

Nebraska Commission for the Blind
Commission Board Meeting Minutes
Public Meeting, Saturday, May 3, 2014
Hampton Inn, 507 Talmadge St, Kearney NE

APPROVED MINUTES

Call to Order. Welcome and introductions. Announcement concerning public comment periods, meeting agendas, open meeting act, proof of publication, recordings, lunch arrangements & other logistics.

Julie Johnson, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m. and she welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Commissioners present: Julie Johnson, Chairperson, York; Mike Hansen, Designee of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska, Lincoln; Jim Jirak, Vice Chairperson, Designee of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, Omaha; Becky Rieken, Kearney; and Robert Leslie Newman, Omaha.

Commission staff present: Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant; Carlos Serván, Deputy Director VR; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director IL; Bill Brown, Business Manager; Wes Majerus, Program Manager Technology; Sarah Stewart, North Platte District Supervisor; Jamie Forbis, Orientation Counselor.

Public Present: Mark Bulger, ACB Representative; Dan Bird, Driver and meeting recorder.

It was noted that public comments are always welcome regarding the agenda items. Dan Bird recorded the meeting and the recordings are available on the website.

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was available. The Act was available in both print and Braille format. The Notice of the Meeting was published in the Lincoln Journal Star, the State Government Calendar, NCBVI Website, NFB Newsline® and Radio Talking Book. The Notice was also sent to ACB and NFB, the NCBVI List Serve.

Approval of the February 1 public meeting minutes and March 14 and 15 board retreat minutes.

Commissioner Newman moved to approve the Minutes of the February 1, 2014 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Jirak seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and it was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Jirak moved to approve the Minutes of the March 14 and 15 Commission Board Retreat. Commissioner Newman seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and it was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Commissioner's Report

Chairperson Johnson noted that it was a busy quarter with lots of Commission documents to be reviewed and personal family issues that came up. Chairperson Johnson thanked Commissioner Jirak for assuming chair duties for the past month. Chairperson Johnson stated that she will now resume the Chair duties.

Commissioner Jirak reported that he has been busy working on the job description for the NCBVI executive director.

Commissioner Newman reported that he attended the State Staff meeting in Grand Island. He also attended the ACB-N Convention in Omaha. Commissioner Newman stated he also assisted with preparing the executive director job description. Commissioner Newman will also attend the upcoming June 4 NBE Vendor meeting.

Commissioner Rieken reported that she also attended the State Staff meeting in Grand Island. She also helped with the NABS college night in Grand Island.

Commissioner Hansen reported that all commissioners attended the Commissioner Retreat that was held in Nebraska City. He felt that the retreat was very beneficial for the commissioners. Commissioner Hansen reported that he also attended the State Staff meeting in Grand Island. He said that a lot of good information was shared during the meeting. Commissioner Hansen noted that he has also been busy working on projects for the Commission Board.

Commissioner Jirak stated that due to personal issues, he is requesting that NCBVI provide him with financial assistance to attend the ACB National Convention. Commissioner Hansen noted that the Commission policy reads:

1. Any active board member may request financial reimbursement for attendance at two national and two state organization activities in their four-year term. This would include the state conventions of the ACB or NFB and national conventions of these two organizations.
2. Board members attending the conventions would have their travel, hotel, meal, and registration expenses paid for (in accordance with State Regulations) by the Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired. Whether or not a board member could attend the activity would ultimately depend on the budget of the agency.
3. Approval of attendance will be accomplished by a member requesting funds in a public meeting of the Board of Commissioners, a reason why he or she wanted to attend the event, followed by majority approval of the other Commissioners.
4. Upon the completion of the trip, a report, no more than one page in length, shall be generated to the commissioners and the Executive Director and shall be presented at

a public meeting of the Board of Commissioners thereby making it a part of the public record via the minutes.

Carlos Serván noted that NCBVI is offering staff assistance of \$145 per day for up to seven days to attend a National Convention.

Commissioner Hansen moved to accept the request of Commissioner Jirak and NCBVI grant assistance of \$145 per day for up to seven days to attend the ACB National Convention. Commissioner Rieken seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion, except Commissioner Jirak who abstained.

Report from the Executive Director

Carlos Serván gave highlights of the Report for the Executive Director. The entire Executive Director report is posted below.

May 3, 2014

I will be out of the office from April 23 through June 9 (target date), following spinal surgery. I will not be able to travel to the July ACB and NFB National Conventions this year. Carlos Serván and Bob Deaton represented NCBVI at the ACB-N State Convention the last weekend in April.

Following the consultation with Dr. Nancy Stelter, we have established the Leadership Team of myself, Carlos, Bob and Bill Brown. In my absence, the three will manage the agency; with of course teamwork from all the rest of our Administrative Team, Supervisors and all the staff doing their respective excellent work.

Effective April 30, Fatos Floyd will no longer be Director of our Nebraska Center for the Blind. She is moving on to the Oklahoma VR agency, where she will continue her career in services for the blind. We wish her well in her new position. For an interim period, Bob Deaton will lead our Center program. He has already met with Center staff and students and is moving forward with the work.

