

Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired
Public Meeting
Friday, November 3, 2000, 6:30 p.m.
Lincoln, Nebraska

Approved

Call to Order and Introductions: The Board of Commissioners meeting of the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired was called to order by Chairman, Barbara Walker. Board members introduced themselves Dorothy Westin-Yockey, Robert Burns, Barbara Walker, William Orester, and Maya Samms. Walker reported an omission to the agenda was the period for Public Comment; but there will be time set aside for the public to make their comments. Walker requested everyone in attendance to introduce themselves Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director; Jan Ludwig, Staff Assistant; Carlos Servan, Deputy Director of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR); Bob Deaton, Deputy Director of Independent Living (IL); Jim Jirak; David Hunt, BEP vendor; Terry Harris, Business Enterprise Administrator; Don Ward, Business Enterprise Rehabilitation Counselor; Nancy Coffinan, Technology Program Specialist; Fritz Yockey; Fatos Floyd, Director of the Nebraska Center for the Blind for the Blind; and Mike Floyd. Van Zandt did announce there are cookies, popcorn and coffee at the east end of the room. Accounting will not approve expenses of refreshments for meetings so if you're interested in contributing, leave it in the basket on the counter.

Minutes of the September 22, 2000 Meeting: Walker read the minutes hoping by the next meeting we would be able to make the minutes available through technology and not have to spend the time reading them. Westin-Yockey moved the minutes be approved, Orester seconded the motion and the motion passed.

Terry Harris presented the focus topic on The Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

Report from the Executive Director:

Van Zandt gave staff updates since the last meeting. Denise Johnston Rauterkus was hired as transition counselor in the North Platte District so we have a rehabilitation counselor position open in the North Platte office. A decision has not been finalized on the rehabilitation counselor position in the Lincoln District. Omaha's position is in the works.

The Newline report revealed progress is being made with the Lincoln Journal Star as they are updating their Library and photo archive system which will make it more workable. We should be seeing results by the end of November. Amy Buresh is the Newline outreach person and she checks daily and also puts updated information on the channel. There was some discussion regarding whether Baltimore knows if they do not get a feed. Individuals were encouraged to monitor problems of publications, relay their findings to Buresh and she will make the report to Baltimore. Buresh reported recently, there are 1, 100 subscribers so the progress has really been great.

Fatos Floyd attended a National meeting of Directors of Nebraska Center for the Blinds. There were eight states attending the meeting (Nebraska, Iowa, South Dakota, Virginia, Hawaii, Minnesota Arizona and North Carolina). They are proposing to have a mid-west regional meeting this next fall or late summer. Floyd and Van Zandt would like to sponsor this Regional meeting. Expenses would be paid by the people sending participants. Bums gave an agreeable response to the idea. Van Zandt promised to keep the Commissioners updated.

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the Independent Living (IL) statistics were given for fiscal year 2000, and these reports are available (print and Braille) upon request from NCBVI.

In the past couple of months, we have received \$150,000 in Social Security reimbursements which has kept us going in this time of budget delays.

Floyd reported 66% who attend the Center do become gainfully employed. Floyd also reported we have a student whose Insurance Company approved a nine week training period in the Center.

A list of attorneys was given as a potential pool of Impartial Hearing Officers and they are as follows: Richard A. Birch, North Platte; Gary G. Burger, Lincoln; John P. Glynn, Jr., Lincoln; R. Kent Radke, Lincoln; and Dennis C. Tegtmeier, Lincoln. We are required to have a pool of attorneys and after reviewing the resumes presented, Bums moved and Samms seconded to approve the group presented. The vote was unanimous. Servan will draft a letter to each attorney letting them know NCBVI has approved to make available their names if services become necessary.

NCBVI is participating in working toward putting together information in order to build a Kearney State office building.

