into Newsline to change their list of favorites, but now this can now also be done by logging into the online site.

New stat features are also being added making it easier then ever to track usage on NFB-Newsline®. Coordinators are now able to tell how many times the state newspapers, state information channel and TV listings are accessed. Knowing how many subscribers access the state information channel is very helpful to me when posting new information.

February's stats don't include the new information, but are as follows. During February 4 new subscribers were added to Newsline ending out the month with a total of 1,388 subscribers. Subscribers read 15,796 minutes of content and received 2,132 emails. Calls lasted on an average 15.40 minutes and 45.78% of the calls were made using the local number.

March's totals were up by three with a total of 1,391 subscribers. The total call minutes were 21,132 and the total email deliveries were 2,898.

Calls lasted on average 17.76 minutes with 56.97% of those calls made through the local number. Now for the new stats! The total number of access to state newspapers was 3,395, total state information channel accesses were 107 and the total TV listings accesses were 413.

In April 10 new subscribers were added for a total of 1,401 subscribers. 16,763 minutes were used and 3,870 emails were received. On average subscribers spent 16.17 minutes per call and 56.28% of those calls were made using the local number. In April subscribers accessed the state newspapers 3,106 times, the state information channel 214 times and TV listings 341 times.

Fifteen days into May 4 subscribers have been added for a mid-month total of 1,405. So far subscribers have read 8,058 minutes and received 1,935 emails. The calls have lasted approximately 18.11 minutes and 57.35% of the calls were made through the local number. Thus far the state newspapers have been accessed 962 times, the information channel has been accessed 62 times and TV listings have been accessed 158 times.

Over the last three months I've been busy adding email addresses and updating contact information. In May I attended the Standing Tall and Taking Charge older blind conference sponsored by NCBVI. During the conference I distributed information, signed up new subscribers and updated contact information. Soon I hope to provide all six of the NCBVI offices with new user guides, posters and business cards to promote the use of NFB-Newsline®.

NFB-Newsline® in Nebraska is moving right along and continues to improve. With the new stats I will continue to encourage subscribers to access the local channel and to use the local number.

Typically during the summer Newsline stats are lower, so it will be interesting to see what happens this year. Enjoy the summer and let me know if there are any questions. End of report.

Commissioner Hansen inquired as to how often the list of subscribers is purged and updated with people who have moved and such.

Jamie Forbis reported that the subscriber base is reviewed fairly often and when word is given that subscribers have passed away or move their information is removed from the system.

Chairman Johnson wondered how Nebraska compared to other states as far as subscriber numbers.

Jamie Forbis reported that subscriber numbers in Nebraska are lower compared to other states, but the number of minutes used reading Newsline are comparatively higher than other states with high numbers of subscribers.

Dr. Van Zandt asked if subscribers are made aware of the local number and the need to use this number when possible to cut down on the cost.

Jamie Forbis reported that she encourages subscribers to use the local number when ever possible because it does cut down on the cost of Newsline.

Dr. Van Zandt and Commissioner Jirak expressed concerns about subscribers that move out of state and the fact that NCBVI is still paying for those subscribers to use Newsline. Dr. Van Zandt encouraged Jamie to contact subscribers that have moved out of state and have their information transferred to their current state.

Commissioner Jirak wondered if there were any copyright infringements when articles are emailed to subscribers.

Jamie Forbis reported that subscribers have to agree to not pass that article on to others or reproduce it.

Jamie Forbis raised the question about the phone line in Lincoln that subscribers can call to ask questions of the coordinator. Jamie inquired if this phone line could be moved to North Platte so calls wouldn't have to be made from her home number. Discussion followed and Dr. Van Zandt and Jamie will look at the phone issue before the next meeting and find out what part of the phone bill is the Commission's responsibility.

Client Assistance Program – Complaints or Issues:

There were two CAP cases during the past quarter. The first case has been closed – it concerned whether the Commission or the General Voc Rehab agency should serve a specific person. The Commission is the appropriate agency and is now serving the client. The second case is still open, dealing with timeliness of service. CAP is following along to make sure it moves along as needed.

