

Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired

Public Meeting

Saturday, February 5, 2011 9:00 AM

Omaha State Office Building

Room 224 and 226, second floor

1313 Farnam on-the-Mall, Omaha, Nebraska.

## APPROVED MINUTES

### Call to Order and Introductions

Julie Johnson, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:10 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; Nancy Oltman, Hastings; Darrell Walla, Omaha.

Commission staff present: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director, Lincoln; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant, Lincoln; Carlos Serván, Deputy Director VR, Lincoln; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director IL; Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor.

Public Present: Hubert Paulson, NCBVI Contractor; Paul Stebbins, Station Manager for Radio Talking Book Services, Mark Bulger, Omaha;

ACB: Shirley Allen, Howard Compton, Janis Compton, Barbara Epworth, Josephine Genit, Janette Hancock, Ann Pelikan, Kristal Platt, Katie Redinbaugh, Sherryl Rissi, Kenda Slavin and Glennie Weiland.

NFB: Amy Buresh, President of NFBN; Shane Buresh, Noah Buresh, Bob Burns, Cheryl Livingston,; Robert Newman, Kayde Reiken, Barbara Loos, Sandy Alvarado, Ross Pollpeter; Karen Anderson, Amy Mason, Jeff Altman

Announcements Concerning Lunch Arrangements and Other Logistics,

Nancy Flearl announced that vegetable soup and chili soup will be served along with crackers, apples and oranges.

Hubert Paulsen recorded the meeting.

Location of Open Meeting Act

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was located on the back table in the meeting room. The Act was available in both print and Braille format.

Announcement of Public Meeting Placement Notice

The Affidavit of Publication was available at the meeting. The meeting notice was published in the Lincoln Journal Star on January 27, 2011.

The Notice was also posted on the State Government calendar, NCBVI website, NFB Newsline and List Serve.

## Approval of November 6, 2010 Minutes

Commissioner Jirak moved to approve the Minutes of the November 6, 2010 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Oltman seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and it was unanimous in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Oltman noted that the Minutes are located on the NCBVI website for review.

## The State Plan, Dr. Pearl Van Zandt

Director Van Zandt reported that the State Plan is a document that is written every year to comply with RSA Regulations. State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies are required to submit a State Plan describing the manner in which they administer the VR and Supported Employment programs in their states. RSA issues requirements each year along with instructions for completion of the Plan and supplement.

The most recent instructions were issued in March 2010. We have been informed that new instructions will be coming, but we do not have those yet. The document is quite lengthy; much of it has to do with parts of the law. Key mandates from the Rehab Act itself are pulled out and put into a pre-print. Every state agency must go through and confirm what they are going to do for the year. The complete State Plan consists of 93 pages. Certain sections of the pre-print require attachments. The attachments follow the pre-print part. States must submit the entire preprint, including certification pages, and all corresponding attachments, regardless of whether they have been previously approved by RSA, that comprise a

complete State Plan and Supplement for FY 2010. If anything changes within the agency or the State that is not a required attachment, the agency is required to know what that was and write a new attachment on that topic.

One large premise throughout the years is that the State Plan cannot be written up and approved without public input. The State Plan must be brought to the public in forums to find out what the public is thinking. The State Plan is on the website and it is available to whoever wants to review it. A lot of the content stays the same over the years, but there can be changes as well. Van Zandt and other NCBVI staff members attend consumer organization events and we inquire about how they feel about the way NCBVI is conducting business. NCBVI makes changes based upon comments from consumer organizations.

The State Plan Attachments are:

Input of State Rehab Council: This attachment is required every year because NCBVI must confirm that we are a free standing Commission and we have a Board of consumers who are the governing Board of the Agency; and therefore, we do not have a State Rehab Council;

Request for Waiver of Statewideness: This is a request to not be required to provide a particular service statewide. NCBVI does not need to complete this attachment because all of our services are offered statewide.

Cooperative Agreements with Agencies Not Carrying Out Activities Under the Statewide Workforce Investment System;

Coordination with Education Officials;

Cooperative Agreements with Private Nonprofit Organizations;

Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services;

Comprehensive System of Personnel Development;

Statewide Assessment;

Annual Estimates;

State Goals and Priorities;

Order of Selection: This is for when funds are not adequate to serve all applicants to the agency, creating a requirement for establishing a waiting list. NCBVI has not had to do this.

Goals and Plans for Distribution of Title VI Part B Funds;

State Strategies;

Evaluation and Reports of Progress; and,

Quality, Scope and Extent of Supported Employment Services.

The Attachments basically cover all the aspects of what the agency does with regard to Vocational Rehabilitation and Supported Employment. The State Plan does not address Older Blind Services or Independent Living. These services are covered separately.

Every year, the Attachments that must be submitted are the staff training section (Comprehensive System of Personnel Development); annual estimates (how many –people do you think you are likely to serve next year and expected ratio of staff to clients served); Goals and Plans for Distribution of Part B – supported employment; and Evaluation and Reports of Progress.

The designated state agency also must actively consult with the director of the Client Assistance Program. NCBVI communicates regularly with the Director of CAP in Nebraska.

In addition to the State Plan materials, a certification regarding lobbying is required for each program for which federal funds are requested.