Personnel Officer Dave Robinson and Connie Daly are working on the creating and hiring of a part-time support staff person for our Lincoln Front Desk. That position is again vacant and we are revising the position description to better fit needs of both the Center and Lincoln District. Other personnel changes are being explored and developed. First up is the need for a part-time support staff for Kearney. That office has been without in-house support for a long time. Sherrie Bruegman from the North Platte office has worked one day per week in Kearney and has provided support from NP as much as possible.

Work has continued by Wes, Bill, and various State officials on aspects related to accessibility problems of various state systems applications. Wes has been working diligently to remedy the problems for the long term. A more complete report from Wes is provided further on. Wes and Bill continue the weekly telephone meetings with

State Personnel to review progress on accessibility issues of their system. Our primary contact there has now moved elsewhere; we will continue to work with their technology point person, as well as seeking someone in a policy-making position to be involved.

During the past quarter, I have met individually and with the Leadership Team, in sessions with Stelter. I have continued to attend some meetings with Center staff and clients, Field offices, Administrative Team including an hour of Philosophy at each meeting, NBE Vendors Committee, Nebraska State agency directors, Lincoln/Lancaster Multicultural Advisory Committee, the Vision Stakeholders annual meeting at Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI), Department of Education's Transition Advisory Committee. A researcher from American Institutes for Research spent a day with us, exploring the training we provide for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. She met with me, Lincoln District VR Counselors, and the Center to observe. We did have two staff trainees at the time, which was beneficial.

I attended the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) Spring Conference. This year Dottie Wilmott also went for the first time and Carlos Serván attended again.

We have drafted the complete State Plan to submit to our Federal partners by July 1, 2014. If approved in today's meeting, I will complete the process after returning in mid-June. The federal government requires the plan be submitted by July 1 each year, or funds for the next fiscal year are in jeopardy.

The Agency enhancement project with Dr. Nancy Stelter continues, as she provides group sessions and individual coaching sessions are being provided to build our individual skills as well as the team as a whole.

Our formal request to relocate Lincoln District, the Center, and Administrative offices is moving forward. State of Nebraska Administrative Services Building Division has assigned an architect to help plan the proposed space. A formal Request for Bids will be issued before too long.

The Annual Performance Report was completed and formally submitted on April 22, 2014. The report covers the last six months of Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2013 and FFY 2014 from October 1, 2013 through March 31, 2014.

To review our report from February, LB429 was passed by the Unicameral in 2013 which establishes a database for public searching of information about all contracts with every state agency. Administrative Services and the OCIO (Office of the Chief Information Officer) were charged with developing the website and the database. Agencies are charged with uploading all contracts to the system; the public will have access when it goes live later this year. Our involvement has been to work with OCIO to assure accessibility of the system and also to get our own contracts uploaded to the system as mandated. The system is now close to completion; Wes, Bill and others are working on the roles we must assign and tasks related to uploading all contracts. Most of our contracts do not include any client information, but if that were

on any contract, the text will be redacted (blocked out) so that all confidentiality of clients is maintained.

The Spring Statewide Staff Meeting was held in early April, 2014. It went really well, with good speakers and participation from many NCBVI Staff members, as well as three Commissioners attending all or part of the meeting. This year we plan to hold another State Staff gathering in the fall. Years ago we always had two such events. We went away from that when funds were limited and time was scarce. Time is still an issue, everyone is busy, but the value of getting together, sharing our wisdom and experiences is well worth the investment.

We are still testing the AWARE client services database software. Wes and Bill are the leads on this, with of course testing and input from direct service staff, supervisors, and other administrative staff.

Field Services

During our second quarter of Federal Fiscal Year 2014 (January 1 through March 31, 2014), we served 672 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients in all statuses. Thirty (30) were closed having achieved their employment goals. Ten (10) were closed without achieving employment (refusing further services, transfers to another agency, unable to locate, disability too significant to benefit from VR, failure to cooperate, and other).

In the Independent Living (IL) track, we have served 458 clients were served, in all statuses. One hundred nine (109) were closed successfully, with four (4) transferring to VR services; twelve (12) were closed without achieving their goals (withdrew, moved, deceased, and other reasons).

Nebraska Center for the Blind

Total Full-time Clients Served between 1996 through May, 2014: 216

Competitive Employment: 129

Homemakers: 24

Students: 41

Results:

Of the clients that finished training and schooling;

88. Percent are employed (competitive employment and homemaker)

74 percent of the clients who finished training and schooling are competitively employed

13 percent are homemakers

19 percent are students from the total number

10 percent are not working

Activities: Musical, BEP luncheon, Morill Hall Exhibit, Art day, Easter egg, Poetry slam.

Field Services by Bob Deaton

Wes and I attended the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute in San Diego, March 17-21.

Carlos and I conducted case reviews in Scottsbluff (March 25), North Platte (March 26), and Kearney (March 27).

Winnerfest was held at The Leadership Center in Aurora on March 6-8.

