

Nebraska Business Enterprises
Blind Licensee Committee Public Meeting

Friday, December 6th, 2024
Omaha State Office Building
2nd Floor
1313 Farnam St., Omaha, NE

Minutes

Chairperson sandy Alvarado called the meeting to order at 10:10 AM

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was available. The Notice of the Meeting was published in the Lincoln Journal Star, on the NCBVI website, and on NFB® Newslines. The notice was sent to the ncbvi.everyone Email List and to all NBE Vendors.

Attendance

Board Members

Sandy Alvarado, Chairperson; Andrea Chizek, Vice Chairperson; Ronnie Kellogg, Secretary

Board Members Absent

Atty Svendsen, absent for medical reasons
Jeremy Richey, absent for personal reasons

Blind Licensees and Trainees in Attendance

Amy Eidenmiller, Jim Jirak, Tanya Cady

NCBVI Staff in Attendance

Eric Buckwalter, NBE Supervisor; Lizzie Heidenreich, NBE Orientation Counselor; Jeff Scheer, NBE VR Counselor

Guests

Chris Cady

1) Approve Minutes from August 23rd, 2024

Andrea made a motion to accept the minutes from the 08/23/ 2024 vendor's committee meeting in Lincoln Nebraska.

Ronnie seconded the motion.

Andrea: Aye

Ronnie: Aye

Sandy: aye

The motion Passed.

2) Committee Chair Report – Sandy Alvarado, Chairperson

Sandy explained Atty's situation with her permission and said that she is doing well.

Sandy said that she wanted to tell everyone when the next BLAST event would occur, but that she couldn't find any info on it.

Sandy said that Sagebrush, which the Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America puts on, is coming up in February. It will take place from the 24th to the 28th in Las Vegas, Nevada.

The agenda is out, but is not final yet. It can be found at Randolph-Sheppard.org.

Go to NAMB.org if you want to get recordings from previous BLAST events.

Sandy said that both of those websites are good sources for vendors in general.

Sandy thanked Andrea for her support as vice chair during hard times.

Sandy and Eric have had many discussions about how to make things easier for the vendors as much as possible.

They discuss the agenda for the committee meetings before they are sent out.

Sandy expressed the need for making sure that the SLA doesn't take on too many new trainee vendors at once, as it leads to issues where neither new or old vendors can be supported as well as they usually are.

Sandy reminded the vendors that they should always remind Eric if they need something they told him about before.

The SLA has a list of things to do and they have to prioritize.

VISTAR did not respond to Sandy's request to conduct our training today.

Jim Davidson from Chesterman Company will be here for training today and will talk about Coke products with us.

3) SLA Report – Eric Buckwalter, NBE Supervisor

Presentation of Licenses

Alek Balaberda – Lincoln: USDA; Atrium Building

Tanya Cady – Omaha: VA-ACC; USPS Gold Coast Rd.; Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail HQ (National Parks); Homeland Security

Amy Eidenmiller – Lincoln: Lincoln Regional Center

Jay Van Winkle – Beatrice: Beatrice State Developmental Center; Beatrice Health & Rehabilitation

Vending Site Update

STRATCOM

Deterrence Diner

The SLA is continuing to work with the Government on the “Diner 2.0” remodel. The first phase of drawings for the remodel began this past week. No timeline for the project has been firmly established.

Deterrence Micro Market

The remodel of the area that will contain the new micro market area is almost complete. The SLA was given several dates that the remodel was anticipated to be completed. All of those have now passed. It now appears that the soonest that it will be completed is December 13th. However, no date for opening has been established as we are waiting on a firm completion date to order product.

NBE Licensed Vendors

Including those who received their Licenses today, NBE currently has 16 Licensed Vendors who are actively servicing sites. NBE also has one individual who is in training and actively servicing sites.

Vending Site Complaints

The SLA received several complaints again this month about understocked or empty vending machines and/or micro markets. The SLA is working with the sites affected by this issue to address these complaints. Vendors and Trainees are reminded that not only does their work and performance reflect on themselves and their businesses; but also reflects heavily on the entire NBE program and on blind individuals as a whole.

Other

BLAST

All three SLA staff members as well as NCBVI Executive Director Carlos Serván were able to attend NABM’s BLAST conference in Nashville in November. The agency’s attorney was also able to attend for the first day of the conference – when there was a special session for SLA staff and attorneys.

There was a lot of great information shared at the conference and the SLA walked away with a renewed sense of enthusiasm and information that we will be able to use to in working with the Committee to hopefully improve the program. More information will be shared as we have time to unpack all that we learned and see how it fits into Nebraska’s program specifically. One big takeaway is that the positive relationship that already exists in Nebraska between the SLA and the Committee of Blind Vendors is a huge advantage we have in making the NBE program in Nebraska the best we possibly can make it!