RSA will carefully review the annual updates and any amendments to the State Plan to ensure that they conform to all of the content requirements for each update and amendment. RSA will pay particular attention to the State Plan provisions required by the Rehabilitation Act. These provisions are significant since they focus on annual state agency performance considerations and, as such, provide important information for future RSA performance monitoring initiatives.

The State Plans for all agencies are available on the Federal Website. The link to the website is: [http://rsa.ed.gov/view\\_info.cfm](http://rsa.ed.gov/view_info.cfm)

10:15 - Public Comment

Commissioner Hansen inquired about the provision that certifies that NCBVI will not do any lobbying. Director Van Zandt noted that NCBVI does not lobby, but we do educate. Van Zandt noted that this is a legal difference. State agencies and government officials can and must answer questions that Senators may have and talk to policy makers about what the agency does, why we do it, and what the law says. Lobbying is asking for support of something.

Van Zandt stated that there are times when people are employees of the agency and they are also active in another consumer organization do go to their senator and say "I am here as a consumer living in the state; not an employee of the agency." Employees use vacation or flex time when they do this. They are not on state time.

Commissioner Oltman asked if there are times that RSA rejects certain portions of the State Plan and portions need to be redone. Van Zandt stated that this happens frequently.

Van Zandt reported that RSA has always stated that in order to work with a Rehab Agency as a Rehab Counselor you must have a Masters Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or the highest in the State. There is no school in Nebraska that offers a Masters Degree in Rehab Counseling, nor Bachelors. Van Zandt stated that she does not believe there is a school in the Midwest that offers these degrees. If Nebraska went completely by this requirement, we would not have any Rehab Counselors because we could not hire anyone. Van Zandt noted that NCBVI currently does have two staff who have a Masters Degree in Rehab Counseling. Van Zandt reported that a couple of years ago, NCBVI worked with senators on a Bill to develop a State Law for Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor for the Blind. This Law is specific to Nebraska and it is a rigorous education which includes four months training in the Center and ongoing continuing education. NCBVI informed the Federal Agency that in Nebraska there are not many people with a Masters Degree in Rehab Counseling, but people can be hired and go through the NCBVI training process to become certified as a VR Counselor for the Blind. The Feds approved this.

Commissioner Oltman stated that she is curious as to how NCBVI estimates how many people we will serve.

Van Zandt stated that it is typical that we serve more individuals than the previous year. This is not totally scientific, but it is an estimate based on history. However, in recent years the numbers have gone down. We have standards and indicators for performance set by the Feds (RSA) that we are required to follow.

If we do not meet these standards, RSA could pull funding. The Feds would not do this immediately, but the agency would need to put a plan of action into place to remedy these areas.

Commissioner Johnson asked about the Federal Monitoring System. Van Zandt explained that there has been a major change in the administration of the Rehab Program. There are a lot of new employees there. The Administration is looking to change their whole review system. For a long time, it was about every year. NCBVI is scheduled for review in 2012. After some states are monitored in 2011 they will review the process to see how well it worked and what they may need to modify. This could affect the scheduling going forward. The present RSA Commissioner was a Director of a State Rehabilitation Agency and is aware of the nuances of how agencies work. Commissioner Walla asked if there is a way to simplify the process. Van Zandt explained that it would be nice for them to have communications so we fully understand what they expect. NCBVI hopes to use eForce to quantify the impact that programs have on our VR process.

Commissioner Johnson asked how successful employment is measured. Carlos Serván stated that the individual must work for at least 90 days to be successful. NCBVI will continue to maintain contact with the individual. If there are needs after closure NCBVI will continue to provide support. Status 26 is a successful closure. This means the client gets a job and they have been in that job for at least three months.

Howard Compton asked if there are other mitigating circumstances where it would not be a successful closure. Commissioner Johnson stated that it must be competitive employment, which means employment cannot be at a sheltered type of workshop, it must be at least minimum wage employment, and 30 hours per week or greater.

Carlos Serván added that according to RSA, an individual must work in an integrated setting and make at least minimum wage. A homemaker can be a successful closure if homemaker was the client's goal.

Commissioner Jirak asked if the Federal Regulations are open for interpretation as it appears that what some States call successful, others do not. Van Zandt stated that technically States must abide by Federal Regulations. There are some situations where the federal people have said they are taking something under advisement for review and states need to provide what they are thinking to them. The actual Regulation is actually the same as law. The definition of competitive employment is in the Regulation.

Carlos Serván stated that some states do not necessarily provide the best services, but they do successfully close a lot of homemakers in order to get a lot of successful closures. However, these states are not getting their clients a lot of jobs. NCBVI has standards as well. NCBVI counselors try to motivate clients to look for full time jobs of at least 30 hours per week and at least minimum wage in those 30 hours. If you multiply 30 hours times minimum wage it equals \$270 plus per week. If someone is making this much working 10 hours per week, this also counts as successful in our mind. In a way, NCBVI not only follows the Federal Regulations, but we also have our own standards. What really matters is the quality of life the clients have after their case is closed.

Howard Compton stated that he knows for a fact that some states say that people who go to work at companies such as Envision are successful closures and these states are being reimbursed for the rehab. It appears to him that Nebraska is passing up valuable federal dollars by taking the stance that companies such as Envision do not meet the requirements.