Minority outreach plans for the North Platte, Lincoln, and Omaha districts are posted on the W drive for revision and updates by local offices. Staff reviews the list of agencies and organizations to be contacted during FY 2014 (October 1, 2013 through September 30, 2014). They also revise if there are any agencies or organizations to be added or deleted from these lists. These forms are used to document the date and type of contacts made, in our efforts to recruit new referrals from unserved or underserved minority or ethnic groups, and to more effectively serve unserved populations.

Because Nebraska generates fewer than 100 active VR cases representing various minority or ethnic groups annually, NCBVI is required by provisions in the Rehabilitation Act to develop an outreach plan to these “unserved and underserved” populations. These reports are collected annually and submitted to the Executive Director and the Client Assistance Program. These records may also be requested by RSA when conducting periodic monitoring reviews.

North Platte District

The North Platte District has had some great trainings and events this quarter. In February, Bob Deaton met with counseling staff to train on supported employment, the rehab act, and rehabilitation counseling philosophy. Bob also spent some time discussing new vocational rehabilitation counselor training issues. There was a lot of good dialogue and sharing of ideas.

The North Platte District had four attendees at Winnerfest this spring. Angie Hoff served on the planning committee and worked the program from our district. Angie and Jamie Forbis filled in on a moment’s notice to plan and present etiquette training for the students since the presenter cancelled at the last minute. We appreciate their flexibility and willingness to step in and share their knowledge. The committee did a great job once again planning activities and events that the kids enjoyed and will give them knowledge and skills that will enrich their daily lives and help them succeed in the future.

The agency worked with the Nebraska Association of Blind Students to present a College Workshop for students. The committee and NABS planned a great event that the students reported to be very informative. It was great for them to have a chance to network with blind students statewide. Cristal Dimas represented the North Platte district on this committee and Cristal, Scott Pavelka, and Jan Brandt worked the program. The North Platte District had 3 students attend the workshop.

We had scheduled our semi-annual home teaching program FYI/Core for March 17-21 but unfortunately had to cancel it this spring because we didn’t have the minimum number of participants registered. However, we look forward to having a full program again in the fall.

Bob Deaton, Carlos Servan, and I conducted Case Reviews March 25-27th in Scottsbluff, North Platte, and Kearney. We used the new case review instrument as a guide for how to improve our documentation. It was great to process what we've done so far and helpful to know where we can make improvements.

All staff attended the State Staff Meeting held in Grand Island on April 1-3rd. It was wonderful to have everyone visit our District and I hope that all were happy with the accommodations. The meetings are always a great time for staff throughout the state to get together for great discussion and to share exciting ideas. We also had some informative training on diseases of the eye and low vision from Dr. Sheppard of the Weigel-Williamson low vision clinic.

We look forward to some upcoming training in our district. We've scheduled our Myers-Briggs team training with Dr. Stelter on April 29th in North Platte. Carlos is also providing some training on policies and RSA rules on May 7th and 8th in North Platte. As always, we are excited for the opportunity to learn more about ourselves and ways to increase our understanding and skills.

The North Platte District had five successful closures in the past quarter including a historian/tour guide, cashier, maintenance and repair worker, customer service associate, and job retention for a maintenance repair worker.

Omaha District Highlights May 2014

We have had several clients that gained employment. One stocking at HyVee, another working in the Bakery at HyVee, clerk with a convenient store. Vending Assistant. Stockroom Associate, Inventory Supervisor.

We are a part of placement organizations and will be helping a speed networking event with area employers on April 29th. We will be using the community room at Heartland Workforce Solutions. As a part of this group we are affiliated with we learned that companies that have federal contracts are being scrutinized for their employment practices and hiring individuals with disability and diversity. The list of contactors is on the DOL website. We will be doing outreach to target these employers.

Carol worked with NABS to plan the College Workshop and she managed the details from the agency perspective and having clients attending have the necessary paperwork. Monica, Ashley and I also worked the event.

Kathy and Kelly were on the Winnerfest team and did an incredible amount of work. The program was a resounding success. I am so amazed at the creativity that is brought to the table and the expectations presented to our teens. Cheryl and several staff lent a hand to get details covered.

Elaine has had several activities with Hand and Hand, their last meeting was at the Henry Doorly Zoo.

We had an individual that was a long time Randolph Vendor pass away. The office has worked closely with NBE/BEP to complete the closing inventory, identify individual interested in the vending program as possible replacements and will continue to work closely in the training of the new vendor.

We have an increase in referrals, from all sources and all ages. Many referrals are from school districts. Cheryl Poff has been kept busy with the number of older referrals.

We have three clients interested in Job Corp for training and completing their High School degree. They will tour the program on May 9th.

Kathy Brown Hollins made a transfer from Orientation Counselor to Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor a couple months ago. She and Kelly Coleman have been working closely as a transition team to work with students. They are working with students to get ready for WAGES. Several students want to work here in the Omaha area and will look for summer employment here.

We had our training with Kris Thaller the "Life Coach", we have a couple of staff interested in continuing to work with her. We have set up a contract for her to work with several clients as well. I can see the value of how this can help us piece together some of the MI work and Bridges out of poverty. Kudos to Connie Daly for sharing this wonderful resource with us.