There was also a lot of product information shared during the conference. Some highlights.

- M&Ms packaging

- M&M Mars is aware of the issues vendors are having with their new eco-friendly packaging doing poorly in vending machines – especially refrigerated machines.
 - Packaging has reverted back to older packaging for products purchased from distributors; Vistar, Sysco, etc.
 - Product purchased from clubs, i.e. SAMs, will continue to be the newer eco-friendly packaging
 - M&M Mars is looking into new eco-friendly packaging that will not disintegrate in refrigerated units
- Keurig/ Dr Pepper/Snapple
 - Acquired
 - Black Rifle Coffee Company (Veteran Owned)
 - RTD products
 - Ghost Energy Drinks
 - Bloom Energy Drinks
 - Tractor Beverage
 - New
 - Dr Pepper Blackberry
 - Snapple Peach ½ Tea
 - Possibly CORE Water in aluminum cans
 - Polar Sparkling Water
 - Peach
 - Cranberry Clemintine
 - Motts
 - Shelf-stable Applesauce pouches
 - Shelf-stable Fruit Smoothies
 - Going Away
 - Shoc Energy Drink
 - Accelerator Energy Drink
 - Xyience Energy Drink
 - Venom Energy Drink

Operator Agreements

In the last year many Vendors have had changes to the sites that they service, and even more since Operator Agreements were last updated. In early 2025 the SLA will be working on updating Operator Agreements with correct site locations and distributing to Vendors for signatures.

2025 SLA Goals

In early 2025 the SLA will be setting their internal goals for the year. The SLA will be working in conjunction with the Committee to make them aware of those goals and to receive their input on what the Committee would like to see accomplished.”

Some important asides from the report:

Eric reminded committee members that due to Nebraska Open Meeting Act regulations if they find themselves in any place where they would have quorum of Blind Licensee Committee Members in a regular meeting, they cannot discuss any NBE related matters.

4) Quarterly Set Aside Report – Eric Buckwalter

The SLA apologized for not doing these reports this past year or so, as no one at the Business Office had access to the necessary info or tools after Dave left.

Eric told everyone about the two funds and how they work.

Eric said that in the last few years There have been federal changes that have greatly reduced flow into the unassigned funds.

Set aside fund balance: \$358,601.40

Unassigned fund balance: \$330,318.72

Eric explained that NCBVI can use VR funds to purchase and maintenance vending machines because their grants allow it.

He explained that, if the SLA needs to begin using set aside funds for those purposes, only around 30 vending machines could be purchased at the funds current balance.

Sandy gave a history of the set aside fund.

She strongly urged the new vendors especially to consider participating in our retirement fund, which set aside provides the matching part of.

Eric urged vendors to contact him If they want to understand the set aside fund better, as it is rather complicated.

5) Update on Profit & Loss – Lizzie Heidenreich

Everyone is doing all right.

Eric says that all the info he needs to do the RSA 15 report is in, though it took longer than necessary.

6) Profit & Loss Technology Deduction Increase – Eric Buckwalter

We discussed raising the technology deduction cap on the P&L during our last meeting because of the increasing costs associated with tech.

During that meeting, The committee suggested raising the cap to \$300.00 from \$200.00.

The SLA is okay with the \$300.00 suggestion.

Andrea made a motion to increase the \$200.00 technology deduction cap to \$300.00 on our P&LS.

Ronnie seconded the motion.

Andrea: aye

Ronnie: Aye

Sandy: aye

Motion Passed.

7) Reporting Sales Tax on Profit & Loss Change – Eric Buckwalter

Eric explained the history of the sales tax issue and why it's important that we change the way we report those figures.

The SLA proposes making the sales tax field fillable.

Vendors will report the taxes when they pay them and put \$0.00 when they don't pay sales tax in a particular month.

Sandy told us that we will need to submit proof of payment for sales tax with our P&LS.

Whenever sales tax is paid, set aside payment will decrease.

The P&L for January will have the new fillable Sales tax field.

8) Nutritional Facts/Date Codes on Items in Vending Machines/Micro Markets – Eric Buckwalter

Eric reminded everyone that vending product must have nutritional labels, and ingredient lists on each individual package, not just on the box.

Each package must be also date coded.

Eric reminded everyone to make sure boxes clearly say that the product inside is for individual retail resale before buying.

Some club stores are phasing out individual retail sale items.

Some products' dates are easy to read/understand and some have more difficult date codes.

Vendors must know how to read the date codes.