Howard suggested that Nebraska revisit the issue and change our minds about successful closure always having to be competitive employment.

Van Zandt stated that NCBVI does get Social Security reimbursement for a lot of individuals that we work with and who achieve competitive employment. Carlos Serván added that Nebraska gets reimbursement from the Social Security Administration, not from a Rehab entity. The Social Security Administration does not care about the status that a client is in. They only care about how much money the person is making. If NCBVI places a client in non-integrated employment and they go off social security benefits, the agency gets reimbursed. This has happened.

Commissioner Walla requested that Van Zandt forward to the commissioners a copy of the Rehab Act and the Regulations.

Robert Newman noted that Envision and Outlook Nebraska are real jobs. NCBVI closes these cases out as successful when the client is working in the office site.

Bob Burns asked what the current state of affairs on the Feds collecting data from States that are successful and sharing it with other States so the wheel is not being reinvented. Also, he wanted to know what State the new head of RSA was from. Van Zandt noted that she was from Washington State. Van Zandt noted that RSA puts on a conference every year on employment, etc. and they talk about how States are helping people get successful employment. National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) is also a good place to hear about what is working well in other States. There are also many Journal articles to read.

This ended the discussion of the State Plan.

#### Public Comment

Amy Buresh stated that in speaking of the Budget and money concerns, she feels this topic fits in as it relates to services for Older Blind. Amy Buresh stated that she has prepared a letter that she would like to read. She read the letter to the Board (printed below).

February 5, 2011

Dr. Pearl Van Zandt PhD, Executive Director

Members of the Board of Commissioners

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

4600 Valley Road, Suite 100

Lincoln, NE 68510

Dear Dr. Van Zandt and Members of the Board:

In the year 2000, a change in Federal grant structures resulted in a significant surplus of funds available to serve the senior blind living in the state of Nebraska. The administration of the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired made what we believe to have been a very appropriate decision, and made a portion of these funds available to non-profit organizations serving the senior blind here in Nebraska, through a grant process. Subsequently, two consumer organizations prepared grant proposals, which after proper review, were eventually approved.

The National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska was one of these two consumer organizations which received approval for a grant at that time. We are very proud of the work we were able to accomplish with those funds, including the founding of a successful computer training program for the senior blind called, "Computer Options," a valuable leadership seminar held for older blind individuals, which assisted the participants in developing highly effective organizational and advocacy skills, and a scholarship program, which gave blind seniors the opportunity to attend a national convention, where they had the opportunity to meet, and learn

from, successful older blind role models. A full accounting of these programs, and the appropriate expenditures related to these programs, was provided to the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired in a timely manner, in keeping with the terms of the grant.

These things having been said, we come to a matter of concern that we believe deserves your attention, as well as that of the Board of Commissioners. As we mentioned at the beginning of this letter, a second grant was approved at or near the time the NFBN received approval of our grant proposal. It is our understanding that this grant was received by the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, a state affiliate of the American Council of the Blind, and was for the intended purpose of creating a state wide system for meeting the critical need for transportation by the senior blind of our state, especially in rural areas. We certainly agree with the decision of the Commission in approving the grant for such a worthwhile project; however, our concern arises out of the fact that after nearly ten years, this project has apparently failed to move forward in any meaningful manner.

While we do not have direct access to the records related to this grant, or its outcome, it is our understanding that a portion of the grant funds were applied to the two existing Nebraska Council of the Blind sponsored taxi coupon programs, "Give a Lift," located in Lincoln, and "Share a Fare," located in Omaha; however, the primary component for which the grant was originally approved, a system of transportation vouchers to be used to assist blind seniors living in rural areas with the cost of hiring drivers, was never actually undertaken. It is our further understanding that a sizable portion of these grant funds is still languishing in an ACBN bank account.

We do not wish to suggest, nor do we believe, that there has been any intentional wrong doing in regard to these funds; however, we believe that incompetence in the management of this grant is highly probable. Given the length of time since the grant was provided to the ACBN, and the apparent lack of progress in reaching the goals of the grant proposal, we believe that a full audit of the grant would be only prudent. In addition, we believe that a period of nearly ten years should have been more than sufficient to have determined the viability of this program, and therefore, any remaining funds, along with the interest collected on these funds during this period, should be returned to the Commission, where they could be utilized to the benefit of the senior blind.

We respectfully request that Dr. Van Zandt, and the Board of Commissioners undertake a full audit of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska's management of this grant and take a more pro-active role in maintaining and managing records for any similar grants or projects in the future, and that the Executive Director insist that the unused portion of the funds, along with any funds utilized for purposes not directly related to the conditions of the grant, be returned immediately to the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. We further ask that, the Executive Director, and the Board of Commissioners; bear in mind the ineffective management of this grant, before embarking on future grants, projects, or partnerships with the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska.

We appreciate your attention to our concerns, and we look forward to the resolution of this apparent problem.

Sincerely,

Amy Buresh, President

National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska

Commissioner Jirak stated that he knew that the NFB was up to something. Jirak noted for the record that he has a lot of respect and admiration for Amy Buresh. Jirak stated that he admits that ACB probably bit off more than they could chew when accepting this grant from NCBVI. However, had she inquired as to the funds instead of reading a letter in a public meeting, the issue could perhaps been resolved. Commissioner Jirak stated when ACB realized they were having problems utilizing the funds, they asked Dr. Van Zandt if ACB could divvy the funds between Give A Lift in Lincoln and Share a Fare in Omaha. Van Zandt responded to ACB stating that this would not be a problem to change the scope of the grant. In this regard, ACB considers this matter to be closed.

