New Mexico Commission for the Blind

State Rehabilitation Council

MINUTES (FINAL)

Regular Meeting Held Virtually

November 10, 2022 - 9:00 AM

1. Call to Order

Chairperson Hayes called the meeting to order at 9:06 AM.

2. Roll Call

Ms. Ellis took roll, and Jim Babb, Jeff Blair, Bernadine Chavez, Katharine Chavez, Deborah Dominguez-Clark, Kaity Ellis, Peggy Hayes, Mario Hooee, Paul Luttrell, Lila Mae Martinez, Daphne Mitchell, Paula Seanez, and Greg Trapp were present. Yolanda Montoya-Cordova joined the meeting later. Craig Cooper was absent.

3. Introduction of Guests and Staff

Staff present included Jim Salas, Deputy Director for Vocational Rehabilitation and Independent Living; Kevin Romero, Deputy Director for Finance and Administration; Kelly Burma, Skills Center Coordinator and SRC Liaison; Patricia Savage, Executive Secretary; Audrey Trujillo, Information Technology Manager; Jedi Moerke, Orientation Center Acting Director; and Lucy Mallahan, Orientation Center Special Project Coordinator. There was one guest present, Commissioner Shirley (Urja) Lansing.

4. Approval of Changes to the Order of the Agenda and Deletion of Agenda Items

Mr. Trapp requested that the Approval of the FFY22 Council Annual Report be moved up in the agenda due to his needing to leave the meeting early to attend the funeral of Jack Travers, the agency contract general counsel. Mr. Trapp said Jack was a friend, and that Jack represented the agency for almost 20 years in areas where the Attorney General was unable to provide representation. Mr. Trapp said he really appreciated the support and legal services that Jack provided to the agency. Mr. Trapp said Jack was a really good guy, and he described how Jack offered to be his advocacy partner in law school when Jack overheard the person originally selected telling the professor he did not want to work with him because of his blindness. Mr. Trapp said he did not learn that story for many years and repeated that Jack was a good person.

Mr. Blair moved to approve the agenda with the annual report item being moved to come before Major Trends and Developments, and Mr. Babb seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the agenda as revised was approved unanimously, with Jim Babb, Jeff Blair, Bernadine Chavez, Katharine Chavez, Deborah Dominguez-Clark, Kaity Ellis, Peggy Hayes, Mario Hooee, Paul Luttrell, Lila Mae Martinez, and Paula Seanez all voting yes. Craig Cooper and Yolanda Montoya-Cordova were absent for this vote. Daphne Mitchell and Greg Trapp are ex officio and did not vote.

5. Approval of Minutes of Regular Meeting of September 8, 2022

Mr. Babb made a motion to approve the September 8 minutes, and Mr. Luttrell seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the minutes were approved unanimously, with Jim Babb, Jeff Blair, Bernadine Chavez, Katharine Chavez, Deborah Dominguez-Clark, Kaity Ellis, Peggy Hayes, Mario Hooee, Paul Luttrell, Lila Mae Martinez, and Paula Seanez all voting yes. Craig Cooper and Yolanda Montoya-Cordova were absent for this vote. Daphne Mitchell and Greg Trapp are ex officio and did not vote.

6. Client Assistance Program Report, Bernadine Chavez

Ms. Chavez reported that CAP had two calls for the Commission, one was for information and the other is still being reviewed.

Ms. Chavez thanked Mr. Trapp for supporting her to attend the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils, CSAVR and NCSAB Conferences in San Antonio. She said it was the first time she had been to the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind Conference, and she said she was really impressed with NCSAB. Ms. Chavez said that as RSA was giving reports about national statistics, the Commission was noted several times for leading the pack. She said the numbers from the Commission are really impressive.

Ms. Chavez said the meeting of the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils was also good, and that NCSRC has some materials that will be posted to the website for SRC members. She said the NCSRC will also do monthly trainings, and that she will pass them to Ms. Burma. Ms. Chavez encouraged SRC members to attend those NCSRC trainings.