Van Zandt reported that Dave Robinson keeps leave records that are accumulated on a yearly basis and he would prefer giving information on Van Zandt's leave status on calendar quarters. After the Budget request is in on November 9, Van Zandt requested leave during the week of November 13', with the exception of a couple of meetings that are already scheduled that she will participate in and then also take November 27' as vacation days. She will also be available if there becomes a need due to budget issues. Orester moved and Samms seconded that the quarterly reports on leave and out-of-state travel be at calendar quarters. The vote was taken and the motion passed unanimously. Following this meeting, Walker will sign the leave forms approving Van Zandt's leave requested for November.

Report from the Chairman: A letter to Mike McCrory, Director of Department of Personnel was written and read by Walker and will accompany the Comprehensive Personnel Questionnaires (CPQs). Consensus of the letter was favorable and this will accompany the CPQs when they go to Personnel. Van Zandt added that she feels Ludwig's position and the HR assistant position, which is a rather low level pay grade, should be looked at also, but should these be included in this package? Bums and Orester spoke favorably in getting them in along with the rest of them. The Board of Commissioners suggested to go ahead and get the other two to develop a CPQ and send along with the rest of them. Van Zandt is going to review this with Deaton and Servan to decide just how this should be handled.

Walker asked for assistance in writing the letter regarding accessibility issues with the budget. Van Zandt did get the budget people to make the budget available in Excel. Excel is accessible but no one on the board has Excel. As long as our voice is being heard for the future and especially in the writing of the Nebraska Information System (NIS) software, we can get along. After much discussion, Bums agreed to put together a letter to the Governor and Chief Information Officer from the Board of Commissioners. Upon completion, he will e-mail it to Walker, Van Zandt and Ludwig so it can be printed on Commission stationery.

Old Business Materials Update: Walker encouraged the Board of Commissioners to complete their Bios so they will be ready to be included on the Commission Web page when it goes up.

Budget Update: The budget we completed is now locked. No one can make any changes without official requests to have it unlocked, and we have until the 15th so hopefully we might find whatever errors there might be by that date. We do have until November 9th for the budget deficit requests. There is no Federal Budget to date, but we are looking for a 3% increase, as that is what has been usual. If that is true this year, we would expect to receive \$3,019,695. The match required for us to get that full amount would be \$684,108. The current appropriation of General funds is \$465,773. The grants received that require no match are the Transition Grant in the amount of \$275,000 and Supported Employment of \$30,000.

Basic Support (which is the majority of our funding) is 78.7% federal and 21.3% non-federal. There are specific requirements in order to meet that match: it has to be real money; or a statewide cost allocation plan; or a third party cooperative agreement which are formal agreements with other public entities. Funds available this year to date total \$618,133. This includes the appropriation of \$465,773, \$50,000 Helen Keller National Center for Deaf/Blind Youth and Adults, \$44,500 is the estimated BEP Set Aside cash fund, \$38,000 from UNMC the Low Vision Clinic and \$10,000 is awarded from the statewide cost allocation. The NFBN Newsline® project amount of \$5,800 has been received as well as the interest from the Catherine D. Robinson Trust fund of \$4,060. So the Basic Support match still needed is \$30,722.

The grants that are 90% Federal and require a 10% match are the \$225,000 for the Older Blind project, \$57,955 for In-Service training and \$34,329 for Title 7 Part B Independent Living Services. This translates into \$317,284 Federal and \$35,254 non-Federal which can be actual dollars or in-kind match (i.e. the work volunteers do). The funds are available to date pending documentation of in-kind match toward the sub-grants that we are getting from Older Blind and Independent Living is \$21,278. To date we have in hand from Panhandle Independent Living services \$17,022 which is the match the funds provided to them. There will be others (i.e. VIPS, NFBN, ACBN of Omaha and Helping Hands) that are consumer driven entities and we are proposing that we will ask each of these folks to basically document the 10% for our 90%. Those that have been contacted seem to be willing to work with us to document time or whatever it might be to help us come up with some more match. We feel our efforts will give a positive message to the Unicameral showing our hard work toward getting our match in such a short time. Work continues as Bob Deaton is in touch with Radio Talking Book to see if we can get some funds through that group. Servan and Mosier are working on a third party cooperative agreement with the Department of Education. The Omaha Association of the Blind does provide funds on a fairly regular basis to Radio Talking Book. We are working on a proposal for them to route those funds through the Commission and we would pass the money onto RTB. By doing that, those dollars would increase Federal moneys coming into the state of Nebraska. There are other pieces to put together and we will see how this works out.

