Minutes

Oklahoma Council of the Blind

First Quarter Zoom Board Meeting

November 23 2024

President Boykin called the meeting to order at 9am.

Those present were Frances Poindexter, Vicky Golightly, Elaine Boykin, Dana Young, Marilyn Sanders, Pam Holloway, Sandy Evans, Magan Rowan, and Jeanne Meyer.  A quorum was established.  Guests present were Jay Doudna, Jean Jones, Julie Brantley, Rae FitsPatrick, Debbie Sanders, and Joseph Bundy.

President Boykin welcomed everyone to the November Board meeting, followed by a moment of silence for those who have passed away.

President’s report

The President said Kay Love was an excellent President, and she is missed.

The Treasurer’s report was filed as distributed on the OCB list. OCB has over $37,000, and we need to decide how to spend our money, such as scholarships for kids, a project for the Oklahoma School for the Blind (OSB), increased outreach, workshops, etc.

Proposed Budget

The Treasurer reviewed the proposed budget for next year.  Vicky moved, with second by Jeanne, that the miscellaneous funding category be raised from $200 to $500.  The motion carried.

Pam moved, with second by Vicky, that OCB establish an annual scholarship of $1,500 called the Kay Love Scholarship.  The motion carried.  A committee will be established to create guidelines and criteria later in the meeting.

The proposed budget is $20,965.23.  Pam moved, with second by Dana, that the budget be accepted as read.  The motion carried.

Convention Report

Frances gave the convention report.

•    There were 76 paid convention attendees:  49 for the whole convention, seven attending for Saturday and Sunday only, and 20 for Friday only.

•    There were 29 SBVI counselors/staff, 17 SBVI clients (most first timers), and 30 regular attendees.

•    There were 23 paid vendors, with 14 displaying, eight not displaying, and one vendor stuck in Florida due to the weather.

•    Lawton and HCB paid for five scholarships each.  OCB paid for six scholarships and one Judy Hansen Transportation Fund reimbursement.

•    Frances broke down the cost of the convention.  Our net profit was $4,697.43.

Membership

Frances reported there are 428 members.

Chapter Outreach

Frances reported the Enid Support Group met last weekend. Hopefully, we can attend their next meeting.  Perhaps they might decide to become an OCB chapter in the future, but we will support them regardless of whether they join as an OCB chapter or decide to remain a support group only.  We also need to reach out to the new people who came to our convention.

Vicky said she and Frances are co-chairing the 2025 OCb convention here in Oklahoma City, and we are beginning to look at hotels. Convention committee meetings will begin in January.

The minutes of the previous meeting were filed as distributed on the OCB list.

Judy Pool Transportation Fund

There is still $2,800 in this fund.  Vicky said there has been talk about changing the calculation of transportation expenses from mileage to a specific amount of money.  The committee guidelines need to be reviewed.  Marilyn will chair a committee to review the guidelines, with members Magan, Elaine and Frances.

Freedom Voice

Chairman Jay Doudna reported that the phone system and call responses have worked well.  Dana will communicate with Jay as to who the new LCB contact person should be.  Dana will also let us know who the LCB contact should be on the OCB website.

Committee Reports

Government Affairs

Chair Jean Jones reported:

Based on the stated goals of November election victors, people with disabilities may face changes in many of the programs we use, the resources available to us and the application of laws that affect us. Potential changes could be helpful or harmful, so it is important that blind individuals pay attention to proposed changes and prepare to offer input on them.  Issues to monitor at the national level include:

The future of Social Security.  Currently, the Social Security Trust Funds are not taking in as much money as they are paying out on benefits.  The Trust Funds are projected to reach a crisis in 2033, when benefits will be automatically cut by about 19% if corrective measures are not taken.  This benefit cut would definitely affect people on Social Security retirement.  The effect on younger disability recipients is uncertain.  Congress will need to take action if benefit cuts are to be prevented. Some options that have been mentioned are raising the retirement age, raising the FICA tax that working people pay to fund Social Security and Medicare, and raising the income level on which the FICA tax is applied.  Changing the way the annual COLA is calculated has also been proposed.  In addition, some Republicans have proposed privatizing Social Security.  None of these proposals has yet been seriously considered by Congress, but time is running out for a solution to be crafted.

Social Security is funded by the FICA tax paid by workers and their employers, the interest on Trust Fund monies that are invested, and the tax on benefits paid by higher income Social Security recipients.  About 40% of Social Security recipients make enough to have their benefits taxed.  President-elect Trump has said he wants to end the federal tax on Social Security benefits. If this happens, the Trust Funds will lose money faster, so benefit cuts would happen sooner than 2033, absent any other actions to shore up the Funds.

Medicare, Medicaid, and the Affordable Care Act.

Many Republican leaders have called for change or repeal of health care programs now in place.  Replacement of the Affordable Care Act is an often expressed goal of the President-Elect.

Federal spending cuts to reduce the federal budget deficit. Already being proposed are spending cuts for programs such as food stamps and Medicaid.  Since major federal spending cuts are now being suggested, other areas like housing assistance and transportation could also be affected.

Special Education, Vocational Rehabilitation, Services for the Blind, Older Blind Independent Living.

President-elect Trump and other Republicans have expressed the desire to eliminate the U.S. Department of Education (DOE).  DOE administers federal special education law, provides funding to states for special ed, administers and funds Vocational Rehabilitation programs for disabled and blind people, administers and funds the Randolph-Sheppard Program, and funds Independent Living for Older Blind. DOE issues regulations for all these programs.  The proposed elimination of DOE raises many questions about how or if these programs would be funded, administered, or even continued.