Ms. Hayes said she found the NCSAB training she attended to be very helpful, and Ms. Burma said she will pass on the training information.

7. Section 121 Project Report, Pauline Seanez

Ms. Seanez said she was representing the Navajo Nation, and that the Navajo Nation recently elected a new President and Vice President. She said Buu Nygren is the youngest elected President, and that he comes from the Red Mesa/Red Valley area. She said Richelle Montoya is the first woman to be elected Vice President, and that she comes from the Torreon area. Ms. Seanez said the Navajo VR program is excited to work with the new leadership, and that they will come into office in January 2023.

Ms. Seanez said the Navajo VR program continues to work to recruit and hire staff. She said the VR program is still lacking a counselor in Farmington and in Chinle.

Ms. Seanez said the Navajo VR program is working on transition efforts with the Sonoran Center on Excellence for Disabilities out of the University of Arizona. She said the VR program is working with the Arizona VR agency and is trying to expand opportunities for youth and students with disabilities. She said the VR program is starting with three schools in the Arizona side of the Navajo Nation to implement work-based learning during the school year and during the summer. She said the VR program is hoping to do similar initiatives on the New Mexico side.

Ms. Seanez said she did not receive a report from Jemez or Laguna, but she believes their offices are opening up.

Ms. Seanez said that the Navajo VR program will be meeting with the RSA Commissioner on November 29 at the Sonoran Center in Tucson to discuss transition collaborative efforts and is very much looking forward to that meeting.

8. Workforce Board Report, Yolanda Montoya-Cordova

Ms. Montoya-Cordova was not present but did update the Council when she arrived later in the meeting.

Mr. Trapp said the Workforce Development Board meets every other month on the first Thursday of the month. He said the Workforce Board was scheduled to meet on December 1, but the meeting was cancelled.

9. Chairperson’s Report, Peggy Hayes

Ms. Hayes said she did not have a report.

Mr. Trapp said that he was happy to have Ms. Hayes back and feeling better. Mr. Trapp thanked Mr. Babb for covering the last meeting while Ms. Hayes was ill.

10. Election of Officers

Ms. Hayes said the floor was open for nominations.

Mr. Blair nominated Ms. Hayes for Chairperson, and Mr. Babb seconded the nomination. Mr. Babb called three times for nominations. There were no other nominations, and Mr. Babb moved that nominations cease, and Ms. Hayes be elected by acclamation. A roll call vote was taken, and Ms. Hayes was elected unanimously, with Jim Babb, Jeff Blair, Bernadine Chavez, Katharine Chavez, Deborah Dominguez-Clark, Kaity Ellis, Peggy Hayes, Mario Hooee, Paul Luttrell, Lila Mae Martinez, and Paula Seanez all voting yes. Craig Cooper and Yolanda Montoya-Cordova were absent for this vote. Daphne Mitchell and Greg Trapp are ex officio and did not vote.

Ms. Hayes called for nominations for Vice Chairperson. Ms. Hayes nominated Mr. Babb for Vice Chairperson, and Mr. Blair seconded the nomination. Ms. Hayes called three times for other nominations. There were no other nominations, and Ms. Hayes moved that nominations cease, and Mr. Babb be elected by acclamation. A roll call vote was taken, and Mr. Babb was elected unanimously, with Jim Babb, Jeff Blair, Bernadine Chavez, Katharine Chavez, Deborah Dominguez-Clark, Kaity Ellis, Peggy Hayes, Mario Hooee, Paul Luttrell, Lila Mae Martinez, and Paula Seanez all voting yes. Craig Cooper and Yolanda Montoya-Cordova were absent for this vote. Daphne Mitchell and Greg Trapp are ex officio and did not vote.