We had a person from California that came to Omaha who is blind and does judo. He did a judo demonstration for the teens, it was very hands on and we got some great pictures.

Dr. Karen Wolffe presented on pre-employment and employment skills for students in transition May 15-17, 2014 here in Omaha. She has shared some wonderful information that we plan to implement in the coming weeks.

Larry worked with the tech team to help with the individual training at the College Workshop. He was flexible and went out to teach a client who was starting at Walmart on how to assemble a bike. The person had never even ridden a bike before.

We have had a temp support staff since January 14th, her name is Vanessa Tatum. We appreciate her support, Her last day with us was April 18th. We were sad to say good bye to Monica Tripp who has been for almost 5 years, she left NCBVI to pursue self-employment. We also are in the process of opening both the VR and VR tech position.

We continue to work with Dr. Stelter and will be planning a group session for Meyer's Briggs.

Lincoln District by Connie Daly

Amy and Shane Buresh welcomed a baby girl on February 14th. Her name is Sarah Faith and she has auburn hair just like her mother. Eric Buckwalter finished center training and started in the field on March 10th. He is learning his job quickly and is a good addition to our team.

We finished three sessions of GATE this quarter. We had 5 participants. Four of them finished all three sessions and graduated. We are exploring a group home teaching with the Omaha office.

We held a networking event on February 25th. LIBA and our Business Advisory Council hosted the event at LIBA's office. There were 20 employers and 15 clients present. Some of the clients made contacts that they are still working with. It was a very positive event.

We had a number of clients that attended the college workshop and winnerfest.

We had clients get jobs at Conroy's Bakery, Lincoln Public Schools, Home Instead, NCBVI, Bailey's, Self-employed quilter. We also had a BEP vendor that was awarded the Veteran's hospital site.

Business Office - Bill Brown

- Stelter Study
- Accessibility Issues with Administrative Services E1-9.1, Cornerstone and Workday, LB 429 database, Surplus Property system
- Federal Reporting 425's, RSA-2, RSA-15, 7OB, 704
- NCBVI Space Requirements and Requisitions
- Financial Status, Match, Funds, Grants
- Cost Allocation Plan

Kathy Stephens – Administrative Assistant

Assisted in putting together a RFP for the 1526 K Street Vending Site.

Worked with Bill Brown and Wes Majerus to modify our contracts.

Working on year-end inventory – scanning of fixed assets.

Attended State Staff Meeting in Grand Island.

Working on staff travel arrangements for several different conventions, conferences and trainings coming up.

Attended Independent Agencies Director's meeting in Pearl's absence. This meeting covered the Public Records law.

Wes Majerus, Technology Program Manager

Accessibility

Work continues on an accessibility front. Pearl, Bill, and I have a weekly call with Department of Administrative Services to provide progress reports on issues we face, and for them to provide us updates on past issues and new initiatives. I believe this works well as it allows us to dialog about our concerns and to keep accessibility top of

mind for DAS. I recently tested the Ameritas Dental web site for accessibility. Although the vendor claims it is 508 compliant, issues exist, including inaccessible PDF forms, unlabeled graphics, and controls that are not properly tagged for screen access technology. This will be reported to DAS in the coming days. DAS also gave me the opportunity to test the new Open Enrollment functionality before it goes live on May 13. In my testing, there is nothing different about the system from last year, so staff should have little to no problem navigating it. Options guides for reading about new benefits plan offerings are under development, and it appears that an accessible version will be made available at the same time as it is made available for all employees. I also spoke at the March Independent Agency Heads Meeting. As a means of educating agencies on how accessibility can be incorporated into their business processes. The presentation was well received and it is our hope that accessibility can be a part of documents and web sites produced by more state agencies at the outset rather than an afterthought.

Operations

I continue to work with staff computer issues. With the ending of support for Windows XP in early April, as well as the age of some of our machines, we slated some computers for replacement. I have been customizing these machines and will have them installed shortly. I also attended the recent State Staff Meeting where I provided a report on accessibility efforts across the state, facilitated a discussion on action items relating to field and Center communication, and had the opportunity to dialog with my team. I continue to assist the Business Office with items necessary to evaluate the purchase of the AWARE system. I continue to evaluate software licensing and inventory concerns to ensure that our staff has what it needs to work effectively, and to ensure that our infrastructure functions properly.

I attended the second session of the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute Seminar Series in March. We completed a policy analysis exercise that was assigned in the first session in December. We also analyzed the 360 degree coaching feedback that was gained through a survey that I took and that was taken by a number of people who reported on my leadership style. The coaching related to this feedback will be ongoing, and I think it is beneficial for any leadership role. I will attend a third installment of the seminar series in June, where we will have the opportunity to go to Washington, DC to learn from RSA staff, and to possibly attend congressional hearings if they were to be scheduled.

The Commission held a College Workshop in March, 2014. As part of the workshop, the Technology Team exhibited a number of hardware and software solutions including iOS devices, Braille Displays and Notetakers, screen access software for Mac and PC, and resources for obtaining accessible books both through mainstream and other sources. In addition, attendees could schedule one-on-one time with a technology specialist to discuss individual questions or topics. These activities were well-received, and we plan to incorporate more one-on-one consultation time into future Commission events. Offering one-on-one consultations was successful when we first tried it at our 2013 Employment Conference; we refined it at the Student Seminar this past March, and hope to make our processes and offerings better for future conferences.