Eric found that relevant Reddit threads can be a good source on how to read date codes, though you might have to read a few posts to get accurate info.

The SLA or the vendors may be able to put together a document explaining how to read date codes.

Vendors are encouraged to let the SLA know when they run into products with date codes so a list can be compiled.

Discussion followed on some of the date codes and how to read them.

The SLA said they'll find out more about smart labels and regulations on them do to questions from our chairperson.

9) Vendor Tool Kit – Sandy Alvarado

Sandy and Eric discussed using Unassigned funds to give every vendor a basic toolkit

Tools could include, silicone, screw drivers, socket wrenches, pliers, micro-fiber cloths, electronic cleaner, ETC

It was suggested that Vendors should get a tool bag so security issues at certain vending sites can be avoided as well

If we want this to happen, vendors have to give their input on what they'd like to see in the tool kit and a maximum dollar amount needs to be set.

The SLA will submit a proposed list of tools for discussion at our next quarterly meeting.

After some discussion, Andrea made a motion for the vendor's tool kit to cost a maximum of \$250.00 to be paid from unassigned funds.

Ronnie Seconded the motion.

Andrea: Aye

Ronnie: aye

Sandy: aye

The motion passed.

10) Retirement Match Increase – Sandy Alvarado

Sandy reminded everyone about our retirement plan.

The maximum amount that can be matched per year is 900 dollars

Roger Frank is our contact.

Sandy wants to propose raising the matching maximum to \$1800 per year.

Carlos's input will be needed to make this happen.

Discussion followed.

Ronnie made a motion to propose to the SLA that we increase our retirement match maximum from \$900.00 per year to \$1800.00 per year.

Andrea seconded the motion.

Andrea, Aye

Ronnie, Aye.

Sandy: Aye

Motion Passed.

11) Reporting Sales by Site – Eric Buckwalter

Eric explained that the SLA is ok with the next two items on the agenda being formally resolved at our next quarterly meeting do to time constraints.

The Sla needs to start collecting information on what each individual site earns because of certain reporting requirements.

Right now this information takes the form of a Lump sum on every P&L.

It would be helpful to the SLA if each vendor provided a spreadsheet detailing both credit card and cash earnings for every site they service.

Each site and its deposits should be in a separate row or on separate columns.

This would greatly ease necessary performance evaluations, but is also necessary for general liability policy reporting and other requirements.

12) Accurately Reporting Cash Sales – Eric Buckwalter

Eric Buckwalter

The change going into the coin mech is not counted as income for vendors.

This causes a discrepancy between the earnings that vendors report and the figures that our tech gives.

One way to solve this is to program vending machines so that all coins go into the change box.

Vendors would just have to buy change to refill the coin mech when they needed to.

Another way is for vendors to count all coin in the machine, regardless of where it is, and refill the coin mech again as they service the machine.

Eric also reminded vendors that troubleshooting bill validators by testing them with real dollars will lead tech to count sales when there hasn't been any.

The SLA has not had time to develop a proposal because this issue was discovered last week.

The SLA wants to develop a proposal with the help of the committee for next quarter's meeting.

13) City of Lincoln Sites – Eric Buckwalter

The City of Lincoln put out an RFP for vending sites.

The committee chair and SLA had a discussion and the SLA decided not to submit an RFP for those sites based on several metrics.

14) Set Date for Next Meeting – Eric Buckwalter

Eric reminded the committee that the second meeting next year has to take place in May because it is an election year.

Discussion followed.

Andrea made a meeting to have our next quarterly meeting on 03/07/2025 at 10:00 am in Lincoln, Nebraska.

Ronnie seconded the motion.

Andrea: aye

Ronnie; Aye

Sandy: aye

Motion passed.

Discussion followed on scheduling the second meeting.

Andrea made a motion to have our election meeting on May 2, 2025 in Omaha, NE at 10:00 AM.

Ronnie seconded the motion

Andrea: Aye

Ronnie;: aye

Sandy: Aye

Motion Passed.

15) Set Training for Next Meeting

Training will remain TBA.

16) Adjourn

Andrea made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Ronnie seconded the motion.

Andrea: aye

Ronnie: aye

Sandy: aye

Motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 PM.

TRAINING

1) Presentation by Jim Davidson from Chesterman Coca-Cola

Vendors Present:

Ronnie, Sandy, Andrea, Tanya,, Jim, Amy

Vendors accrued 30 minutes of training.

Jim Davidson and Claire Fletcher from Chesterman Coca-Cola

Distributed product samples and discussed interesting products from Coca-Cola that vendors could consider selling.

They also gave some important info to the vendors relevant to accounts and finding out who their rep is.