Mr. Babb nominated Ms. Katharine Chavez as Secretary, and Ms. Bernadine Chavez seconded the nomination. Ms. Hayes called three times for nominations and there were no other nominations. Ms. Hayes moved that nominations cease, and Ms. Katharine Chavez be elected by acclamation. A roll call vote was taken, and Ms. Katharine Chavez was elected unanimously, with Jim Babb, Jeff Blair, Bernadine Chavez, Katharine Chavez, Deborah Dominguez-Clark, Kaity Ellis, Peggy Hayes, Mario Hooee, Paul Luttrell, Lila Mae Martinez, and Paula Seanez all voting yes. Craig Cooper and Yolanda Montoya-Cordova were absent for this vote. Daphne Mitchell and Greg Trapp are ex officio and did not vote.

Ms. Hayes asked for nominations for Board Position 1. Ms. Hayes nominated Ms. Bernadine Chavez for Board Position 1, and Mr. Luttrell seconded the nomination. Ms. Hayes asked three times for nominations, and there were no other nominations. Ms. Hayes moved that nomination cease, and Ms. Bernadine Chavez be elected by acclamation. A roll call vote was taken, and Ms. Bernadine Chavez was elected unanimously, with Jim Babb, Jeff Blair, Bernadine Chavez, Katharine Chavez, Deborah Dominguez-Clark, Kaity Ellis, Peggy Hayes, Mario Hooee, Paul Luttrell, Lila Mae Martinez, and Paula Seanez all voting yes. Craig Cooper and Yolanda Montoya-Cordova were absent for this vote. Daphne Mitchell and Greg Trapp are ex officio and did not vote.

Ms. Hayes asked for nominations for Board Position 2, and Ms. Bernadine Chavez nominated Mr. Hooee for Board Position 2. Ms. Seanez seconded the nomination. Ms. Hayes asked three times for other nominations, and there were no other nominations. Ms. Hayes moved that nominations cease, and Mr. Hooee be elected by acclamation. A roll call vote was taken, and Mr. Hooee was elected unanimously, with Jim Babb, Jeff Blair, Bernadine Chavez, Katharine Chavez, Deborah Dominguez-Clark, Kaity Ellis, Peggy Hayes, Mario Hooee, Paul Luttrell, Lila Mae Martinez, and Paula Seanez all voting yes. Craig Cooper and Yolanda Montoya-Cordova were absent for this vote. Daphne Mitchell and Greg Trapp are ex officio and did not vote.

New Business - Approval of FFY22 Council Annual Report, Peggy Hayes and Greg Trapp

The Approval of the FFY22 Council Annual Report was moved up in the agenda and presented by Peggy Hayes and Greg Trapp

Mr. Trapp said one of the duties of the Council is to submit an annual report and that the annual report is due 90 days after the close of the Federal Fiscal Year, which makes it due on December 30. He said the report is also submitted to the Governor, which is also done pursuant to State law. Mr. Trapp said the agency has been submitting a combined Commission and Council annual report. He said he thought that process is logistically easier and shows that the Council and agency work very closely together.

Mr. Trapp said the annual report includes cover letters from the Commission Chair and the State Rehabilitation Council Chair. He said the annual report describes the agency performance and includes the goals and priorities. He said the goals and priorities are a part of the State Plan. He said he sent the current annual report to the Council, and he is proposing to add new performance numbers. He said the report is for the Federal Fiscal Year from October 1, 2021 through September 30, 2022. Mr. Trapp said the last report has considerable information about the impact of the pandemic. He said when the Commission submitted the last annual report in December 2021, the agency had only just moved out of the lockdown, which happened in July of last year. He said the Commission has been providing in-person services at a more significant level for basically a year and a half, and that he wants to include language that the agency is providing greater services. He said he sent out the proposed draft annual report, which has statistics about blindness. He said in terms of prevalence, the rate of increase is decreasing, but there is still an overall increase in blindness because of the aging of the population. Mr. Trapp said the American Community Survey Statistics have not been updated, and unless those are updated the report would use the current American Community Survey numbers. He said the narrative portion describes the Commission’s number of individuals served, starting wage, number of placements for the vocational rehabilitation program, number of persons served by the vocational rehabilitation program and the independent living program, the business enterprise program, the overall amount of income generated by the business enterprise program, the Newsline for the blind program, the Technology for Children program, the Skills Center, and the Orientation Center. He said for the Orientation Center, the apartments are close to being completed and ready for occupancy, and that the report would have the latest information on the apartments.