Unfinished Business

Budget and Biennium Update

Bill Brown gave a budget and biennium update. NCBVI has received all of our grants for 2014. NCBVI received a small decrease of \$50,000 in the federal VR grant. It is unpredictable what it will be next year. NCBVI is in good shape with our grants for 2014. We have a 2.6 million dollar carryover from last year and we may carry over 2.5 million into 2015. This is a little bit less which is because we have a structural budget deficit which is fairly significant. However, NCBVI will be applying for reallocation funds in July 2014. The reallocation funds are funds that are characterized as benefitting from the misery of others. There are states across the country that are not able to match their grants and NCBVI usually applies for some of that money. The budget for the next few years looks good; however, five to ten years down the road, we don't know.

As it relates to Social Security reimbursement (program income), we have about \$20,000 left in program income at this time. We have claims for approximately \$150,000 that are outstanding and we would anticipate that we will receive a majority of that funding. This will help fund our independent living grant and especially the Part B grant. A lot of our program income is used to supplement the independent living Part B program. Last year NCBVI received over 1 million dollars in social security money. This year will not be as much.

The Biennium Budget is due on September 15, which is by law. The Leadership Team has been in discussions about funding positions, etc. Additional information will be provided to the commissioners during the August Commission Board Meeting.

Commissioner Hansen asked if the program income funds are typically used for VR clients. Bill Brown noted that NCBVI can designate some program income funds to go to independent living; however, it must follow the rules of the grant.

Commissioner Hansen asked if there are any big picture adjustments that need to be made due to the budget deficit. Bill Brown stated that NCBVI has tried to be flexible with where we have been using the funding. The latest figure would indicate that if NCBVI received no more program income and no more reallocation money, the money we have right now would last the agency about four years. Any additional money that the agency receives moves that time back just a bit. NCBVI has made a concerted effort to try to spend the money on innovative and one time types of things such as equipment and training.

Chairperson Johnson asked if there are any big picture adjustments that NCBVI will need to make. Bill Brown stated that NCBVI does have some one time money which we can use to move the Lincoln office to a new building. We are also looking at

replacing some vending machines across the state which will be a .25 million dollar project.

Newsline® Update

Nebraska NFB-Newsline®
May 1, 2014
Jamie K. Forbis, Outreach Coordinator

The past quarter has been busy for NFB-Newsline® in Nebraska. So hang on to your hats as we breeze through this report! First I want to thank each of the Commissioners for providing feedback for the new Newsline application. The application will be sent to all staff soon and hopefully make the process easier for everyone involved. With time constraints I didn't get a chance to talk at the NCBVI State Staff meeting in early April, but an overall description of the services as well as information on the application will be provided to staff in an E-mail. This past weekend I had the opportunity to speak at the American Counsel of the Blind of Nebraska (ACBN) State Convention in Omaha. Some good questions were asked and new subscribers will be added as a result of the presentation. It had been 14 years since the last Newsline presentation at an ACBN convention, so hopefully this will not be the case in the future.

The Baltimore office has also been busy and as a result several new publications have been added this quarter! With these additions the total number of publications available on NFB-Newsline® is currently 357. First I'm pleased to announce the addition of the Norfolk Daily News out of Norfolk Nebraska. It has been a long process to get this paper added, but the efforts have finally paid off. The paper is now online and through the mobile app. The phone portion of Newsline with the content is being update throughout the day. I appreciate all the work done by Dr. Van Zandt and Glenn Ervin to get this publication added to the system.

The other publications added this quarter include: Investor's Business Daily which is published Monday through Friday and contains articles covering international business, finance and the global economy. This publication is found under the National Newspapers category of Newsline. Next is the Japan Times; a daily newspaper from Tokyo that contains domestic, world and business news opinion/editorials, lifestyle, entertainment and sports coverage. This newspaper is found under the International category. Finally a new magazine named the Conde Nast Traveler has been added. This is a luxury and lifestyle travel magazine provided monthly.

By waiting a couple of days to submit this report I was able to include the stats for April. So January through April's stats are listed below.

Thirty-four new subscribers were added to NFB-Newsline® from January 1, 2014 through April 30, 2014 with the total number of subscribers at 1,750. These subscribers read 18,081 minutes of content in January, 15,448 in February, 17,323 in March and 13,981 in April. The duration of calls were much the same with subscribers spending 12.62 minutes per call in January, 11.36 minutes in February, 12.04 minutes in March and 11.71 in April. The percentage of local calls varies slightly

with 42.57 subscribers using it in January, 43.42% in February, 46.01% in March and 47.66 in April.

Other access methods stats are as follows: Online Sessions in January equaled 2,180, in February 2,708, in March 2,615 and in April 3,319. Mobile Sessions in all four months equaled 125 and the In Your Pocket deliveries only slightly varied with January equaling 176 deliveries, February 192, March 197 and April 239. E-mails were delivered to inboxes 1,305 times in January, 1,263 in February, 1,128 in March and 2,099 in April.