Director Van Zandt noted that the ACB did in fact discuss with her what was being done with the funds, why there was money left, how much was left and, what their proposal was. Van Zandt stated that she did approve the proposal. Van Zandt asked if those funds were provided to Give a Lift and Share A Fare. Commissioner Jirak stated that that had been done.

Bob Deaton stated that there were time constraints built into the grant in terms of what was to happen and when. Deaton stated that the project was in fact undertaken and there were strenuous efforts to get the project off the ground. This was a statewide program to provide funding for vouchers for transportation. Bob Deaton stated that he felt the project was good in its scope. There were several areas where programs were actually started. What ACB found out was that the program was under utilized even though people were aware of it. People did not seem to have the mindset in rural areas to use the vouchers, and therefore, it “dried up on the vine.” The concept was good, but it just was not happening. Van Zandt stated for the reasons Bob mentioned she approved ACB’s request to give up on the voucher plan and move those funds into the Lincoln and Omaha programs. Bob Deaton noted that ACB did submit all the reports that were required by the grant.

Howard Compton stated that he would like to address the questions that were brought forth as the newly elected Treasurer in 2007. Howard Compton shared some facts and figures to show what happened with the \$50,000 grant. \$30,000 of the grant was spent on exploratory investigative work to find clients to use the program in rural Nebraska. This money was accounted for. This leaves \$20,000 in reserves that they consistently tried to use with the Independent Living Centers. ACB was turned down on some occasions. Scottsbluff was the last Independent Living Center who accepted money from the Grant. ACBN sent them \$2,500, but because of lack of use \$2,300 was returned to ACBN. This brought their fund back up to about \$20,000. ACBN began to look for ways to re-establish ways to use the funds in rural Nebraska, but they could find no ridership. Therefore, ACBN wrote to Director Pearl Van Zandt asking for permission to redirect the grant money into known successful programs, ie. Give a Lift in Lincoln and Share a Fare in Omaha. About \$16,000 was split between these two programs. This left approximately \$5,000. About \$1,000 of this was used to get the cab operation in Fremont off the ground. ACB still has \$4,000 of this grant left. This money has been reserved and it is dedicated for any rural program or to be distributed equally between Lincoln and Omaha. Howard Compton stated that he hopes his comments address the issues regarding the grant.

Amy Buresh thanked everyone for the clarification as to what happened with the grant money.

Chairperson Johnson stated that she would like to see a copy of the original grant and any reports that were submitted along the way along with any other documentation that is available. This should be forwarded to all commissioners for review. At the May meeting, the commissioners will discuss to see what the next step will be if any.

Kristal Platt stated that one of the issues that came up as it relates to transportation is drivers who could be paid in areas where there were fewer opportunities for cab services. A concern raised by agencies was liability. This would probably take legislative effort on the part of Nebraska cover the liability concerns. Kristal suggested that ACBN and NFBN work together on legislation for this.

A break was taken at 11:00 a.m. The meeting resumed at 11:15 a.m.

#### Report from the Chair

Chairperson Julie Johnson reported that over the holidays she did not have much activity going on. Johnson asked if any of the other commissioners had any information they wished to share.

Commissioner Nancy Oltman reported that she continues to attend the Networking conference calls. These calls are held every other month. During these calls agencies across the Nation discuss happenings on rehabilitation. The calls are very worthwhile.

Commissioner Jim Jirak noted that in May 2010 NCBVI sponsored a conference for Older Blind in Kearney. The ACB values the importance of such conferences. In June 2010 the ACB Board did grant writing to see if they could obtain funds to provide a similar workshop. The grant was submitted, but funding was denied. The reason given for declining the funding was the declining economy and stock market.

## Report from the Executive Director

Van Zandt verbally gave highlights of her report and she thanked the Commissioners for their time. The entire report of the Executive Director is pasted below.

### Executive Director's Report - February 5, 2011

#### Staff Update

Monica Tripp, V.R. Counselor in Omaha, and Lin Cain, Center Apartment Resource Counselor, completed training and moved into their positions on January 24, 2011.

Robert Newman retired on December 31, 2010, after 37 years at NCBVI.

We have hired Jessica Bartenbach to temporarily fill in for Candy Laursen, while Candy continues to be on extended medical leave.

#### Field Services

For the first four months of Federal Fiscal Year 2011 (October 1, 2010 through January 31, 2011), we served 403 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients in all statuses. 12 were closed having achieved their employment goals. 20 were closed without achieving employment. In the Independent Living (IL) track, from October 1 through December 31, 2010, we served 403 clients in all statuses. 26 were closed successfully. 23 were closed without achieving their goals.

## Center Services

Total Full-time Clients served from 1996 through January 2010: 184. 86.5 percent achieved their employment goal. 105 in Competitive Employment; 23 are Home Makers. 36 are still students. 10.5 percent are not working.