Public Comment:

No public comment.

Discussion of Service Provider Award:

Commissioner Hansen reported that suggestions had been discussed for an award that would be given to other agencies that have worked with the Commission. At this time two different awards are being considered. There will be no obligation to give out either of these awards a set number of times each year. The first award could be named the Ally in Independence Award and given to an agency/organization/individual proclaiming their work with NCBVI. This award could be in the form of a framed certificate or small token of appreciation. The second award is given to those who give a more outstanding contribution and could be more of a plaque named after Dr. James Nyman.

Commissioner Walla liked the idea of using Dr. Nyman's name on the second award given that Dr. Nyman was willing.

Commissioner Oltman agreed with the sentiments of Commissioner Walla and would like to see the name of Dr. Nyman used on the second award.

Commissioner Hansen will go forward with the awards and discuss the idea with Dr. Nyman.

Dr. Van Zandt inquired if the awards would be awarded on annual basis or when the Commissioners feel it's warranted.

Chairman Johnson stated that the details were still being considered, but that the award would most likely be given when exemplary service is provided by another agency, not routinely.

Commissioner Hansen suggested that nominations for these awards be made by the Commission staff as they are the ones working with the entities who would be worthy of recognition.

Discussion of State Plan:

Dr. Van Zandt reported that a draft of the state plan was sent to the board.

Commissioner Hansen stated that the plan lists no vacancies at this time. However, the Business Enterprise Program is being revamped and a director has not been hired; and the North Platte district has no onsite supervisor.

Dr. Van Zandt replied that the plan referred to staff providing Vocational Rehabilitation services and not staff of the entire agency. As far as the North Platte district supervisor, State Personnel was informed that that position would no longer be needed and instead the position had been moved to Lincoln for a rehab teacher.

Bob Deaton stated that the position previously held by Bob Shankland was also not filled. So that position could be moved wherever the need is greatest.

Dr. Van Zandt reported that the position was moved to Omaha where an Older Blind Counselor position was created.

Chairman Johnson asked how many employees the agency currently has.

Dr. Van Zandt reported that it was hard to say a number of employees due to part time positions. The part time employees only account for a portion of a full time equivalent position on paper.

Bob Deaton stated that the older blind position in Omaha was created using state funding.

Commissioner Oltman reported that the plan flowed nicely and she didn't see any obvious grammatical errors.

Commissioner Jirak moved to approve the state plan as proposed. Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. Chairman Johnson abstained because she didn't get a chance to read the plan. The other four commissioners voted unanimously in favor of the motion.

Public Comment:

Della Johnston – Della expressed her thoughts on the Standing Tall and Taking Charge conference. She'd like to see this conference held more often as it was very valuable to older blind clients.

Commissioner Walla- Is there an estimated cost for each client to attend the conference.

Bob Deaton – Without taking in the consideration the cost of wages of staff who worked the conference and only taking in the cost of lodging, meals and transportation the total cost of the conference was \$40,000.

Commissioner Walla – If clients paid to attend the conference it might be possible to have future conferences.

Della Johnston – A VIPS committee has been formed to look into the possibility of funding another conference.

Dr. Van Zandt – One option is to limit the number of participants just like with any other program within the agency.

Bob Deaton – 222 people attended the conference, however only 130 of those are active clients.

Commissioner Hansen – Typically at the end of programs clients are asked to complete a survey rating their experience. Was a survey taken at the end of the conference?

Bob Deaton – A telephone survey is being conducted to evaluate the experiences of clients who attended the conference.

Commissioner Hansen – Would like to see the results of the survey.

Final Announcements:

The next meeting of the Board of Commissioners will be held August 14, 2010 in Hastings NE. The focus topic is Youth Services.

The November meeting will be held November 6, 2010 in Lincoln NE with the focus topic of the Tech Team.

Adjourn:

Commissioner Jirak moved to adjourn. Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and it was unanimous in favor of the motion.

The May 15, 2010 meeting adjourned at 2:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jamie Forbis

Orientation Counselor

NCBVI

Julie Johnson

Chairman

NCBVI Board of Commissioners