Mr. Trapp said he recommends that the Council authorize the Executive Committee to review and approve the updated Annual Report with the new numbers that are being gathered with the close of the Federal Fiscal Year. Mr. Trapp said the draft report would also have an update on the pandemic, the impact of Pre-Employment Transition Services and the updated numbers, with the Executive Committee approving the final annual report as submitted and approved by the Council.

Mr. Blair made a suggestion regarding the formatting of the annual report, saying the expenditure information should be combined and the goals and priorities language was repetitive. Mr. Trapp and Mr. Blair had a discussion about the suggestions. Mr. Blair asked that the goals and priorities language be made less repetitive, and Mr. Trapp agreed to make the change. Mr. Trapp said the Stevens Amendment language was included in the annual report because it is required by federal law and that it should be in a prominent location.

Mr. Blair made a motion to approve the Annual Report as Director Trapp has presented, updating the Annual Report with new numbers and new information on the pandemic, authorizing the Executive Committee to make final changes to the Annual Report, including consolidating the fiscal numbers in a single section and also looking at the ways to make the Goals and Priorities section more readable, and Ms. Katharine Chavez seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken, and the annual report as revised was approved unanimously, with Jim Babb, Jeff Blair, Bernadine Chavez, Katharine Chavez, Deborah Dominguez-Clark, Kaity Ellis, Peggy Hayes, Mario Hooee, Paul Luttrell, Lila Mae Martinez, and Paula Seanez all voting yes. Craig Cooper and Yolanda Montoya-Cordova were absent for this vote. Daphne Mitchell and Greg Trapp are ex officio and did not vote.

11. Director’s Report, Greg Trapp

a. Major Trends and Developments, Greg Trapp

Mr. Trapp congratulated the new Officers and said he looks forward to working with them. He also thanked Kaity Ellis for her service as secretary.

Mr. Trapp said one of the consistent points made during the meetings of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation and National Council of State Agencies for the Blind was the need for agencies to increase spending. Mr. Trapp said the federal Vocational Rehabilitation Program gets about $3.7 billion, and this last year either did not spend or did not reallocate through the reallotment process about half a billion dollars. Mr. Trapp said the federal funding is increasing as a part of the Consumer Price Index Urban, and that the spending trends are alarming. Mr. Trapp said the reasons include the declining workforce participation rate, the pandemic, the bureaucracy, counselor vacancies, and the requirement to reserve and spend 15 percent of funds on Pre-Employment Transition Services. Mr. Trapp said he is part of a workgroup that is working with RSA to revise the Monitoring and Technical Assistance Guide to identify ways agencies can address spending obstacles.

Mr. Trapp reported on the pandemic, saying there are some concerning issues regarding the pandemic. He said the Omicron variant is not spiking quite as fast as he expected, but there have been cases at the Commission. He said the nation is also seeing a very severe flu season, with more people hospitalized with the flu than in over a decade. Mr. Trapp said the Omicron variant is able to reinfect people just three or four months after a prior infection.

Mr. Trapp said the Commission had its LFC hearing on October 18, and that it went well. He said the LFC was looking at the fund balance, and he was able to explain how it was due to the way the agency generates program income and leverages funding. He said the agency would be working to increase the spending of its fund balance.

Mr. Trapp asked Mr. Salas to fill in for him, leaving at 10:15 AM to attend Mr. Traver’s funeral.