Activities this past quarter:

Pumpkin carving

Salad & soup buffet

Thanksgiving Dinner

Collecting toys for Head Start & Salvation Army

Ringing bells for Salvation Army

Holiday Party in December

Ice Skating

Sheldon Museum Round Table Discussion – accessibility of art

Valentine's Day banquet (coming up soon after the Board meeting)

## Deputy Directors and North Platte District

North Platte district staff meeting was held on December 8th and 9th. Low vision training was provided by Curt Wilyard, sales representative for Eschenbach Optical.

Carlos Serván and Don Ward reviewed changes to Nebraska Business Enterprises.

Deanna Jesse attended the NCSAB meeting in November, giving a presentation on the “Pathways to Independence” video series. Response to her presentation was overwhelmingly positive, exceeding our expectations. Since then, she has heard back from several other state agencies and national organizations interested in the series.

The “Pathways to Independence” video series is now in the process of replication and distribution. It will soon be ready for use in the field.

North Platte:

A client was placed as a Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist.

## Nebraska Business Enterprises (NBE)

A quarterly Vendors Committee meeting was held in December. Issues discussed were the status of their retirement plan; new machines that will sell hot sandwiches and accept credit cards for rest areas sites; and future training for blind vendors in Nebraska.

Started conversation with the U.S. Postal Services to expand our vending program to other cities and town in Nebraska.

The vending machines were removed from the State Office Building and the State Capitol. Regarding this issue, Pearl and Carlos met with Carlos Castillo, Director of Administrative Services, on January 24 to build a relationship and improve communication regarding the nature and importance of the NBE program. We also talked about the possibilities to expand business opportunities on other state building beside vending machines.

The National Guard (NG) Camp-Ashland blind manager is looking to hire two clients to work at the cafeteria.

The Hastings NG contract will be expanded until the end of September.

Possibility to expand a cafeteria at the NG Air Base in Lincoln.

First week of January the Technology Committee met and developed a policy regarding steps to take before purchasing a scanner.

January 25-26, Susan Rucker provided training to the VR counselors on Career Planning.

The placement committee met with Kent Taylor to work on developing a 30 second Public Service Announcement (PSA) to be used on television. Kent is working on it and we should have the PSA by March.

eForce is now live for both the VR and IL systems. Dottie is working with all staff to assure things go smoothly. It is working!

Business Office

Bill Brown – Business Manager

Federal Reporting for 2010 Grants including BEP Reporting

Enrichment Foundation Grant and Budget Reporting

Answer Budget questions from Legislative and Governor's Budget offices

Work on restructure of Dave's Duties

Look at space needs in Kearney office

Discuss design of Financial Piece of eForce

Dave Robinson – Personnel Officer

Robert Newman retired December 31, 2010

Monica Tripp completed center training and now occupies Robert Newman's former position.

We have hired Jessica Bartenbach, to temporarily fill in for Candy Laursen, while Candy continues to be on extended medical leave.

Attended pre-audit training on January 26, 2011 and became certified as a pre-auditor. Certain documents prepared for payment are required to be looked at (pre-audited) by another set of eyes. My being certified will give us more flexibility in allowing some agency bills that I currently prepare, to be prepared by other staff, while I take on additional NBE duties.

I'm conducting training with Connie Carlow, showing her how to prepare payments for agency operations bills. Right now, she and other support staff prepare payments for case service bills, but we're getting Connie involved in the preparation of operations bills, so as to accommodate the additional NBE duties that I'm assuming.

Aside from making space for my NBE duties, this move also creates some redundancy that we need, so as to assure that there will be more than one person capable of paying the agency's operations bills. Connie is extremely sharp and eager to learn and will provide us with a lot of peace of mind in the business office, knowing we have some backup in this area.

Kathy Stephens – Administrative Assistant

Assisted with surplus of vending machines from Lincoln State Office Building and State Capitol.

Currently tracking four legislative bills: LB 149, 198, 316, and 337.

End of year TSB vehicle assignments

Client Assistance Program (CAP) – Victoria Rasmussen

One CAP case: Questions about services a client can receive from the Commission while in post-secondary education. I have reviewed the file and visited with the office director and specialist and we have a meeting scheduled with the client.

## Omaha District Update - February 2011

Robert Newman retired with 37 years of service to NCBVI and Blind and Visually Impaired citizens of Nebraska.

Monica Tripp our New VR counselor completed center training on January 21st. She has worked with Dottie Wilmott on our new case management system and is busy meeting the clients on her caseload. I am so pleased to welcome her to Omaha.

Our referrals have been pretty consistent.

We met with the Low Vision Providers that work in the Omaha Metro Area to Network on January 21st. This group meets two times a year.

We are collaborating with services in the Nebraska (Radio Talking Book, Talking Book and Braille Service/Newsline, Lion's Club, Weigel Williamson Center, Outlook Nebraska, Prevent Blindness Nebraska, Representatives from Nebraska Ophthalmology Association and Nebraska Optometric Association, etc) The concern is in larger metro areas people maybe aware of services available to them, but as you go west people need to know of these valuable resources.

We are developing a brochure with a list of services and contact information. These will be distributed statewide to doctor's offices. They will be presented at annual meeting of Ophthalmology and optometrist by the doctors that are apart of this collaboration, stressing the importance of early referral. It is easier to assist in maintain a job than to find a new one.

