

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

Friday, August 23rd, 2024  
NCBVI Main Office, Lincoln, NE  
Lincoln District Conference Room  
4600 Valley Rd., Lincoln, NE

**Minutes**

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.

Vice Chairperson Andrea Chizek started the meeting at 10:05 AM.

**Attendance**

**Board Members**

Sandy Alvarado, Chairperson; Andrea Chizek, Vice Chairperson; Ronnie Kellogg, Secretary; Atty Svendsen; Jeremy Richey

**Blind Licensees and Trainees in Attendance**

Amy Eidenmiller, Jim Jirak, Jay Van Winkle, Jason Thompson, Wily Elmshouser

**NCBVI Staff in Attendance**

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

**Guests**

Krystal Elmshouser, Neilsine Van Winkle, Nancy Flearl

**Approve Minutes from June 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024**

Jeremy made a motion to approved the minutes from our 06/07/2024 meeting in Omaha.

Atty seconded the motion

Jeremy: aye

Atty: aye

Sandy: aye

Andrea: aye

Ronnie: aye

Motion Passed.

**Committee Chair Report**

No Report

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

### Vending Site Update

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

The micro markets at these locations are finally activated and online. The SLA worked with the Vendors who service these markets to switch gears from using State internet connections to using OptConnect – a cellular internet service. The markets are doing well for an initial roll out. The SLA is working to track sales figures to ensure the markets are viable locations. As needed the SLA is also working with the Vendors on training on PAR levels to ensure that shrinkage is as low as possible.

#### **Beatrice Health and Rehabilitation**

The new vending site at Beatrice Health and Rehabilitation will launch next Friday, August 30<sup>th</sup>. This is the second private location that the SLA has opened in the last year – both through individual Vendor's connections in their communities.

As the number of individuals working in state and federal buildings across the country continues to be in flux, both NABM and RSVA have encouraged SLAs and Vendors to look at the private sector for vending and micro market sites. The SLA is excited to have another private sector site, and will look to add more in the future.

#### **USCIS**

The two USCIS sites in Lincoln are still scheduled to consolidate early next year. The SLA continues to work with GSA on planning for the new location – providing input and reviewing drawings to ensure that electrical outlets, etc. are where they are needed. This site will not go out for bid as a current single Vendor currently serves both USCIS sites that will be consolidating into one location.

#### **Deterrence Diner**

NCBVI is continuing to work with the Government on what is being called, at least colloquially, "Diner 2.0". The revamp of the cafeteria space will bring a lot of changes to our current services, and hopefully will bring a new level of excitement to the cafeteria – in addition to structural changes behind the scenes.

#### **Deterrence Micro Market**

The SLA continues to work with the Government on designing and preparing for the new grab-and-go section of the cafeteria. In addition to a 24/7 market, the current plan is to also sell STRATCOM branded merchandise (t-shirts, sweatshirts, hats, challenge coins, etc.). Currently, construction is set to be complete by the end of the fall. However, a start date for construction has yet to be set.

#### **DHHS**

While nothing is currently planned. Conversations with DHHS have taken place about the opportunity for several more micro markets at their other offices in the future.\

### NBE Licensed Vendors

There are currently 12 Licensed NBE Vendors who are actively servicing sites. There are also 5 Trainees who are actively servicing sites. The SLA is working with several of the Trainees to prepare for Licensure in the next month; and will be reaching out to talk with all Trainees next week.

### Vending Site Complaints

The SLA received several complaints this past quarter about understocked or empty vending machines. The SLA is working with the sites affected to address the issues. The SLA reminds all Vendors and Trainees that fulfilling the duty to keep the vending machines stocked and in good operating condition is at the core of the Operator's Agreement. Failure to keep vending machines and micro markets stocked not only affects your ability as a Vendor to earn money – an empty vending machine makes \$0.00 – but also reflects poorly on the NBE program as a whole.

If individual Vendors or Trainees have concerns about a machine/machines earning profit at a location – and that is the reason for understocking – they are encouraged to reach out to the SLA for guidance. The SLA staff welcomes the opportunity to work with Vendors on strategies to ensure the contract for operation is being met, while ensuring the Vendor makes a profit.