Content accesses are broken down into categories and are as follows: Nebraska newspapers were accessed 2,549 times in January, 376 in February, 2,390 in March and 3,137 in April. The local channel was accessed 84 times in January, 76 in February, 171 in March and 60 in April. The local weather and alerts category - 159 times in January, 135 in February, 216 in March and 203 in April. National and International newspapers were accessed 477 times in January, 528 in February, 597 in March and 440 in April. Magazines - 125 times in January, 93 in both February and March and 79 in April. The final category is TV Listings which was accessed 503 times in January, 439 in February, 425 in March and 393 in April.

Are you totally windblown yet? The stats are always good to know, but can make your head spin at times. This concludes my report for this quarter. If you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me at (402) 471-8102, newsline@ne.nfb.org or via Twitter @NFB_NEWSLINE_NE. And as always happy reading!

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Complaints or issues

There are no CAP cases to report. Carlos Serván reported that NCBVI and VR have entered into a MOU where the agency for the blind will serve any blind person regardless of any other disability they may have. This will help avoid two separate cases being opened for one client. However, there is no way to know if a client has a case open with the VR agency and NCBVI unless they report it. When Pearl returns to the office, this issue will be discussed in further detail with the director of VR.

Nebraska Business Enterprise (NBE) Update

We have been subcontracting the main post office in Omaha since the passing of Randy Swanson. We opened that facility to current vendors but no one showed interest. Then, we looked for some clients and interviewed three few weeks ago. We selected Ross Pollpeter, who started on May 1.

Carlos Serván noted that it is difficult to find competent blind people to run the vending businesses because most of them usually start with a small amount of money and as blind people they need to pay a driver. The agencies are also getting tougher and the drivers need to have insurance for the cars, etc. Normally when a vendor starts their business, they start small and add to it as time goes on.

Don Ward met with the V.A. medical center in Lincoln, and we are working to get the contract on a new cafeteria.

We were awarded the 1526 K building in Lincoln and should open within the next few weeks. Victor Ireland was selected to operate that building.

The RFP for the Joint Forces in Lincoln finally came up. We submitted a proposal and we will likely be awarded the canteen site because no other proposals were submitted. There are approximately 290 employees in the building and 900 employees in the area.

We are also looking at a new opportunity with the Department of Agriculture that could bring us new locations across the state.

We are beginning plans for our annual NBE retreat September 19 and 20 which will be in Grand Island. It was noted that training for NBE is in the Rule; and therefore, training is now being conducted on an annual basis.

We currently have 16 vendors and 3 in training. (Ross, Amy and Laurie are in training.)

The project of getting new machines on all the location on I-80 is being rescheduled. The companies from which we buy our machines are delaying the make of new orders. We are communicating this fact to DOR.

Progress Report on Organizational Development Specialist

Dr. Nancy Stelter submitted to the Board a progress report regarding NCBVI organizational development. Commissioner Hansen summarized the report and it is also posted below.

Commissioner Hansen noted that the Executive Director's Report included some of the outcomes from the organizational development project. In the meetings that the management has had with Dr. Stelter they decided it would be a good idea to form the leadership team. The team will work together on decision making processes.

Project as of 5-1-14

Held three group sessions with the Center - next one scheduled May 2nd - the last meeting was very good! Individuals started developing solutions for problems earlier identified, methods for client staffing were discussed and decided upon, processes in the Center were discussed and modifications were decided upon. What impact the resignation of Fatos will have on our results remains to be seen. I meet with the group again on May 2nd.

Continue individual coaching with some of the Center staff

Continuing with coaching select supervisors and administrators

Continue meeting with the four top administrators - now three until Pearl's return. They have agreed to the following:

1. Requiring information and requests be done through the chain of command.
2. Being a team that walks in unison and does not make individual decisions that affect the agency as a whole until they have determined they are all in agreement.

Bill has organized his committee to review the billing and HR functions and has held one meeting.

Next meeting with three of the four administrators (Pearl will be absent) is scheduled May 5th.

Lincoln/Norfolk first group meeting scheduled May 8th.

Kearney/North Platte/Scottsbluff first group meeting was held April 29th in North Platte. They identified some issues that we will discuss further at our next meeting in Kearney on the 15th of May.

There have been some staff changes in Omaha, so we have been slow getting them scheduled to meet.

As more work is completed we should be getting more updates.

Regards,

Nancy Stelter

Commissioner Hansen noted that he has heard some comments from about why the Commission is doing this and why does the Board think they are going to have insight to how the Commission runs when they are not there on a day to day basis. Commissioner Hansen stated that he has reported to staff that the Board is not the ones identifying the issues and offering solutions. The process is designed so it is driven by the needs of the staff and this is the way the Board hopes the process works. The commissioners hope that the staff will embrace the process and hopefully it will be productive and beneficial for everyone.