Mr. Salas said Mr. Travers was a very nice guy and that he got to know him over the years as the Agency Attorney. He said Mr. Travers handled contracts and employment issues.

b. Administration and Finance, Kevin Romero

Mr. Romero reported that as of today for fiscal year FY23, the Commission has spent $5,155,500 and has encumbrances totaling $746,600, leaving a remaining balance of $10,905,100 or 65 percent of the appropriated budget. He said this is a 50 percent year, and the Commission is currently projected to spend about $7.1 million as of December 31, keeping the agency below the 50 percent mark.

Mr. Romero said the Commission currently has 21 positions vacant, with 10 of those positions being Exempt/Other and 11 being Classified, giving the Commission a 23.2 percent vacancy rate. He said the Classified position vacancy rate is only 17.3 percent. He said the Classified vacancy rate is a better gauge of how the Commission is filling positions as the Exempt/Other are filled as needed. He said 17 percent is a good vacancy rate, which the agency is working to lower. He said the Commission currently has 11 positions that are currently being advertised. He said once those 11 positions are filled the Commission will have an 11 percent vacancy rate.

Mr. Romero said the FY22 Audit was submitted to the Office of the State Auditor on the statutory date of November 1, 2022. He said the Commission had an Exit Conference on November 1. He said State Auditor Colòn attended, and that the audit is currently with the Office of the State Auditor and DFA for review.

Mr. Romero said the Commission had its Capital Outlay Hearing on October 13 and has submitted a Capital Outlay Request of $835,257 in total for four years, with $300,705 for FY24. He said the request is for repairs and renovations of existing buildings.

Mr. Romero said Director Trapp covered the LFC Hearing, saying in addition the Executive and the Legislative Committees are preparing their recommendations.

Mr. Salas asked Mr. Romero to speak about the meeting with Secretary Mantos. Mr. Romero said a couple days ago the Commission had a meeting with Peter Mantos, the Department of Information Technology designated Cabinet Secretary. Mr. Romero said the purpose was to discuss issues the Commission has raised previously about accessibility of documents and software applications. He said the Cabinet Secretary was interested in getting issues resolved as best as possible. Mr. Romero said the State is moving to multi-factor authentication to reduce the possibility of cyber security threats. As part of that change, there is an authenticator App or a text code that is required when an employee logs in.

Ms. Dominguez-Clark asked Mr. Romero if the Commission is getting new email addresses, and Mr. Romero confirmed that Commission email addresses will now end with @cfb.nm.gov. He said the old addresses will continue to work.

c. Independent Living and Vocational Rehabilitation, Jim Salas

Mr. Salas reported on vacancies, saying the Commission currently has only one Counselor vacancy in Roswell. He said the agency also has a vacancy in the Assistive Technology Unit and has conducted interviews and is now checking references.

He said the Commission moved the Las Vegas office to Santa Fe and has an Independent Living Teacher position vacant in Santa Fe, and that he is working to fill that position.

Mr. Salas said the Commission will have a couple Independent Living Program vacancies in Albuquerque because a couple long-time teachers have decided to retire. He said one of those teachers is John McNabb, who has 17 years with the Commission and will retire at the end of December. Mr. Salas said the other was Linda Mascarenas who is retiring at the end of November. He said she had 23 years with the Commission. Mr. Salas congratulated both Mr. McNabb and Ms. Mascarenas. He said they have been very long serving employees with the Commission and he really appreciated their hard work and skills. He said Mr. McNabb had specialized knowledge related to working with consumers with hearing loss, and he also had the Certified Orientation Mobility Specialist Certification. Mr. Salas noted that Ms. Mascarenas is also Bi-lingual. He said the agency was able to post Mr. McNabb’s position as a double fill, and the agency is about to make an offer to one of the candidates. Mr. Salas said the Commission also recently hired a Reader/Driver. Mr. Salas said the Commission has a Business Consultant position that is vacant, and also has secretarial positions vacant in Santa Fe and in Albuquerque.