### SLA Management Software

The SLA continues to transfer data over to our new management system. It is a time consuming process as for the system to track information effectively we have to enter approximately the past five years' worth of data; by hand.

### Group General Liability Policy

The SLA is set to begin working with Nebraska Risk Management to renew the group general liability policy that covers the vending and micro market sites.

### SLA FFY 2025

In the beginning of September the SLA will begin to work on wrapping up FFY 2024 and preparing for the annual RSA-15 report that NCBVI needs to file. The SLA reminds Vendors that getting your August and September P&Ls in on time is very important as the SLA needs these numbers to finalize the report. Please keep an eye on your email for other important information we need to collect and the deadlines for receiving the information. This especially includes the annual inventory of all product in your machines and storage areas.

The SLA NBE staff members will also be planning and strategizing the programs areas of focus for FFY 2025 in the coming weeks. While these goals are internal to the operation of the program, the SLA will review them with the NBE Committee Chairperson and present at the next NBE Committee Meeting for feedback.

### GAD Anniversary Celebration

A few weeks ago Eric and Lizzie were able to attend GAD's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration. While there we were able to get one-on-one time with a number of representatives of different equipment manufacturers; including the president of U-Select-It (USI) a company who manufactures machines of which we recently purchased a significant quantity. We were also able to see some new coolers (like those used in micro markets) that take payment directly at the cooler. More will be presented on these machines during the Training following the meeting.

### **BLAST in Nashville in November**

Eric told everyone that the National association of Bline merchants will be holding their BLAST event from November 18 to the 22<sup>nd</sup> in Nashville Tennessee.

The agenda is available and Eric said that he'd forward it to anyone if they send him an email asking him to.

The agenda is also on NABM's website.

Eric said that Carlos Servan, the staff of the SLA, and the SLA's lawyer will be going there.

Eric explained that the block of rooms at the convention hotel that were originally meant for attendees have all been taken.

There are alternate accommodations close by, though.

Andrea said that she has gone to BLAST before and enjoyed it.

### **Sales Tax on Snack Items – Unicameral**

Eric explained that the Nebraska Unicameral held a special session to discuss property tax reduction.

They discussed taxing beverages and candy as part of a solution to regain that revenue.

They passed 3 bills and Eric read all of them.

No tax was added to the mentioned vending products in the bills.

Eric said that the SLA is monitoring this situation because officials have stated that this issue will be discussed again.

Eric did say though, that this type of added tax has been discussed before by the unicameral and has never gone anywhere.

Sandy urged the vendors to be checking their emails and be ready to act in opposition to such a policy if necessary, as the SLA cannot lobby on behalf of the vendors.

### **P&L Deduction – Phone/Internet Increase**

There is currently a limit of \$200.00 on how much Vendors can write off on their P&Ls for phone and internet expenses.

Lizzie said that she has notice that Vendors are getting close to the 200 dollar limit and are sometimes surpassing it.

She suggested raising the cap to \$250.00.

Eric explained that the committee can make a recommendation on this, but Carlos must give his approval before a vote is taken.

Eric explained that vendors that service micro markets can write off Opt-Connect payments in the credit card fee section of their P&Ls.

Sandy suggested that we propose to increase the cap from \$200-\$300 dollars to allow for future growth in such expenses.

Discussion followed and there was a strong consensus in favor of Sandy's suggestion.

Andrea expressed this consensus and told the SLA that the committee's proposal is that the phone and internet P&L deduction be raised to \$300 dollars.

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

Lizzie explained that most vendors are doing well.

She has been noticing, however, that vendors have been struggling to get P&Ls in on time and urged people to get them in on the twentieth of the month.

Lizzie reminded vendors to be checking their emails in case she communicates with them about their P&Ls.

This is especially important for documenting when a discrepancy changes what a vendor owes in set aside.

### **Sales Tax Fillable field on P&Ls**

Eric explained how sales taxes are currently handled on the P&L and why it's problematic.

