

**Nebraska Business Enterprises (NBE)
Blind Licensee Committee Public Meeting Minutes**

Friday March 7th, 2025
NCBVI Main Office, Lincoln, NE
Lincoln District Conference Room
4600 Valley Rd., Lincoln, NE

Chairperson sandy Alvarado called the meeting to order at 10:06 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.

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, Jason Thompson

NCBVI Staff in Attendance

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

Guests

Krystal Elmshouser, Ana Alvarado

Approve Minutes from December 6th, 2024

Sandy requested a correction to the last meeting minutes.

(Retirement matching up to \$1800.00 is to start in 2025.)

Andrea made a motion to accept the minutes from our 12/06/2024 quarterly meeting in Omaha as amended.

Ronnie seconded the motion.

Andrea: Aye

Ronnie: Aye

Sandy: Aye

The motion passed.

Committee Chair Report - Sandy Alvarado: Chairperson

As usual, Eric and I have spoken about several items over the past few months. Updates on current sites and how they are progressing, the status on our newer licensees, and questions we have for active participation between our vendors and the SLA.

In January Lizzie and I were going through the allowable deductions for the P&Ls. We discovered that for Federal minimum wages went up to \$17.75 starting January 1, 2025. This caused me to research if it had increased for 2024. It had, you should have been paying workers \$17.20. You should speak with your tax preparer about how you can amend a 1099 for the year 2024 for any you already had issued.

Upcoming negotiations with the state building contract, Eric and I spoke of concerns with the capping of what can be charged on these properties. With the current economic uncertainties he will petition to eliminate this cap.

Joining NAMA: I encourage all of you to join NAMA. They offer webinars on several topics and it's free. They will be holding their annual show in May.

I attended Sagebrush at the end of February virtually. They had many good speakers and updates. Unfortunately, I was not able to attend all sessions due to my work schedule. I enjoyed the speakers they had on some of the panel discussions.

Letting the SLA know if you attend any type of training is important. It can help you if you should want to bid on sites in the future and I believe that is something they report on the yearly R15.

Elections:

As most of you know, elections to the committee is coming up very soon. If you wish to put your name in, please let the SLA know by April 30, 2025. Because of the rules in chapter 3, title 192, we will need to move our May meeting back a week.”

SLA Report - Eric Buckwalter; NBE Supervisor

Vending Site Update

STRATCOM

Deterrence Diner

The SLA is continuing to work with the Government on what 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 new micro market at Deterrence Diner in the USSTRATCOM building is open for business. Sales for the first full month of operation are not yet received, but a slightly larger area with expanded options for grab-and-go food items seems to be well received.

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

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.

Update on Operator Agreements

Eric reiterated that the SLA is planning on making updates to the operator agreements, but has not been able to because of other commitments.

Update on SLA Goals for 2025

Eric said that these goals were discussed by agency staff during their recent state staff retreat:

- Finalizing the setup and implementation of the new management software.
- Taking inventory of vending machine parts and discarding unnecessary ones.
- Finding new storage options for vending machines and their parts due to the loss of “the cage”.
- Clean up the NBE’s state fixed asset list and use proper methods to dispose of unneeded assets.
- Perform more in person check-ins at sites to support vendors.
- Setting duties for each staff member so vendors know who to go to for what issue.

Vendor Tool List/Cost

At our last meeting, the committee passed a motion to allow a vendor’s toolkit to be provided by the SLA for up to \$250.00 per toolkit.

Eric said he needs to do more research to find the optimal set of important socket wrenches.

Eric told us which tools are currently on the list, told us what many of them are for, and expressed the desire to add more.

Discussion followed after Eric asked for suggestions.

Timeliness of Repairs/Projects

Eric said that he understands and acknowledges the frustration vendors have been feeling because of lengthy delays in work orders being fulfilled.

He explained that one company the SLA contracts with has been short a worker for a 6 months and has just recently almost finished training a replacement.

The other person has their own business and treats that as a priority.

Both providers also have other clients besides NBE.

Eric explained that the SLA was not able to get to as many repairs as usual last year because of how busy the SLA was working with new vendors to get their sites operational.

He expressed understanding about the plight of vendors, but urged us to understand that the SLA has to carefully consider priorities.

Eric stressed that the SLA is working on internal systems to better track repairs and help improve response time.

He apologized for the recent issues but urged us to take into account that the 3 staff members of the SLA have to support us in the field and keep the NBE going by doing important tasks behind the scenes as well.

P&L Documentation

The SLA has noticed that P&Ls have been coming in late the past couple of months and that documentation accuracy has been lacking.