Mr. Salas said the agency has had turnover this year in the Independent Living Program in the Las Cruces, Roswell, and Albuquerque offices. He said the longest serving Independent Living employee is Deon Dodson in the Farmington office, who has been with the agency since 1998. He said Mr. Dodson has done a really good job in Farmington for all those years.

Mr. Salas reported on the Federal FY22 employment numbers, which ran from October 2021 through the end of September 2022. He said 18 consumers were placed in integrated settings and two consumers were placed in self-employment, for a total of 20. He said the average wage was $24.24 per hour. Reporting on State FY23, he said six consumers were placed in integrated settings and one consumer in self-employment, for a total of seven. He said the average wage was $22.51 per hour. Mr. Salas said 20 consumers are in employment status with a stable date, and 11 consumers are in employment status without a stable date.

Ms. Bernadine Chavez said when the Feds were providing these statistics to us, they would call off the state agencies that were top and at least three or four times they said the Commission for the Blind. She said it is very important for the SRC Members to pay attention to those numbers because the SRC is to analyze, advise and provide input for policies that impact VR services. She said the average wage is really important because what the feds are looking at now is quality placements. These are long-term placements, and you can tell by the average wage. She said members can go to the RSA website to look at the statistics for all the VR agencies across the country.

d. Orientation Center, Jedi Moerke

Mre. Moerke said the Orientation Center has been really busy for the last few months. They said since the last meeting, the Orientation Center has had three staff trainees finish training and one start training. They said the Orientation Center has four in-person students; one is a returning student from prior to the pandemic and three new students. Mre. Moerke said the Orientation Center has two tours coming up next week and one more in December. They said since the last meeting the Orientation Center discontinued virtual training because the schedule was full with staff trainees and in-person students.

Mre. Moerke said the Orientation Center continues to take prudent COVID measures and is watching the COVID numbers and not going to community activities when COVID is high. They said the Orientation Center is not currently masking, but those who wish to mask are certainly welcome to wear masks. They said the Orientation Center is encouraging vaccinations, though not requiring it. They said the Orientation Center has not had any student infections.

Mre. Moerke said this is going to be their last report for the SRC. They said Jamie Sibson will be starting November 28, and she will be giving the next Orientation Center report.

Ms. Hayes and Mr. Salas thanked Mre. Moerke for filling in as Acting Director of the Orientation Center.

e. Skills Center, Kelly Burma

Ms. Burma said the Skills Center is continuing to serve both students and adults. She said the Skills Center is currently serving five Pre-ETS students and two adults.

Ms. Burma said the Skills Center is also serving teachers of the blind and visually impaired, their support staff and Braille transcribers. She said the Commission will be hosting an administration of the National Certification in Unified English Braille exam on Saturday, December 3 in Albuquerque. She said the Skills Center will also be providing a seminar for those who do not feel ready to take the exam. She said the Commission sponsors the exam for eligible professionals at a cost of $350 per person. She said the seminar is scheduled for February 2 and will be presented by Dr. Casey West Robertson of the National Blindness Professional Certification Board. She said Dr. West Robertson is a long-time teacher at the Blind and Visually Impaired in Mississippi. She said Dr. West Robertson puts on a great seminar and people do walk away feeling equipped to take the exam. Ms. Burma said the Skills Center is also working with the New Mexico Association for the Education and Rehabilitation for the Blind and Visually Impaired, which will be holding their conference right after the NCUEB seminar.

Ms. Burma said the Technology for Children Program served 14 students for Federal FY22.

12. Unfinished Business

a. Report on Apartment Construction at the Orientation Center, Lucy Mallahan and Jedi Moerke

Ms. Mallahan said the apartment building is built, and she is working on the very last items on the punch list. She said this is touch-up paint, installation of the microwaves, and the over range hoods. She said those need to be in place before the Orientation Center can get a certificate of occupancy. She said there are also delays with the fire alarm system, the camera system, and the access control system. She said the cameras are on back-order with no estimated date of being re-stocked, and the parts for the fire alarm system should be in at the end of November.

