

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
JUNE 11, 2005

DSB BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

Jim Adams
John Barnett
Lindi Johnson
Nola McKinney

DSB BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT

Sharon Berry
Searcy Ewell
Maria Morais

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT

Pierre Curry
Ramona Sangalli
Buddy Spivey

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT

Beth Bourgeois (resigned due to hire 2/05)
Jim Hill

DHS Representative: None

Attorney General's Office Representative: Tom Gay

Governor's Office Representative: None

DSB Staff Present: Jim Hudson, Katy Morris, Coral Virden, Jim Pearson, Donna Birdwell, Lyndel Lybarger, Kara Aaron, Mary Cabaniss, Carolyn Holbrook, Dorothy Brooks, Kandy Cayce

CALL TO ORDER. Chairman Mrs. Lindi Johnson called the meeting to order.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA. Motion was made by Mr. John Barnett to approve the agenda. Mrs. Nola McKinney seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

INTRODUCTIONS. All persons in attendance introduced themselves.

APPROVAL OF 03/12/05 MINUTES. Motion was made by Mr. Jim Adams to approve the minutes. Mr. Barnett seconded the motion. *Motion passed.*

DSB DIRECTOR'S REPORT-DHS Director Mr. Kurt Knickrehm will be leaving the department and going to the private sector effective the end of June. John Selig, currently one of the Deputy Directors, will be the new Director. Mr. Selig has 20 years experience in state government, including both the Health department and DHS. We will certainly miss Mr. Knickrehm and wish him well in the future. He has provided a lot of positive leadership for DHS and has been supportive of DSB, including attending DSB Board meetings. We look forward to working with Mr. Selig concerning DSB issues, and hope to see him at one of our board meetings soon.

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Congress is considering senate bill 1021 which relates to rehabilitation. Matters of particular concern to the state rehab community are proposals to lessen the authority of the RSA Commissioner, eliminate the separate bureau of Services for the Blind at the national level, block grant rehab federal funds under workforce investment, giving governors of each state the authority to disburse rehabilitation money as they see fit, and the immediate closure of all RSA regional offices. Though DSB is prohibited by federal anti-lobbying law from actively protesting or supporting these plans, we are permitted and obligated to provide information on their status when asked. I encourage you to track this legislation through the consumer groups or give us a call.

There was an information rally in Washington recently, organized and conducted by 45 to 50 consumer and advocate groups, particularly NFB and ACB. Over a thousand people participated, including 4 or 5 from Arkansas. Four former RSA Commissioners spoke in front of Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings' Office to provide her and her staff with information about how important the regional offices are to state rehabilitation and other issues. This was a very positive and important event. It has raised a lot of awareness of the issues across the nation. The Dallas regional office has consistently provided DSB an opportunity for feedback on how we are doing as an agency concerning the regulations that we implement. They have provided us technical assistance and supported us on issues relative to the authority vested in the rehabilitation agency for the blind in Arkansas. Current RSA Region VI Commissioner, Loerance Deaver, has visited here at least three times to meet with various DHS Directors and myself to clarify the roles of DSB and DHS in carrying out the Rehab Act.

JUMP START - Jump Start begins tomorrow, June 12, with 21 students and we have obtained work placements for all.

Recently, I had the privilege to give presentations at the AER (Association for Education and Rehabilitation) Annual Conference, Arkansas School for the Blind sixth grade graduation, and the ACB (American Council of the Blind) annual state convention recently. The events were most enjoyable and successful.

MEDICAID WAIVER – We are making slow but steady progress on the waiver application. Kandy Cayce reported that we are working on breaking down the service statistics and have a target date of October 1.

STATE PLAN – Kandy Cayce reported further that DSB held a statewide hearing on the proposed State Plan, and submitted the plan to Workforce for inclusion in the Unified Plan for the state. This approach satisfied Workforce, but RSA voiced issues regarding format and is requiring further submission.