Public Comment

Mark Bulger

Mark Bulger thanked the Board of Commissioners for their service. Mark noted that this is the only public comment opportunity before the commissioners go into executive session. Mark stated that he sees the role of the Board primarily to oversee

the duties of the executive director. This is an important role. Mark stated that he sees that the commissioners take this role very seriously. Mark stated that he is glad to see that the Board is going into a closed session this year to conduct the evaluation of the executive director. He is also glad to see that the Board is shifting some of the evaluation tools. To him it always appeared that the staff evaluation was what the Board based their evaluation on. While the staff survey can be helpful, it can also give the staff too much power. Mark told the Board that the best thing they can do for the executive director is to empower them to do his/her job and give them the tools and support to do that job. One thing that the Board will probably do today is look at the salary of the executive director. Whether the Director is Dr. Van Zandt or someone else, the Board needs to put a high value on what they pay the executive director. Mark stated that if NCBVI wants to have an effective executive director and have high expectations for the director, they need to pay them appropriately. He hopes the Board considers what comparable executive directors are being paid and pay the director according to what the position is worth. At the executive level you get what you pay for and what they do matters a lot. In Dr. Van Zandt's case, she goes above and beyond the normal expectations and she does try hard to do her job. Mark noted that he is trying to say that the Board should pay the executive director appropriately. If the Board has high expectations for the executive director then they need to pay the person based on those high expectations. Mark stated that he would like to see the Board be supportive of the role of the executive director and get behind her and give the staff and consumers the idea that the Board supports the executive director. If there are problems, then those need to be dealt with in an executive session. Mark stated that it appears that at times mixed signals are being sent to staff and consumers. Mark noted that personally he does not feel that anyone at NCBVI is being paid enough and there will be staff turnover based on what the pay is for employees. That being said, the Board must support their leaders so they will be there and help support new staff that comes on board.

Commissioner Hansen commented on why the executive director's evaluation was done publicly in the past. Commissioner Hansen noted that the Board of Commissioners reaches out for advice when they have questions regarding state regulations. The Board was previously advised that it was a requirement that the executive director evaluation be conducted in public. The Board has since been informed that it is not a requirement that the executive director evaluation be done in public and the executive director has the choice of how they would like to have their evaluation conducted. Each year the executive director can choose the method and this year the executive director chose to have her evaluation conducted in an executive session. Mark Bulger stated that he sees this as another positive step that the Commission Board is taking.

Commissioner Jirak stated that it was asked of him last week what happened to the staff survey. There was some staff who forgot that the survey was not going to be done this year. A couple of staff was glad that there was no staff survey. Chairperson Johnson noted that the survey was always voluntary. Staff was not required to complete it. Commissioner Jirak reported that the new evaluation process for the executive director will begin on July 1, 2014.

Break

A break was taken at 10:42 a.m. The meeting resumed at 11:00 a.m.

Annual Business

Discuss and Act on the approval of the Executive Director's time certification

Commissioner Hansen moved to continue with the current method being used for the Director to submit her Personnel Activity Report to the Board. The Director submits her Personnel Activity Report via email to the entire Board for their review and information. It is an automatic approval unless a question or concern is raised by a Commission Board member.

Commissioner Jirak seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken and all voted in favor of the motion.

Discuss and Act on the approval of Executive Director's NCSAB treasurer election in November of 2013

Commissioner Jirak moved to approve Executive Director Van Zandt to seek an additional term as Treasurer of the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB). This is to be approved on a year by year basis. Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners were in favor of the motion.

Discuss and Act on the approval of the Executive Director's participation on the National Blindness Professional Certification Board, (NBPCB.)

Commissioner Jirak moved to approve Executive Director Van Zandt participation in the National Blind Professionals Certification Board for the current term. This is to be approved on a year by year basis. Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners were in favor of the motion.

Discuss and Act on the approval of the Executive Director's participation on the Board of Community Advocates, Inc.

Commissioner Jirak moved to approve Executive Director Van Zandt participation on the Board of Community Advocates, Inc. for the current term. This is to be approved on a year by year basis. Commissioner Rieken seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners were in favor of the motion.

Discuss & Act on the Approval of Employee in-state and out-of-state Travel

It was noted that State law requires all travel of staff of state agencies to be pre-approved. This includes travel in state and out state. Currently for out of state travel all staff must complete a form that says where they are going, why they are going there, the cost, how it will be funded, etc. and this must be pre-approved by their immediate supervisor and by the executive director. This is done by all staff for out of state travel.

Supervisors manage in state travel by getting itineraries from staff and reviewing them on an on-going basis. However, staff is not required to check in with their supervisor every morning to get an okay for in state travel as this would not be manageable. Discussion was held with Administrative Services to determine how the agency could comply with the law regarding in state travel. Administrative Services recommended that each year the Board of Commissioners would have a motion to pre-approve travel that is related to the purpose of the staff person's position. Business Manager Bill Brown put together a proposed motion for the Board to approve.

Commissioner Hansen moved:

The Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired approves all employee in-state business travel and/or out of state business travel within 60 miles of the border of Nebraska in any adjoining state, which relates directly to the provision of services to a client, i.e. employer visit, medical appointment, service referral, employment interview, etc. All other out of state business travel is approved if granted approval by the Executive Director of the agency. This motion is in effect until the next meeting of the Board of Commissioners after April 1, 2015.