Ms. Burma asked about the temporary certificate of occupancy, and Ms. Mallahan said there is a set of requirements that construction and industries requires before they will issue a certificate of occupancy, and those are mainly centered around building codes, operations of systems and safety.

Ms. Mitchell asked if the Orientation Center has the furnishings and appliances for the apartments, and Ms. Mallahan said the appliances are in the apartments, but there is not a smaller refrigerator for the Commons, and there is not an acceptable dishwasher in place in the ADA accessible apartment.

Ms. Hayes asked Ms. Montoya-Cordova, who had joined the meeting at 10:35 AM, to give her report. Ms. Montoya-Cordova apologized for being late. She said Workforce Development received funding that is earmarked specifically for youth workforce development, pre-apprenticeship work, as well as case management work. She said the state will be purchasing a tricked-out trailer, that is called “Be Pro, Be Proud”. She said the unit will be a simulator where students residing in more rural areas can have access to a hands-on virtual reality experience with some trades. Ms. Montoya-Cordova said that Workforce Development will be hiring high school career case managers who will be working with schools and youth who are interested in moving into trades or vocational occupations. She said Workforce envisions a strong partnership with VR counselors. She said the work is going to begin in January, and 15 case managers will be hired and placed throughout the State with the goal to get them connected to public schools. She said Workforce is looking for ways to be responsive to students with special needs and who have disabilities. She said there is going to be funding available to pay stipends for students that are going to be in work-based learning opportunities.

Ms. Montoya-Cordova said Workforce Development will be starting an apprenticeship program that is going to be State focused, and that they are working primarily with the Department of Transportation. She said Workforce Development will be working with high schools on this project.

Ms. Montoya-Cordova said that Workforce Development will be having a workforce conference in May 2023. She said Workforce Development will reach out to the Commission to see if there might be a workshop or two that the Commission would be interested in providing.

Ms. Montoya-Cordova said that Workforce Development is going to be putting out an RFP for the Coordinator for the State Plan. She said the goal is to have all of the workforce partners giving input and guidance around what the statewide goals need to look like. She said she would venture that the Governor is going to stay really close to her sector strategy work.

Ms. Burma asked about the tricked-out trailer, and if there was anything done to consider accessibility of its items and the entry and exit. Ms. Montoya-Cordova said it is just getting started and accessibility will definitely be taken into account. She said it will be accessible in regard to entry and exit, and that she will make sure that it is accessible with regard to programming.

Ms. Hayes asked if Workforce Development will be advertising, and Ms. Montoya-Cordova said there is a whole marketing campaign behind it. She encouraged the Council to do a search on the Be Pro, Be Proud. She said Workforce Development will be doing a Be Pro, Be Proud New Mexico campaign.

13. New Business

a. Approval of FFY22 Council Annual Report, Peggy Hayes and Greg Trapp

The Approval of FFY22 Council Annual Report was moved up in the agenda and presented by Peggy Hayes and Greg Trapp

b. Update on submission of the Combined State Plan, Process and Timelines, Greg Trapp, Jim Salas, and Kelly Burma

Mr. Salas said this is the State Plan that will be effective in July 2024. He said the agency will start work on it in March of 2023. He said the Commission will submit the draft plan to DWS in October of 2023 and it will be submitted to the Workforce Development Board in December of 2023. He said it will go to the Feds in March of 2024. He said there will be a number of public meetings from the Commission to get input into the State Plan and the goals and priorities.

Ms. Burma said she will send out notices related to the various public meetings of the Commission for the Blind. She said this will include the goals and priorities, and what the Council will want to enhance or change about those.

Mr. Salas asked Ms. Montoya-Cordova if she had anything to add to the timeline he had described, and Ms. Montoya-Cordova said that his timeline is matching with what DWS has in mind. She said the RFP for the facilitator is going out in January. She said the expectation is that each of the agencies or title programs run their own process because there is the need to get public input on the particular plan and needs. She said it is important to get feedback around the needs of individuals with disabilities to make sure the plan is responsive to those needs.

