

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

Friday, June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024  
Omaha State Office Building  
2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
1313 Farnam St., Omaha, NE

**Minutes**

Chairperson sandy Alvarado called the meeting to order at 10:05 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; Ronnie Kellogg, Secretary; Atty Svendsen; Jeremy Richey

Board Members Absent

Andrea Chizek, Vice Chairperson

Blind Licensees and Trainees in Attendance

Amy Eidenmiller, Alek Balaberda, Jim Jirak, Richetta Henry, Tanya Cady,

NCBVI Staff in Attendance

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

Guests

Patty Schonlau, Commissioner; Chris Cady; Oscar Alvarado

**Approve Minutes from March 8<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

Jeremy made a motion to approve the minutes from our March 8, 2024 committee meeting.

Atty seconded the motion.

Atty: Aye

Jeremy: Aye

Ronnie: aye

Sandy: aye

Motion Passed

**Committee Chair Report**, Sandy Alvarado, Chairperson

Sandy talked about the possible changes in the way we report sales taxes on our P&Ls. More information provided later in the meeting.

Sandy got contact information from the new vendors so she could keep them informed about monthly calls hosted by the RSVA and the National Association of Blind Merchants.

Sandy explained that the calls she shares are useful to participate in because being on those calls can help vendors learn what is going on with other state programs. Vendors also have the opportunity to ask questions and voice concerns.

She reminded vendors to report when they attend those calls to the SLA via the NBE's specific email address.

This helps with Vendors' upward mobility and promotions.

Sandy explained that active participation in this way, rather than just filling up machines and going about your life, is crucial for potentially serving new sites.

Sandy explained that she tries to share several opportunities with the vendors, including a Zoom training with the blind merchants.

The Blind merchants also have a podcast that counts as training.

Sandy reported that she's been having conversations with Greater America because we need to have better communication between them and the vendors.

She asked her Coke rep if NBE is still on a group plan, which allows us to pay less.

He told her "yes".

He wants names of the vendors that use coke services In Nebraska, no matter where they are, so he can put them in a list.

Sandy said that she will try to get NBE on a higher teir with coke, since all Vendors order from them a lot.

If you are with the RSA management group and you pay different prices for Coke products because of that, Sandy wants to know.

Sandy clarified that she isn't sure if NBE is actually in a group policy with Coke.

Discussion occurred on the progress of the internal list of all vendors and their contact information.

Sandy asked vendors for permission and will get it done when she can.

Questions and concerns were brought up regarding the potential Coke group policy discount.

**SLA Report**, Eric Buckwalter, NBE Supervisor

#### **40 Years**

NCBVI would like to recognize Marlin Roesler for his 40 years of owning and operating a business through the Nebraska Business Enterprises program. Marlin hit the 40 year mark the Friday before Memorial Day.

#### **Vending Site Update**

#### **Micro Market Update**

##### DHHS-Omaha/DHHS-Bellevue/NDE-Lincoln

NBE continues to struggle with getting internet to these sites so that we can open the micro markets. We are going to try once more to get internet provided through the state network. If that fails, we are going to utilize OptConnect for these sites.

##### DHHS-Hastings

NBE is opening a micro market at the new DHHS-Hastings office. We are waiting on some coolers that were delayed in shipping and then this market can open.

##### USDA

The new USDA building in Lincoln is now open and has two vending machines in the breakroom. This site is being operated by a new Vendor. The building is new and not all employees have finished transitioning to the building. We are told that should happen at some point this summer.

##### Beatrice Health and Rehabilitation

NBE is in touch with Beatrice Health and Rehabilitation about taking over the vending in their breakroom. We should be starting services there this summer.

##### USCIS

The two USCIS federal buildings in Lincoln are condensing into one location early next year. NCBVI already has vending services with the two locations. When the new building opens we will be providing services through a micro market.

##### GSA-Omaha

There is a new GSA location in Omaha opening this fall. NBE is in talks with this location to provide services. It is a very small office, only 16 people, so we are working to figure out the best way to provide these services.

##### STRATCOM

#### **Deterrence Diner**

NCBVI signed a new contract with Offutt AFB to provide cafeteria services to the USSTRATCOM building. We are also working with the building leadership who oversees the cafeteria on an upgrade project that should take place early in 2025. The upgrade project will give the cafeteria a

refresh, as well as offer the opportunity to provide a greater range of services and options to customers.

### **Deterrence Micro Market**

The first part of the cafeteria upgrade at USSTRATCOM is to turn their current grab-and-go area into a 24 hour micro market. This market will be significantly larger than the other market we have located in the building and will be able to offer a larger array of options. There are currently no plans to remove the current market in the building.