NIS Accessibility Update: This agenda item was covered within the Report from the Chairman.

Comprehensive Position Questionnaire Update: The Board of Commissioners agreed this agenda item has been covered also.

Public Comment: Chairman Walker offered for the public to make comment at this time; but there being none she moved onto the next agenda item.

Website Update: Report on the Web page was given by Van Zandt. She had talked to Kelly Coleman and Jonathan Ross and presented a printout of the Web page which for right now is a Draft Web Page and is in the office of the State Web Master. Coleman would like suggestions from the

Board of Commissioners as to Links you might like to have included (i.e. Commissioner Bios, draft minutes).

Consumer groups should be listed both National and State, and Van Zandt will check with the Feds as to whether RSA should be included as a Link. Since we have a cooperative agreement with NCCBVI it was felt we may want to include them as well.

Friends of the Commission Update: The three attorneys agreed that completing the Articles of Incorporation is the easy part to draft. Effectiveness of a Foundation may be to target industries (i.e. people in the high tech industry) to make available a program of "life long learning and training" for the people in Nebraska and raising money for support and training. A question was raised as to whether the incorporating officers would be the Board of Commissioners. Following discussion there was general agreement that the officers of the foundation would be the Board of Commissioners. There will be a Public Notice fee and a filing fee with the State and Van Zandt will check with Brown to see if funds from the Robinson Trust fund could be used for up front costs to complete this. Samms moved, "Pending legal approval of using funds from the trust for setup costs of incorporating, that we proceed with the necessary paperwork to complete the Articles of Incorporation." Bums second the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

New Business: Executive Director Evaluation: The Board of Commissioners did receive the information regarding the procedure and process to complete an evaluation on the Director of the Commission. Chairman Walker explained the need to either choose an example given or come up with our own. At the time of Van Zandt's reappointment there were five general areas of expectations or points, spelling out the word BLIND, expressing what we look for in an Executive Director. Discussion followed regarding the evaluation due date to the Governor's office of November 13, the type of form and what criteria needs to be included in that form. Orester moved and Bums seconded, "We use the five goals set forth in the letter of reappointment through the use of the word BLIND, as the five duties on the evaluation form and the evaluation period will be from July 1 through June 30th." The motion passed unanimously.

DigitalNews Information--Stacy and Craig Groff: Illness precluded the Groffs attendance. Walker read an informational letter from them regarding a non-profit to raise funds for Newsline®. No action necessary at this time.

Visually Impaired Peer Support Fund raiser: Van Zandt read the information from the South Central Peer Support Group regarding the "bumper sticker and T-shirt" contest they are sponsoring through January 31, 2001. They are looking to NCBVI staff and board members for creative ideas and encouraging involvement of everyone. Ray Johnson is the contact person for this fund raiser. Please submit entries to Johnson. Part of their contest objective is to acquaint people all across the state, including those who are experiencing vision loss, with the services and training available. Public information is foremost at this point in time.

Location, Date and Time of Next Meeting: Our next meeting will be in Omaha, February 24, 2001, 9:00 a.m. Transition will be the focus with Carlos Servan and Karen Mosier presenting.

Adjourn: There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted

Jan Ludwig, Staff Assistant

Barbara Walker, Chairman of Commissioners

Business Enterprise Program Overview:

Terry Harris the Business Enterprise Administrator of the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired presented the Focus for this meeting. The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) is organized around the Randolph-Shepard Law which first became law in 1936 and was amended in its current form in 1974. The Randolph-Shepard Law affords blind persons priority in vending facilities on Federal property. The Federal agency that administers this program is the Department of Education and it is the Secretary of Education that is responsible for the regulatory, oversight, technical development, evaluations and designation of State Licensing Agencies (SLA). The State Licensing Agency is the State Vocational Agency for the Blind which in Nebraska is the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI). The SLA has the responsibility to train and license qualified facility managers, must oversee all sites, inspect for health standards, be within contract agreements, audit for accurate reports, maintain machines, and do reporting to the Rehabilitation Service Administration (RSA).