Ms. Hayes asked how the Workforce Board puts out their notification for public meetings, and Ms. Montoya-Cordova said the Workforce facilitator will broadly announce where those regional meetings will be, and Workforce Development sends them out to the partners. Ms. Montoya-Cordova said Workforce Development works collectively with all of the title programs, including the Commission for the Blind, to make sure announcements are made broadly. She said Workforce Development uses social media and does press releases, so there will be ample time for people to select a regional meeting and know when they are occurring. Ms. Burma noted that Ms. Montoya-Cordova will likely follow the same open meeting processes as the Workforce Board prescribes, and Ms. Montoya-Cordova agreed.

c. Update on Performance Measures, Jim Salas

Mr. Salas said people are used to talking about Federal fiscal years and State fiscal years, but now there are also program years. Mr. Salas said under WIOA the number is the beginning of the year, saying program year 2021 began in July of 2021 and ended in June of 2022.

Mr. Salas said the only performance measures that were relevant to vocational rehabilitation in 2020 and 2021 were measurable skill gain, and that the others were baseline. He said that for PY22 and PY23 the state had negotiated targets for the remaining five performance measures. He said the performance measures were statewide numbers that included the Commission and DVR. He said for program year 2020, for measurable skill gain the target was 24 percent and the Commission was at 51.4 percent, with actual state performance at 13.5 percent. He said for program year 2021 the target for measurable skill gain was 25 percent, the Commission was at 57 percent, and the actual state performance at 17.3 percent. He said the lower state numbers were because of some data problems that DVR was having, adding that their typical performance was really high.

Mr. Salas said for median earnings in the second quarter, the targeted performance was $5,741 and the actual was $5,812. He said this number was really important, and that under WIOA it reflects actual earnings rather than just the hourly rate that was measured in the old Standards and Indicators. Mr. Salas gave the example of a person making $50 an hour but working only ten hours a week not being as significant as a person making $50 an hour but working 40 hours a week. He said WIOA performance measures now reflect the actual total earnings and not just the hourly rate.

Mr. Salas offered to provide the negotiated performance numbers he had reported previously to the Council, and Ms. Ellis and Mr. Blair asked him to repeat those numbers.

Mr. Salas said the agency is four months into program year 2022. He said for program year 2022, the target for measurable skill gain is 32.5 percent, and 35 percent for program year 2023. He said for credential attainment the target is 26 percent for PY22 and 28 percent for PY23. He said for employment in the second quarter the target is 40 percent for PY22 and 42 percent for PY23. He said for employment in the fourth quarter, the target is 35 percent for PY22 and 38 percent for PY23. Reporting on median earnings in the second quarter, he said the target is $4,500 for PY22 and $4,600 for PY23.

Mr. Salas said when he talks about the second or fourth quarter, it is after the consumer has exited the VR system. He said the Commission does have a process in place to keep in contact with consumers after they have exited the Commission to confirm that they are still employed and verify the wages that they are receiving.

Ms. Hayes said it looks like for consumers who are employed, most of them are staying employed.

14. Council Open Discussion

Ms. Hayes said last night the NFB had their senior support meeting, and the new Director for the Orientation Center gave a little bit of history on her life and employment, and it was very interesting to hear. Ms. Hayes said she thinks Ms. Sibson is going to be a good asset to the Orientation Center. Mr. Babb agreed.

15. Comments from the Audience

There were no audience comments.

16. Date and Location of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be either hybrid or virtual, depending on the pandemic, and will be held starting at 9:00 AM on January 26, 2022.

17. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:37 AM.

Approved and Electronically Signed this 26th Day of January 2023.

Peggy Hayes, Chair

State Rehabilitation Council

New Mexico Commission for the Blind