VENDING PROGRAM – The vending location at the old Sears building is no longer producing enough customers and will be closed after June 30, 2005. The Department of

Human Services intends to use the space for relocation of staff being consolidated from the Arkansas Department of Health. The vendor in this location is planning to retire and if he doesn't want to retire he will have first option for future locations. The renovation of the federal building location has been completed. A vendor has won the bid. The location will be a little larger than what we have in this building. The location is scheduled to open July 18, 2005. We are going to continue to take a look at finding more locations but we are having a problem getting young people to come into the program. Another concern is that the vendors do not want to change what they are doing. They are satisfied with providing the type of food services that they have provided for years. However, the public, in a lot of situations, is demanding hot foods.

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR Mr. Barnett, Chairman of the DSB Board Employee Recognition Committee, announced the names of the winning DSB employees for 2005. Committee members were Pierre Curry, Searcy Ewell, Jim Adams and John Barnett. The Division of Services for the Blind outstanding employees include Dorothy Brooks for Administrative Services; Mary Douglas for Direct Client Services, and Francine Crain for Clerical Services. The Overall DSB Employee of the Year is Mary Douglas.

The committee suggested that the Board meet with Mr. Hudson and 3 to 4 DSB staff from across the state next year to revise the criteria listed on the nomination form. The goal is to make the criteria more appropriate for evaluating and choosing the DSB employee of the year and to make the form more user friendly. Mrs. Nola McKinney suggested that bios for each DSB employee be made available.

BUDGET FOR SFY 2006

Mary Cabaniss, DSB Chief Fiscal Officer, reported that 67 of the 74 authorized positions are budgeted for the year beginning July 1. Purchased services are planned at \$2,122,058 and Direct Services at \$4,076,236 for a total of \$6,198,294. This budget includes a Cost of Living raise for staff. The budget is partially funded with a one percent increase in state general revenue, and the remaining increase comes from federal funding.

ENHANCED PUBLIC RELATIONS Along with Mr. Hudson and administrative staff, the functional job description of each DSB staff member who carries a caseload, includes the duty to do public speaking activities and attend job fairs.

DSB has increased the amount of information on its web site, and increased the number of other web sites that contain links back to DSB. Additionally, DSB expends \$10,000 a year providing brochures, handouts, magnets, and key chains in various media to DSB

consumer meetings, job fairs and other information activities. Further, a group of administrators at the state level, managing programs serving persons who are blind meets quarterly to discuss common issues. This group is known as the "Blind Interest Group", and consists of DSB, ASB, Library Services for the Blind, LWSB, Arkansas Lighthouse for the Blind, Radio Reading Services, AER, and UALR. It also happens that DSB is the featured Division this month in the showcase at the front of this building, which lets DHS staff as well as the public get a good idea of what DSB is all about. Support groups such as the LIFE (living independence for the elders) Advisory Council also help spread the news. DSB counselors also do a lot of work with church groups.

DISABILITY RIGHTS CENTER REPORT (DRC) - No representative was present. No report was submitted.

ARKANSAS INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL REPORT (AILC) – No representative was present. A report was submitted with the board packet.

CONSUMER INPUT – The Annual Vendors Seminar is the first week in August at the Holiday Inn Airport. The NFB of Arkansas State Convention is tentatively scheduled for late September in Fort Smith. The Lions Club District Conference is November 11-12, 2005 in Maumelle at the Comfort Inn.

Former DSB Board member, Johnny Holmes, passed away six weeks ago.

Jimmy Sparks noted that he attended the information rally held in Washington D.C. and it was a tremendous success. He has pictures and info if anybody is interested.

Harold Brewer will replace Pierre Curry as representative of the Arkansas Association of Blind Business Enterprise Managers. It was noted that Mr. Curry held a near perfect record for attendance to the DSB Board meetings, missing only two times during the tenure of his post. The absences were due to means beyond his control; foul weather and a travel obstacle when the meeting was held in Fayetteville. As everyone applauded him for his remarkable achievement, the board expressed that Pierre Curry's loyal presence will be sincerely missed.

Schedule of Next Meeting - Tentative Date is September 10, 2005, at the Department of Human Services, Donaghey Plaza South, 700 Main Street, First Floor, Conference Room A. This date is subject to change after contacting additional board members.

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The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully Submitted,

Nola McKinney
Secretary