

**SOUTH CAROLINA BOARD OF EXAMINERS IN OPTOMETRY
BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

August 07, 2024 at 3:00 PM

110 Centerview Drive, Kingstree Building, Pee Dee Room
Columbia, South Carolina 29210

1. Meeting Called to Order

- a. Public Notice of this meeting was properly posted at the Optometry Board Office, Synergy Business Park, Kingstree Building, and provided to all requesting persons, organizations, and news media in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act, Section 30-4-80.

Dr. Wayne Cannon, President, called the meeting of the SC Board of Examiners in Optometry to order at 3:00 pm.

2. Introduction of Board Members

Board members in attendance were :

- Dr. Wayne Cannon, President
- Dr. Michelle Cooper, Vice President
- Dr. Brad Majors (Conference Call)
- Dr. Melissa Wood

LLR staff present included : Ely Grote, Esq., Advice Counsel; Patrice Deas, Board Executive; Theresa Brown, Program Director; Natasha Mitchell, OIE; Donnell Jennings, Assistant Deputy Director of OIE; Jennifer Stillwell, Chief Inspector; Billie Chambers, DOT; Josh Shannon, DOT; Tajuana Hall, Program Coordinator I

Others in attendance: Robin Reibold, Court Reporter

3. Approval of Excused Absences

Dr. Michelle Cooper made a motion to approve the absence of Dr. Michael Campbell, Jesse Price, and Charles Hill. Dr. Melissa Wood seconded the motion and it carried.

4. Approval of Agenda (with any deviations necessary)

Dr. Michelle Cooper made a motion to approve the agenda. Dr Melissa Wood seconded the motion and it carried.

5. Approval of Meeting Minutes

a. Board Meeting- May 15, 2024

Dr. Michelle Cooper made a motion to approve the minutes for the May 15, 2024 Board meeting. Dr. Melissa Wood seconded this motion and it carried.

6. Administrative Reports

A. OIE Report – For Information Only – Natasha Mitchell

This report was for information purposes only and given by Natasha Mitchell. From January 1, 2024 through July 25, 2024 there have been 12 complaints, 9 active investigations, and 7 closed investigations.

B. IRC Report – For Approval – Natasha Mitchell

There were two cases for approval for dismissal. Dr. Michelle Cooper made a motion to accept the IRC recommendations for dismissal. Dr. Melissa Wood seconded the motion and it carried.

C. ODC Report – For Information – Patrice Deas

This report was for information purposes only and given by Patrice Deas. There is 1 open case, 0 pending hearings and agreements, 0 pending closure, 0 closed, and 0 appeals.

D. Inspection Report- Jennifer Stillwell

Jennifer Stillwell reported that there have been 3 inspections of the mobile optometry units.

Mrs. Stillwell indicated that Dr. Cannon was present for the last inspection.

Dr. Cannon advised that both units passed the inspections. The units themselves were well staffed and stocked with equipment.

Jennifer Stillwell informed the Board that there are 2 units licensed in the state.

7. Board Executive Report – Patrice Deas

A. Finance Report

Patrice Deas reported the cash balance for the optometry board as of May 31, 2024, is \$291,103.32.

B. Total Number of Licensees

The total number of licensees are as follows: 1076 active licensees; 4 pending applications; 3 exam eligible candidates; 4 inactive licensees; and 2 mobile units.

C. List of Newly Licensed Optometrists

From May 14, 2024, to August 6, 2024 there have been 29 licenses issued.

D. Application Process

The Board members were provided a copy of an online application so they can see what is received when an individual is applying to become licensed as an optometrist. The application is reviewed to ensure all the questions are answered correctly. If yes is answered to any questions, additional information is required. If they have met all of the qualifications, listed in the statutes and regulations, they are allowed to sit for the jurisprudence exam. This is an online exam, that once passed, scores get sent to board services automatically and a license is then issued.

Patrice Deas informed the Board that if there is an issue or someone needs to be added to the agenda, Dr. Cannon will be contacted, and they will then come before the Board.

E. CE Broker

Dr. Majors will be more involved with reviewing the online courses. He will get notifications when a course has been submitted so he can review and give approval to the Board Executive for the course to be approved.

Dr. Cannon asked for clarification on the mandatory requirement for reporting CEs to CE Broker as this is the first year it is mandatory. 40 hours are required to be reported by Dec 31, 2024. Dr. Cannon suggested sending out a notice to inform the licensees about the requirement to have all 40 hours reported before the deadline.

8. Introduction of New Board Counsel

Ely Grote introduced himself to the Board and gave a briefing on his background in the legal field and his career.

9. New Business

A. Approval of travel to ARBO Conference – June 22-24, 2025 in Minneapolis, Minnesota

Dr. Michelle Cooper made a motion to approve sending two staff members and two board members to attend the ARBO Conference. Dr. Brad Majors seconded the motion and it carried.

B. Report on ARBO Conference in Nashville TN – Dr. Cannon

Dr. Cannon, Dr. Cooper and Patrice Deas attended the conference in Nashville. There was a variety of speakers to include Dale Atkinson, who gave an overview of what regulators do, as well as policies, regulations, and different state laws. Dr. Cannon spoke about one of the duties of the Board, evaluating the content of the NBEO examination. There has been an adjustment to the way part three is presented. There was a PEPs meeting regarding this. The adjustment process began the first of August. There were breakout sessions on CE Tracker, COPE, and The Counsel Endorsement of license mobility in Optometry.

C. Update on the Eye Care Consumer Protection Act Litigation

Ely Grote gave an update about a lawsuit filed in 2016 Opternative Inc. raising constitutional challenges to the Eye Care Consumer Protection Law.

D. Complaint Process

Dr. Cooper made a motion to go into executive session to discuss the complaint process. Dr. Melissa Wood seconded the motion and it carried.

Dr. Melissa Wood made a motion to come out of executive session. Dr. Michelle Cooper seconded the motion and it carried.

Donnell Jennings, Assistant Deputy Director of OIE introduced himself.

E. National Board of Examiners in Optometry (NBEO) Administration of SC Jurisprudence Exam

Dr. Michelle Cooper stated that they learned at the ARBO meeting that NBEO in Charlotte can administer the Jurisprudence Exam for the state.

F. Approval of 2025 Board Meeting Dates

- Wednesday, January 29, 2025
- Wednesday, May 14, 2025
- Wednesday, August 6, 2025
- Wednesday November 19, 2025

Dr. Melissa Wood made a motion to approve the dates for the 2025 meetings. Dr. Michelle Cooper seconded the motion and it carried.

10. Old Business

A. Visit NBEO examination facility in Charlotte

Dr. Cannon spoke of coordinating with the board executive to visit the NBEO examination facility in Charlotte. There was an approval for the visit at a prior meeting. On September 14, 2024, is ARBO day in Charlotte. Dr. Michelle Cooper and Dr. Brad Majors said they were interested in attending an open house

meeting to the facility and other members of the Board would be contacted to be made aware.

11. Public Comments

There were no public comments.

12. Adjournment

Dr. Melissa Wood made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 3:45 pm. Dr. Michelle Cooper seconded the motion and it carried.