Eric reminded the vendors how important it is to get P&Ls in within 20 days after a month has passed.

The SLA recommends that vendors contact Lizzie if they need help with any aspect of successful P&L completion.

The SLA gave a helpful tip to the vendors.

- Document everything business related when it happens, or at least set aside time every week to do the paperwork.
- Don't let everything pile up until the last minute.

Sandy said that vendors that pay drivers by the mile should log their miles right after they finish a route.

Eric reminded vendors about the sales tax field not being automated anymore and to ask Lizzie whatever questions they might have about how to fill it in.

Lizzie said that she is going to be more bullish about assessing late fees for tardy P&Ls.

The late fee is currently \$25.00 and can be paid by adding said amount to set aside payments or be paid separately.

Jim asked if there was a certain time vendors had to get their P&Ls in by on the 20th of every month.

After some discussion, the SLA said that the time doesn't matter because the SLA defines 'late' as any day beyond the 20th day of the month. The time stamp on the email does not matter, as long as it is on the 20th day of the month.

Jason asked what happens if the 20th of the month falls on a holiday or weekend.

Sandy and the SLA expressed agreement that vendors should get everything in before the 20th in those cases, but the SLA said that sending the P&L in on the weekday after is generally acceptable, as long as the set aside check is postmarked for the 20th.

Update on Sales per Location

Eric said that vendors who have credit card readers on every machine they service do not have to report sales by individual site monthly because the SLA has access to their cash and electronic sales data. They do have to make sure that the cash amounts reported by Cantaloupe very closely match their own recorded deposits.

Eric said that they may not match 100% because vendors often test bill validators with real cash, which messes with the readings a bit.

Vendors who don't have credit card readers on some machines must report sales by individual site because the SLA needs such information to ensure their required reports are accurate and in case of any audit.

Vendors can keep deposit separate by placing cash from different sites in separate bank bags or by depositing money from different sites at different times and asking bank tellers to put memos on each deposit stating which site it was made from.

Eric and Sandy reminded vendors that it is a best practice to deposit all money first, then make any necessary withdrawals.

Lizzie offered to make templates or add sheets to P&Ls for vendors to help them document their deposits properly.

Vendors should reach out to lizzie if they need her help.

Federal Minimum Wage Increase

Sandy mentioned that vendors could currently write off \$15.00 per hour on the P&Ls for worker pay, but suggested raising that cap to \$17.75 per hour after noting that independent contractors working at federal sites got a legally required raise recently.

Discussion followed.

The SLA had no problem with the suggestion.

Ronnie made a motion to increase the worker pay deduction on the P&L from \$15.00 an hour to \$17.75 an hour.

Andrea seconded the motion.

Andrea: Aye

Ronnie: Aye

Sandy: Aye

The motion passed.

Sandy asked the SLA if vendors could go back and amend their January and February P&Ls to account for this motions passage.

The SLA said they will allow it.

Vendors should deduct any relevant overpayments of set aside from future set aside payments and document everything.

Lizzie said that she will send emails for documentation purposes as needed.

General Liability Insurance Audit

Eric told the story of how our general liability policy was audited, illustrating well why being able to report sales by individual site is very important for the SLA.

Retirement Match Increase

The SLA expressed support for the committee's decision to increase retirement matching, which is done via set aside funds, from \$900.00 per year to \$1800.00 per year starting in 2025.

Sales Tax

Eric said that there was a question called as to whether micro markets are defined as vending machines.

The SLA found out that they are defined as such by the national Association of Blind merchants.

this means that vendors must charge customers sales tax on all items sold at micro markets.

Eric said that the SLA will let vendors know if the SLA's interpretation regarding this matter changes.

State Building Division Agreement

The SLA will be focusing on this in the coming weeks.

Discussion on NBE Retreat

Sandy started the discussion.

Sandy and Lizzie were tasked with working on a plan for the retreat in the end.

Next Meeting Schedule

Reminder of Next Quarterly Meeting on May 2nd, 2025 (*May 2nd meeting was set during December 6th, 2024*) needs to be changed.

Sandy explained that we need to change our previous decision and have a meeting after May 7th In order to follow certain legal rules.

Discussion followed.

Ronnie made a motion to reschedule our May second meeting to May 9, 2025, and to have it in Omaha, Nebraska at 10:00 AM, location to be announced.

Andrea Seconded the motion.

Andrea: aye

Ronnie: aye

Sandy: Aye

The motion passed.

Adjournment

Ronnie made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Andrea seconded the motion.

Andrea: aye

Ronnie: aye

Sandy: Aye

Meeting was adjourned at 11:26 AM.