The Blind Vendors Committee, which is required by the Randolph-Shepard Law, are wanting to make some changes in the Rules & Regulations so we anticipate some updating in the near future. The Government Service Administration (GSA) has been patient with us in getting the Commission up and running as this process will require some public forums. Nebraska currently has 21 licensed blind vendors which we refer to as facility managers plus 3 new folks in the program who are not yet licensed vendors which makes a total of 24 manager entrepreneurial persons in the Business Enterprises.

The 24 vendors are managing facilities consisting of 65 vending contracts or permits. The sites are located across a 400 mile stretch over the state of Nebraska (i.e. along 1-80 rest areas, state colleges, nursing homes, state and federal office facilities, state and federal court, a small facility at Offutt Air Force Base, and post offices). Facility managers send 12% of net proceeds back to the SLA as Set Aside and this money is matched with Federal dollars and is used to contribute to the vendor's retirement program, purchase new machines and make repair on existing machines. The ownership of this equipment remains with the SLA. We are currently working with the Blind Vendors Committee to establish a policy manual and training program for the Business Enterprise. This is a Blind Vendors

Employment program and is not a rehabilitation program and its new name will be the Nebraska Business Enterprises (NBE). We are currently exploring the possibility to make use of the Missouri Business Enterprise training program. Missouri has a full time training staff compared to our staff of two. GSA is pushing for "Quality of Service" nationwide. We are hoping this training will assist our facility managers to professionalize their business. We are planning to have information available for the December 8, 2000 Vendor's meeting regarding establishment of a training program. Missouri's curriculum includes seventeen weeks working in a classroom setting: on vending machines; computers; talking cash registers; and a section on bookkeeping. It also includes on-the-job training in a cafeteria, located in the Capitol building. When they complete the program, the individual is Licensed by the National Restaurant Association. Following Harris' report there were several questions and concerns raised by the Board of Commissioners. The Board expressed concern regarding no Braille on the machines in vending areas they have visited and questioned what kind of image is that sending? Walker stated, "I think I am most interested in what the actual function of this program is with respect to the blind community as a whole and our relationship to the public". She continued saying, "If this program is established to 'get a foot' in the door with the public and expand opportunities for the blind, I like the idea of incorporating training in blindness skills." Walker went on to say, "These businesses are 'Blind Ambassadors'". There was a general consensus of the Commissioners that there be Braille on the machines. It was recommended each site make use of Braille in their marketing, and other blindness related alternatives. Ward confirmed that he will begin this process and also informed the Commissioners that some of the machines available for purchase do come with Braille on them already. The Board of Commissioners did request that Harris make the information he just presented available to Ludwig and she in turn will e-mail it to the Board of Commissioners. It was also reported, that the average income for Nebraska vendors is \$16,800 per year and the national average is \$32,000. Harris will send the yearly income information on each location to Van Zandt and she will forward this to the Board of Commissioners.

Business Enterprise Program Proposal--Dave Hunt: Hunt presented a resolution he has been instrumental in developing. The Blind Vendors Committee supports this endeavor as well.

This resolution was also approved for support by the State NFB Chapter at their recent October, 2000 convention. This proposal is requesting a change in the Nebraska tax code. The change would return the vendor's sales tax collected to the Commission. The vendor's portion could then work as a match which would enable the Commission to capture Federal money to allow increased business opportunities in the Nebraska Business Enterprises for the blind, rather than having to go to the state for appropriations. To establish a new vending site it runs around \$50,000. Senator Preister is showing some indication that he might sponsor this resolution and Hunt will be meeting with him on the 15' of November. The Board of Commissioners is in support of this effort and interested in seeing how it goes. The Blind Vendors Committee is encouraged by Van Zandt to keep the Board of Commissioners informed of their progress. Orester offered to testify or whatever might be necessary to help with this process.