Commissioner Jirak seconded.

A roll call vote and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Executive Session for Executive Director Evaluation

Commissioner Jirak moved to go into Executive Session at 11:15 a.m. to conduct the evaluation of the Executive Director.

(Ref. Open Meeting Act; 84-1410. Closed session; (d) Evaluation of the job performance of a person when necessary to prevent needless injury to the reputation of a person and if such person has not requested a public meeting.)

Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Hansen moved to come out of Executive Session at 11:50 a.m.

Commissioner Jirak seconded the motion.

A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Lunch – A lunch break was taken.

Commissioner Jirak moved to retain Dr. Pearl Van Zandt as the Executive Director of the Commission for another year. Commissioner Hansen seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all voted in favor of the motion.

The commissioners inquired about the raise percentage for staff this year. Bill Brown noted that Rules covered employees will get a 2.25% raise effective July 1, 2014.

Commissioner Jirak noted for the record that it was suggested that the Board increase the pay much higher than 2.25 %, but the thought process was that they need to be able to justify the competitiveness of the size of the agency as well as what other executive directors are getting compensated for an agency about the same size. That is why the 2.25 % is being suggested.

Commissioner Hansen moved to give the Executive Director a 2.25% raise effective July 1, 2014. Commissioner Rieken seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all voted in favor of the motion.

It was noted that Chairperson Johnson needs to communicate to the Governor via State Personnel that the NCBVI Executive Director was retained.

New Business

Discuss and Act on 2015 State Plan

The commissioners received a draft of the State Plan prior to today's meeting and they have had the opportunity to review it.

Commissioner Jirak moved to approve the 2015 State Plan as presented. Commissioner Newman seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Discuss and Act on Executive Director Job Description

Commissioners Jirak and Newman worked on developing a written job description for the executive director. It was noted that NCBVI did not currently have a written job description for the executive director. The commissioners consulted with other State agencies for the Blind when developing the job description. It was noted that the commissioners plan to meet with the current executive director at a later time in order to develop a list of all the executive director job duties. Below is the job description as developed.

Executive Director Job Description

Class Title:
Blind Services Executive Director
Bargaining Unit:
Non-Classified
Position Title/Level/Code: Director - N00200

This position serves at the pleasure of the Board of Commissioners, Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired.

The expectations of the Executive Director of NCBVI are: to annually develop and facilitate the implementation of the state plan, to champion the commission's mission

of “Empowering blind individuals, promoting opportunities and building belief in the blind” and, to oversee the commission’s many state wide programs.

Our programs include:

- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
- Technology
- Independent Living Part B (IL)
- Older Blind (OIB)
- Deaf-Blind
- Business Enterprise
- Digital Voice Newspaper Delivery System (NFB-NEWSLINE®)
- Nebraska Center for the Blind

Position functions:

- Analyzes, coordinates, and oversees policies and procedures ensuring projects/programs conforming with state and federal regulations
- Oversee a staff of 50 plus employees.
- Promote a collaborative work environment throughout a multi city state wide agency
- Initiates and facilitates development of a strategic plan for NCBVI
- Assists with the preparation of the Agency’s budget and insures that appropriate fiscal policies and procedures are followed
- Facilitates special events such as community forums and other large-scale meetings
- Assists with the coordination of Agency participation in conferences sponsored by other groups
- May, with board approval, serve as liaison to agencies and associations to represent NCBVI
- Represent the interests of the commission by serving other agencies and associations

Education and Experience Requirements:

- Excellent verbal and written communication skills
- A working knowledge of the Rehabilitation Act, as recently amended and, accessibility law as it pertains to blindness
- Completion of the curriculum requirements for a master’s or doctoral degree
- Three (3) years of professional level experience in vocational rehabilitation of the blind
- Four (4) years in an administrative or supervisory level experience in vocational rehabilitation of the blind

Commissioner Jirak moved to adopt the Executive Director Job description as developed. Commissioner Newman seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Discuss and Act on Commissioner Support of Outlook
Nebraska at the Greater Omaha Business Excellence Awards Luncheon

Commissioner Jirak noted that he originally put this item on the agenda because he thought this was an event to recognize blind individuals. He has now learned that this event is not what he thought it was going to be; and therefore, he asked to have this item removed from the agenda with no action being taken.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Final Announcements

Next meeting – August 2, 2014 in Norfolk, NE (Divots Hotel)
Focus Topic – Guide dogs and how the agency works with clients with guides.

November 1, 2014 in Omaha
Focus Topic - The collaborative process between civic/consumer organizations to further advance independent living and employment of blind Nebraskans

Adjourn

Commissioner Hansen moved to adjourn at 1:55 p.m.
Commissioner Newman seconded the motion.
All commissioners were in favor of the motion.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the August 2, 2014 Commission Board meeting, please email it to the NCBVI Commission Board at ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant
NCBVI

Julie Johnson, Chairperson
NCBVI Board of Commissioners