We have had an increase number of younger referrals. We have split our Teens Adventure in Blindness Skills (TABS) and established a Junior TABS. We have established our schedule for the year for these two groups and have shared our Schedule with area Vision Teachers and the Transition Newsletter. We are meeting with the OPS Vision Teachers on February 2 here at our office.

On February 15th we will be starting our next Senior's Adventure in Independent Living Skills (SAILS) which will run into May.

We believe we have located a camp that will be hosting Project Independence. We are working with Woodman of the World who owns a camp in Nebraska City. We will hold this program the week of July 24th.

We met with Peter Kiewit Corporation and several of their HR Staff on December 9th. The new recruiter has lived in major cities around the country and has networked with VR agencies in the past. He is working to pull together all the Major employers and discuss the value of working with us and the importance of doing OJT and etc.

He is working with staff at Peter Kiewit to identify several areas to provide OJT opportunity. He knows once our consumers are here they will confidently demonstrate their abilities and more employment opportunities will be possible. He was familiar with JAWS/MAGIC, CCTV etc.

We have resumed our Placement Class and it meets on Thursdays. We have about 15 consumers attending.

On January 18th we collaborated with other agencies such as Community Alliance (Community Mental Health Service) Veteran's Administration, etc to host a job fair. We had 30 employers attend. Our staff and clients attended networking with area employers.

This past quarter we have assisted several individuals with maintaining their employment and are now in follow up status (a nurse, mental health therapist, grocery clerk, legal services clerk) We have moved into employed status one individual as a retail manager, Loan Officer and closed one individual as a child care worker). Clients are having more interviews and the overall climate is looking more promising.

End of Executive Director's Report.

Chairperson Johnson inquired about the purpose of the Internships. Van Zandt reported that Jessica works for Specialized Office Services (SOS) which is the temp agency for Nebraska State Government. NCBVI uses SOS in summer for our WAGES employees and once in a while we have used it for other temp workers that we need. Jessica is a blind lady who is doing home teaching for NCBVI on a temporary basis. She works under the supervision of Connie Daly in the Lincoln District. Jessica did receive training as a client in the Center. Jessica is working three days a week.

Ron is currently a client of the Texas Rehab Agency for the Blind. Ron has been in training at the Criss Cole Training Center for the Blind in Texas and he needs to do an internship at an approved agency for structured discovery training. The Texas agency is paying NCBVI to provide additional training to him. Ron is working closely with Jeff Altman who is supervising him. Jeff Altman added that Ron had been a cane travel instructor at Blind, Inc. in Minnesota for a time and then worked as an employee for the Texas Commission for the Blind. Ron went off to do other things for a time and his Orientation and Mobility certification has lapsed. Ron wants to get back into that field of work so he had to go through full immersion training at an approved Center which was the Louisiana Center for the Blind. He completed that in December 2010 and he needed to go to a different approved Center in order to complete his supervision under a National Orientation and Certification Mobility Trainer. Ron will be completing a program of 3 to 5 months depending upon how his performance is. Jeff Altman noted that Ron is doing very well.

Commissioners requested that Executive Director Van Zandt read her December 14, 2010 letter to ACB in response to their November 5, 2010 letter for the record. Van Zandt read the letter and it is below.

December 14, 2010

Mr. Jim Jirak, President

American Council of the Blind of Nebraska

P.O. Box 6506

Omaha, NE 68106-0506

Mr. Jirak:

This letter is in response to the letter dated November 5, 2010 signed by yourself, Glendora Weiland, Shirley C. Allen, Howard B. Compton, Janice Shafer, Terry Brennfoerder, and Barbara Epworth. I do not have the addresses of all the co-signers, so will trust that you will share this with the ACB-N Executive Board. I am sending this letter by email, so that you will have it electronically and will also mail the print letter via United States Postal Service.

I have pasted each numerated issue here, in quotation marks, followed by my response.

“First, any employee of NCBVI, or Commissioner of NCBVI, regardless of affiliation with an advocacy organization can not use their influence and lobby the clients of NCBVI to join or not to join an advocacy organization.”

It is our policy that NCBVI employees are not to attempt to influence or lobby clients to join any particular organization of any type. We do believe that there is much value in the mentoring and other benefits offered by

organizations of blind and visually impaired persons. When individuals are losing vision, they struggle with many issues related to blindness. We do tell clients that meeting with other blind persons, especially those who have become successful members of their communities, can make a big difference in their lives. We bring representatives of ACB and NFB to speak at Center Seminars, group teaching sessions, group programs for transition aged clients, and other settings. Our goal is to inform clients of the tremendous resource which exists in the local, state and national organizations of the blind – primarily the ACB and NFB.

“Second, in the event that charges of any kind are filed against an individual or company in the state of Nebraska, neither NCBVI nor the NCBVI Commissioners Board act positively or negatively until the case and all of the appeals have been adjudicated.”

This item relates to the NCBVI Board decision to ask Outlook Nebraska (ONI) to not participate in an agency sponsored employment workshop and job fair. At the time,

several consumers directly contacted the Chairperson of the NCBVI Board of Commissioners. They informed her of concerns they had about the company. They did tell her that no charges of any kind had been filed at that time. The Board took the action they did because of the direct concerns of several blind persons who worked at ONI.