### **New Vendor**

NBE has been working with to get a new vendor into the operating position at USSTRATCOM for quite some time – as we have been operating with just the teaming partner. A new Vendor has come forward and has accepted the role.

### **NBE Licensed Vendors**

NBE currently has 12 Licensed Vendors and 5 Trainees in the program.

### **Vending Site Complaints**

There were no significant vending site complaints this past quarter. One minor issue involved some mice finding there way into the vending machines inside a building. We worked with the building to address the issue.

### **State Building Agreement**

The State Building Division approved the price increases that were proposed. The individual who we work with in this agency has changed since the last time we asked for a price increase, so it took a bit longer than usual to get an answer – as they had to bring themselves up to speed on the agreement. This particular agreement expires next spring, both NBE and the State Building Division are already planning discussions for early next year on a new agreement.

### **Nebraska Department of Corrections Agreement**

NBE has gotten verbal approval for the price increase at Nebraska Department of Corrections locations. We are waiting for the official contract amendment to come through.

### **Other**

NBE is in the training and testing stages of new management software for the program. While this will not directly affect Vendors, Vendors may see information presented in a different way – and should definitely notice an increase in program efficiency. A change to the structure of Vendors' monthly profit and loss statements may be necessary due to how the new system processes these items. More information will be available after we become more familiar with the system.

More discussion was had about fixing communication issues with Greater America. Eric said that he is working with them on this issue.

Issues with Canteen were also discussed. NBE shared that they are also working on communication issues with Canteen. They have had a lot of turn over in their accounting department recently.

### **Update on Profit and Loss Report**

Eric reported that P&Ls Look very good.

Eric reminded vendors to respond quickly to Lizzie if she follows up on a report.

### **Sales Tax Fillable Field On P&Ls**

Eric discussed the issue with reported sales tax payments not reflecting actual sales tax payments and the suggestion that we allow vendors to fill in what they paid rather than having a formula calculate it and fill it in automatically.

He said that we will have to hold off on making that change because the SLA needs to know how their new management system handles the fact that some vendors have to pay sales tax monthly and some have to do it quarterly.

The SLA thinks they will have more information on that by our next quarterly meeting.

### **ACH Set Aside (no update)**

Eric explained how the current process to allow vendors to pay set aside electronically is not working for all but one of the Vendors, and reported that there are no new updates on that front.

Discussions followed on the sales tax reporting issue and the ACH payment option for set aside.

Sandy asked if the SLA can send an acknowledgement whenever they receive a vendor's report.

Lizzie said that she had an auto reply set up, but that it may have been accidentally deactivated.

### **Quarterly Set-Aside and Unassigned Reports**

Sandy asked why the quarterly set aside and unassigned fund reports weren't being sent to vendors.

The SLA apologized and explained the circumstances that caused the issue.

Eric said that they will begin sending them out again.

### **Micro Market Update**

OptConnect

Eric explained that each micro Market planned for opening needs the internet to work and that the SLA had a hard time getting the state internet option, which would save vendors money and allow remote viewing of security footage without eating up cellular data, up and running.

The SLA has decided to help get micro market operators set up with OptConnect, a company that provides cellular internet service.

Eric explained some of how OptConnect works, as well as some of their policies.

Each device will be free because the company has an agreement with Cantaloupe to service their customers, but the service costs \$55.00 per month per device and each vendor has to sign a 3 year contract.

What happens if the micro Markets turn out to be nonviable because of that cost?

Should we reimburse vendors if they have to pay to get out of the contract they can't honor?

OptConnect told Eric that the buy-out cost is \$55.00 times however many months of the contract remain.

If so, do we do it with unassigned funds?

Discussion followed, especially on what steps the SLA would take to determine viability.

No decision was reached at this meeting.

### **Set Date for Next Quarterly Meeting**

Discussion followed.

Jeremy made a motion to have the next quarterly meeting on 08/23/2024 at 10:00 AM in Lincoln.

Atty seconded the motion.

Jeremy: aye

Atty: Aye

Ronnie: aye

Sandy; Aye

Motion Passed.

### **Training at Next Quarterly Meeting**

Everyone agreed that the training should be on new products.

Atty made a motion that we adjourn the meeting.

Jeremy seconded the motion.

Jeremy: aye

Atty: Aye

Ronnie; Aye

Sandy; Aye

Motion Passed.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:14 AM

**Training:**

Micro Market Tips and Tricks

Vendors in attendance:

Amy, Alek, Jim, Richetta, Tanya, Sandy, Atty, Jeremy, Ronnie

Sandy explained that we were going to talk about tips and tricks for running micro markets, but since the rest of our micro markets have not been operational, she'd just talk about her experience. She did just that and took questions.

Eric was able to answer questions about micro market security in detail as well.