On November 21 South Dakota Senator Mike Rounds introduced a bill to eliminate the U.S. Department of Education.  More such bills may come. Rounds’ bill closes DOE and sends some programs to other agencies. Vocational Rehabilitation and the Randolph-Sheppard program would go to the Department of Labor.

Special Ed, APH, the Helen Keller Center and some other programs would go into the Department of Health and Human Services.  Civil rights complaint functions like enforcement of Section 504 in the educational arena would go into the Justice Department.

Department of Justice priorities.  The appointment of a new U.S.

Attorney General will affect U. S. Department of Justice priorities.  It is uncertain whether enforcement and technical assistance for disability rights laws will retain the level of attention DOJ has given these laws in recent years.  It will also be important to watch for any attempts by Congress to modify or weaken disability rights laws such as the Americans with Disabilities Act.

At the State level, Workforce program consolidation remains an issue to watch.  Although Governor Stitt has issued Executive Orders directing consolidation of WIOA funds and programs, the state Department of Rehabilitation remains a separate agency at this time.  It will be important to continue watching for Workforce legislation that may affect VR, Services for the Blind, and other blindness programs.

Jean said that if we think any of the drastic changes will occur, it might be helpful if there is money in the OCB budget to write letters to legislators.

Social Media

Chair Sandy Evans reported she continues to work on our Facebook page, and we have around 450 followers.  We still have the closed group for discussion.  Sandy said she will continue chairing this committee.

The Oklahoma School for the Blind will host the South Central Association of Schools for the Blind conference in late January 2025, and they are looking for sponsorships or a donation of a door prize. The schools are Oklahoma, Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Alabama. Vicky moved, with second by Pam, that OCB allocate $150 toward a sponsorship for the SCASB Conference to be held at OSB in January.  The motion carried.

Public Affairs

Chair Sandy Evans said the Department of Rehabilitation Services (DRS) People with Disabilities Awareness Day on March 11 is a key function OCB attends.  Elaine Boykin, Jay Doudna, Julie Brantley, and maybe others plan to represent OCB at this event.  The location is the Oklahoma History Center in Oklahoma City.  Sandy will continue to chair this committee.

History Committee

Chair Jeanne Meyer continues to obtain factual information for OCB. Please let the committee know if you have any documentation that will provide valuable information for this committee.

Vicky suggested setting up a contact person to schedule all of OCB’s committee meetings so there are not two people scheduling a Zoom meeting at the same time.  As the Zoom account is Marilyn’s account, let her know you will need to use the Zoom link.

Constitution

Chair Jeanne Meyer reported the OCB Constitution was amended on September 29 2024, and it is available on our website thanks to Jean and Frances.

Fundraising

Jay Doudna is the past Chair.  Joseph Bundy volunteered to chair this committee.

Terry Lynn candy is advertised on our website as one of our fundraisers.

Vicky is chairing the Interstate Auction Committee.  Vicky will contact Auction Coordinator Pat Tussing after this Board meeting. Joseph will assist Vicky on this committee.

Brenda Dillon Memorial Walk

This ACB walk is an annual activity to raise funds, 50% going to ACB and 50% going to OCB.  There is a walk at the ACB convention in July, but funds are raised over a few months, ending the end of August.  OCB’s team is the Oklahoma Tornadoes.

MMS, Monthly Monetary Support

The fund consists of contributions by individuals to ACB, with a designated percentage to OCB.  Each OCB member decides what percentage of the donation goes to ACB and what goes to OCB.

OCB Website

 Chair Vicky Golightly said the committee meets monthly and continues to update the website content.  Debbie Sanders is our administrator. There is a wonderful tribute to Kay Love, lots of convention pictures, and constantly updated content.

Membership

Frances gave a membership report in that we have 428 members.  The President said she would welcome more members to serve on this committee to help with membership growth and keeping track of our membership to report the number to ACB.  The Committee members are Elaine Boykin, Joseph Bundy and Debbie Sanders.

Membership Outreach

Vicky, Elaine and Frances work with membership outreach, the goal being to interact with existing chapters and possibly helping to form new chapters.

OSB Outreach

Chair Jeanne Meyer reported the former OSB superintendent retired in the Fall of 2024.  The Interim Superintendent is Brent Pierce, who was hired as the high school principal.  Jeanne has met with Principal Pierce several times about the OSB Alumni Association and the Oklahoma Foundation for the Education of Blind Children and Youth.

Next Generation

Chair Dana Young said the committee has a book club.  They are also planning a lot of activities across the state.  There will be a survey sent out the first of next year asking what types of activities people would like, such as going to the park, attending concerts, bowling, etc.  Because transportation is a barrier to people who are blind or who have low vision, hosting activities across the state might attract good attendance.  Dana is willing to continue chairing the committee.

The Blind Spot

Debbie has the newsletter almost completed.  She would like to establish a database which reflects the type of available formats including audio, braille, large print and email.

Unfinished Business

None.

Chapter Updates were given.

New Business

Members of the Scholarship Committee are Pam, Dana, Vicky, and Marilyn.

Announcements:

Wilderness Ministries is having a silent auction and raffle on December

14 at the Canadian River by Noble.

Next Board Meeting

The next Board meeting is on February 22 at 9am.

The meeting adjourned at 11:15am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Lynn (Vicky) Secretary

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