He gave the possible solution of making the P&L sales tax cell fillable and explained the issues with that.

He explained that different vendors file sales taxes at different times depending on how much money they make, but the P&Ls are sent in monthly and require sales tax data.

He explained how the SLA use to keep track of sales tax data and said that the SLA is unsure how the new management system will handle data tracking yet.

The SLA wants to table the issue for now as they continue to get their new management system ready and work through how to handle the nuances of this issue.

### **ACH Set Aside**

The one vendor that used to use our electronic set aside payment method has stopped using it.

### **Update Set-Aside Percentage**

Eric explained how set aside has been handled in the past.

The SLA proposed that we keep the set aside percentage at 8% given what they know about the SLA's financial situation.

Eric explained the strengths of this proposal, too.

Sandy made a motion that we maintain our set aside at 8%.

Atty seconded the motion.

Atty: aye

Jeremy: aye

Sandy: aye

Ronnie: aye

Andrea: aye

Motion passed.

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

Eric explained why the set aside fund and unassigned fund reports that are supposed to be sent to the vendors haven't been lately.

Eric explained the difference between Set aside funds and unassigned funds and how the SLA is allowed to use each of them.

Sandy reminded the vendors of our retirement plan and explained that set aside funds help with the \$900.00 yearly matching part of that program.

Eric told vendors to contact the NBE staff and they'll help get them set up with the retirement plan.

Eric explained the benefit of us having a group general liability policy.

Unassigned funds pay for that.

Eric explained that The two funds are separate in practice, but are combined when a report is run on them.

No one new this problem existed and no one has access to the accounting software to fix it yet.

The SLA will rectify the issues and begin sending out the reports again.

Combined the two funds contain \$330,318.72.

### **Micro Market Update**

Eric asked the vendors with new micro markets to speak.

Atty -

She praised the SLA, especially Lizzie.

Atty spoke of several issues with the accessibility of Cantaloupe's micro market management website.

Discussion followed on those accessibility issues.

Eric asked Sandy if 3 Squares older website was more accessible than Cantaloupe's.

She said it wasn't more accessible, but more detailed and more helpful reports could be run from it.

Jeff asked Atty what kind of feedback she was getting from customers.

Atty said that she doesn't get much. The customers tell her when things don't work, but they are happy the micro market is there.

Ronnie -

Ronnie discussed the differences between NVDA and JAWS when it came to the micro market website.

He told everyone about the accessibility setting on the site.

He expressed his satisfaction with Cantaloupe's customer service.

Sandy asked Atty and Ronnie which report they look for to find out what they earned over a given period of time.

Discussion followed on how numerous, inconsistent, and confusing the reports are.

Lizzie gave her hypothesis on why the reports are the way they are and expressed her intention to continue talking to Cantaloupe about the best way to find the correct numbers for P&Ls.

Andrea asked if the reports themselves are accessible.

Sandy explained that they are, but they require some effort to interpret correctly.

More discussion followed on accessibility issues with the website.

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

Discussion Followed.

Sandy made a motion that our next quarterly meeting be on 12/06/2024 at 10:00 Am in Omaha.

Atty seconded the motion.

Jeremy: aye

Sandy: aye

Atty: aye

Ronnie: aye

Andrea: aye

Motion Passed.

### **Discuss Training for Next Quarterly Meeting**

Discussion followed.

Sandy recommended that we have a representative from Coke or Vistar come and speak to us.

There were no other suggestions.

Eric said the SLA will have something prepared if none of those reps can make it.

Sandy reminded the new vendors that we are all here to help them and to contact us if they have any questions.

### **Adjourn**

Sandy made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Atty Seconded the motion.

Atty: aye

Sandy; aye

Jeremy: aye  
Ronnie: aye  
Andrea: aye

Motion Passed.

The meeting Adjourned at 11:43 AM.

### **Training**

Vendors Present:

Sandy, Andrea, Atty, Jim, Jason, Ronnie, Jeremy

1.25 Hours of training logged for all present vendors.

Eric gave a thorough presentation on new snack options, new machine options, updates on the State of the Industry, and more.