

STATUTORY COUNCIL ON BLINDNESS

Meeting minutes of March 24-25, 2009

Best Western Inn on the Park

22 South Carroll Street, Madison

Present: Dave Hyde, Chair; Mark Janowiak; Eleanor Loomans; Dennis Nielsen; Bruce Parkinson; Carolyn Spain; Rhonda Staats; and Ed Weiss (Assistants: Kathy Parkinson, Connie Radloff, and Edward Statz)

Staff: Tom Langham, Cathy Frosch-Hellenbrand; and Mary Gorman

Guests: Paul Nelson, Wisconsin Library Association; Gary Goyke, Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired

Absent: Joan Wucherer

Chair Hyde opened the meeting at 4:30 p.m. asking for introductions. He then requested approval of the December 2008 meeting minutes.

MOTION: Dennis Nielsen moved; Bruce Parkinson seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the December 2008 meeting. Motion carried.

The Executive Committee discussed sending a letter to Department of Workforce Development (DWD) in regard to exploring the combination of blind services between DHS and DWD. Chair Hyde called for a motion:

MOTION: Rhonda Staats moved; Bruce Parkinson seconded a motion to approve the Executive Committee proposal to send a letter to the DWD Secretary in regard to combining services. Motion carried.

Chair Hyde discussed the response received from DVR Administrator Charlene Dwyer. He said the response indicated no changes would be made with regard to combining services, but she would meet with the Council on this topic. Chair Hyde will distribute the response to council members.

Gary Goyke announced some of the Wisconsin Council of the Blind and Visually Impaired programs.

Doc U Scan: The Wisconsin Council is starting a new business venture. This program employs people with disabilities to assist in scanning and storing documents for the Council.

March 26: the legislative Council Committee will vote on issues involving public transportation.

MOTION: Ed Weiss moved; Mark Janowiak seconded a motion that the statutory council go on record as supporting organizations that support public transportation initiatives, including the Wisconsin Council's legislative committee. Motion carried.

May 15: The Wisconsin Council will host its seventh annual philanthropy day held at King Wisconsin.

June 3: Council members are invited to participate in Wisconsin Council's legislative day on June 3. The council's legislative committee supports Terry Smith as the next RSA Commissioner. A Vision Services Wisconsin meeting will take place after the legislative day. Eleanor Loomans will host a booth on behalf of the statutory Council on Blindness. The OBVI will cover the fee.

The People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) vice-president is targeting all dog guide schools based on the tenant that training dogs for service work is mistreatment of animals. PETA is an extension of an organization called the Humane Society of America.

Library Services

Paul Nelson, Chair, Library Development and Legislation Committee, Wisconsin Library Association, discussed the governor's budget for library services. The funding for Newslines through the Universal service fund is adequate at this time since it is one of the smaller items in the budget. The Governor's budget initiative supports library services. Mr. Nelson said it would be helpful to tell legislators that the Council on Blindness supports the budget bill.

National Federation of the Blind (NFB) State Convention, La Crosse: Joseph D'Costa was one of the speakers and Tom Langham represented the OBVI.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

Dave explained that the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) administers the BEP. Vendors, who are self-employed, are charged a set aside fee ranging from 16–30 percent of their net profits. Currently, the set-aside fund balance is about \$100,000. The fund is used to purchase equipment and as a match for additional federal money. D'Costa explained that the funds will be paid back to the vendors, however, no equipment is being repaired. He said that equipment purchased independently would be purchased at amortized prices from vendors after they leave employment.

The DVR has taken actions to reduce their consumer wait list. Chair Hyde said clients are supposed to be served out of GPR 110 funds. In view of the problems with the Business Enterprise Program (BEP), Chair Hyde is glad there is resistance to combining services. He feels the council should take no action at this time and Administrator Charlene Dwyer should be given an opportunity to respond to the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). Chair Hyde will do some legislative research about the Randolph Sheppard program. The Statutory Council will take no further action at this time in regard to the BEP program.

Governor's Committee for People with Disabilities

The Governor's Committee will meet March 27. A council representative will be unable to attend this month but will be put in contact with a representative for the Governor's Committee for future meeting dates and locations.

Statutory Council on Blindness meeting
reconvened - March 25, 2009, 8:00 a.m.

All council members were present, except Dennis Nielsen and Joan Wucherer. The Office for the Blind and Visually Impaired Director Linda Huffer attended this meeting. The council members reviewed their discussions with legislators who were generally receptive to what they thought were reasonable requests.

Linda Huffer has an extensive background in working with legislators and asked council members to consider what to do following their meetings with legislators. She advocated follow up action be taken such as starting a bill to the Joint Committee on Finance to encourage greater support. Chair Hyde will follow up on the funding of the OBVI. Eleanor, Rhonda and Dave will work on funding support for the Adult Summer School.

Linda thinks it will be at least a year before the new OBVI director is hired. She will send the OBVI director position description to council members for their review and seek their suggestions regarding the selection of candidates. These suggestions will be sent to Ed Weiss who will compile them for further action by the Executive Committee.

OBVI Report – Linda Huffer, Director

The fiscal year 2009 General Program Revenue (GPR) budget is \$850,000 and the Independent Living for Older Blind Award (ILOB) award is \$550,000. A decline is expected in both these funds next year with the greatest cut in GPR. All state agencies have been told that they will take at least a one percent budget cut. Linda

said the new director will need to have skills to research funding, including grants and other sources. The person will also need to know how to work within the Department of Health Services (DHS) and partner with other agencies for funding programs.

The Office for the Blind and Visually Impaired (OBVI) expects to receive approximately \$667,000 federal stimulus money through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). The ILOB stimulus funding, targeting individuals over 55, is awarded for the next two years only. The OBVI must come up with a ten percent match. Many papers are being written proposing how to spend this money but the OBVI can only make proposals, not final decisions. The OBVI is anticipating and preparing for a federal audit in 2010.

Member Recruitment

Council member recruitment will begin early April. The Nominating Committee comprised of Carol Spain, Dave Hyde, and Ed Weiss will review the applications.

Future Council on Blindness Meetings

June 18-19, Manitowoc

September 17-18, Madison

MOTION: Bruce Parkinson moved; Eleanor Loomans seconded a motion to adjourn. Motion carried.

Meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Edward Weiss, Recording Secretary