As a general statement, we (the agency and the board) do not normally know whether any charges have been filed against persons or businesses. This could include OSHA, civil court, criminal court, state or federal equal opportunity commissions, and perhaps other entities. To say that we are to not act “positively or negatively” until the case and all appeals are processed is not logical. In the example with ONI, if in fact there had been charges filed (which was not the case at the time of the decision), a positive

action might have been to include them in the job fair; a negative action might have been to not include them. How does one do neither? Also, some of the larger corporations have frequent issues in court at any given time. We do not know about the wide range of legal issues that might be in process.

“Third, in the event an advocacy organization attempts to cause NCBVI or the NCBVI Commissioners Board to act negatively toward an individual or Nebraska Company, that organization will be censured for a period of six months from presenting its desires in any form to NCBVI or the Commissioners Board.”

NCBVI and its' governing Board of Commissioners are public entities. As such, we are subject to communications from organizations and individuals who wish to communicate with us. This can take the shape of direct in person contact, emails, letters and phone calls, or it can be through the governor's ombudsman's office and other routes. To 'censure' the public from any form of communication with this public agency and our board is not feasible, nor do I believe would it be legal.

The key is to make sure that we respond to any communication in a manner which is respectful of the public's right to let their thoughts be known, and which demonstrates wisdom and fairness in any decision taken.

“Fourth, we think it would be prudent to change the policies regarding employees belonging to advocacy groups. We feel that membership in any advocacy group that lobbies the NCBVI are a conflict of interest.”

Comments were made during the public Board meeting, at which this letter was presented, that spoke to this idea. We do not have a right to prohibit state employees from belonging to advocacy groups. Your presentation raised up the rights of this country we hold dear. State and federal laws address potential conflicts of interest; we abide by those laws.

Beyond this is an issue which I have stated in more than one email to you, Jim. Perhaps you have not shared those with your Executive Board. Even if this agency could prohibit employees from belonging to organizations of the blind, it would result in staff members who are ignorant about blindness and/or who do not care about the blind. That is not to say that one must belong to such a group to be a caring professional; but to prohibit it, even if legal, would be counterproductive. Many of our employees are not members of any such organization. But those who do choose to personally belong to one, have every right to do so. Agencies which claim to be 'neutral' toward blindness organizations are cheating their clients from the chance to expand their personal understanding of their own vision loss.

Finally, since your letter was made part of the public record with the November 6, 2010 NCBVI Board Meeting Minutes, I am copying this response to our Board of Commissioners. I request that they include this response with the Minutes of the upcoming meeting, February 5, 2011, so that it to will become public record.

Respectfully Yours,

Dr. Pearl Van Zandt

Executive Director

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Our Mission:

Empowering Blind Individuals, Promoting Opportunities, and Building Belief in the Blind.

Cc: NCBVI Board of Commissioners

Commissioner Jirak stated that he will publish the letter of response from Dr. Pearl Van Zandt in the ACB newsletter.

## Old Business

### NFB Newsline Update

Jamie Forbis emailed the NFB-Newsline® Update to the Board members, Pearl Van Zandt and Kathy Stephens. The Report is as follows:

#### Nebraska NFB-Newsline®

February 1, 2011

Jamie K. Forbis, Out Reach Coordinator

Welcome to 2011! This quarter started off with 1,474 subscribers of NFB-Newsline® Nebraska. Twelve subscribers were added in November, only 3 in December and another 12 in January. This brings the total of subscribers to 1,489 as of February 1, 2011. As Nebraska incorporates a new area code; I thought it would be interesting to see how many subscribers are currently in the two area codes. 1,161 subscribers live in the 402 area code and only 328 live in the 308 area code.

Now onto more stats. In November 971 calls were made to Newsline for a total of 17,055 minutes and the average call lasted 17.56 minutes. The state newspapers were accessed 3,718 times, the local channel 137 times and TV listings 375 times. In December; 1,022 calls were made for a total of 16,402 minutes with the average call lasting 16.05 minutes. The state newspapers were accessed 3,744 times in December, with the local channel accessed 113 times and the TV listings 515 times. A whopping 22,776 minutes were spent reading NFB-Newsline® in January! These minutes were accumulated by 1,322 calls being made. These calls lasted on average 17.22 minutes. The state newspapers, local channel and TV listings were accessed 4,206, 183 and 532 times respectively. During

November, December and January the percentage of local calls was consistent at 45.62%.

The next section explains, in detail, the new features released for NFB-Newsline® this quarter. This section was taken from an article I recently wrote for the NFB of Nebraska's biannual newsletter; The Nebraska Independent. More information on these new features can be found at [www.nfbnewslineonline.org](http://www.nfbnewslineonline.org).

NFB-NEWSLINE® now offers subscribers the ability to independently access job classifieds and apply for open positions. With this groundbreaking job-listings feature, which was announced in early December, blind and print-disabled people will be able to search for job openings that match their education, skills, and interests. Subscribers can easily search through hundreds of thousands of job listings from all across the country using NFB-Newsline® on the phone. With content from a national job classifieds provider, NFB-NEWSLINE® subscribers can conduct searches for job openings in over fifty categories and if desired, can narrow the search to look for certain keywords within the listings. Subscribers can also request that a particular job listing be sent to them via e-mail by pressing "pound nine" when hearing the listing. The e-mail will contain the listing as well as a link that will provide a Web page with the position's application form.

Announced in late December is yet another way to level the playing field for the blind.

Presenting the NFB-NEWSLINE® NLS DTB Downloader. This breakthrough access method will allow subscribers to easily download their favorite publications to the book cartridges used in the new Digital Talking Book (DTB) players provided to patrons by NLS. The new NLS Digital Talking Book player is now the standard player being released by NLS and allows for unprecedented flexibility in the book-reading experience. With this new access method, subscribers download the content in a file format called DAISY III directly to the cartridges that are inserted into the new NLS digital talking-book player.

With all these new features comes more questions by subscribers. I've kept busy returning phone calls and emails and answering questions. I've also been busy learning ways to promote NFB-Newsline® more widely through the World Wide Web. Due to busy schedules Dr. Van Zandt and I haven't gotten a chance to meet and discuss the phone line for Newsline, but I hope to accomplish this soon.

Each year NFB-Newsline® grows and expands and I can't wait to see what new features will be added in 2011. Until next time stay warm and keep reading! As always let me know if you have any questions. Thank you!

## CAP Complaints or Issues

Director Van Zandt reported that there is currently one Client Assistant Program (CAP) case in process. The complaint relates to what services a client might receive from NCBVI while they are in post secondary school. Van Zandt noted that she does not know any other specifics of the case since it is currently in process.

Chairperson Johnson stated that she would take the comment from Paul Stebbens at this time. Paul stated that he is the Station Manager for the Radio Talking Book in Nebraska. They have been serving Nebraska for over 36 years on an over the air type basis. Paul wants everyone to know that they are now available to the Nation and the World via the World Wide Web. This is available at [www.rtbs.org](http://www.rtbs.org). No password is needed and it is open to everyone.

12:00 – Lunch

A lunch break was taken at 12:00 noon. The meeting resumed at 12:45 p.m.

## Budget Update

Director Van Zandt reported that we are in the Budget Session. The Legislature of Nebraska is currently reviewing all agency budget requests. The Governor has come out with his recommendations and next it goes to the Appropriations Committee for consideration, hearings and then to the Legislature as a whole. After this process is complete, agencies find out what their budget will be for the next two State fiscal years.

NCBVI requested \$835,295 in State funding per year for Fiscal Year 2012 and 2013. The Governor recommended no budget cuts for NCBVI. A budget hearing has not yet been scheduled but Van Zandt will keep the commissioners informed of the date and time.

Commissioner Walla inquired as to when the ARRA funding concludes. Van Zandt reported that this ends at the end of September 2011. This means that all projects that we have using stimulus funding must be completed by then. In that regard, Jamie Forbis who is an Orientation Counselor in North Platte will go back to part-time work. Van Zandt noted that the client load in North Platte will be fine with a part-time person.

Chairperson Johnson inquired as to where NCBVI is with staffing. Van Zandt noted that Sarah Stewart who is a VR Counselor in Kearney has announced her resignation as of April 15, 2011. It is possible that she will leave sooner. The position will be posted internally to see if there is any interest. If we have no internal applicants the position will be posted externally. It is hopeful to have someone start in the position at the time Sarah leaves. NCBVI is also creating a position of Program Technology Manager. We do not yet have this position; however the funding is in the budget request.

Update on Nebraska Business Enterprise Program (Randolph/Sheppard Vending)

Carlos Serván reported that Nebraska Business Enterprise lost its contract for the State Office Building and the State Capitol regarding the vending machines. Van Zandt and he met with Carlos Castillo, Director of Administrative Services, to discuss the spirit of the law regarding giving

priority to blind people for operating vending machines. The law as it is written states that they will give us priority as long as we are competitive with other entities. Serván noted that it is difficult to be competitive with large corporations such as Pepsi. Van Zandt and he pointed out the benefit to the State to contract with NBE. Administrative Services is willing to work with us and inform us of other vending business opportunities. One of the opportunities is the Grand Island Law Enforcement Training Center. NCBVI put in a bid at that location a few months ago, but all bids they received were rejected. The State was looking for services that no one mentioned in their bids.

Carlos stated that he is working on getting more vending opportunities at Post Offices across Nebraska. Carlos noted that NCBVI realizes that the only way the vending program can grow is to be competitive. Carlos stated that NCBVI has purchased a mixed snack vending machine. This machine will serve hot and cold items. This machine will be placed in Grand Island and we will monitor the results. He is looking into vending opportunities at Department of Roads, and the National Guard Air Base in Lincoln.

## New Business

Travel/Meeting Participation for 2011 by Commissioners - (IE: NCSAB, State Staff Meeting, National and State Consumer Convention Attendance, etc.)

Van Zandt reported dates of some of the upcoming conferences and training for 2011.

NCBVI State Staff Meeting will be April 5-7.

NCSAB will meet in Bethesda, MD April 13-15

## National and State Consumer Conventions

NFB National, July 3-8 in Orlando, FL

ACB National, July 8-17 in Reno, NV

For the State Staff meeting, Gary Wunder will give the keynote on April 5, Gary is from the University of Columbia. He will talk about what vocational rehab has meant in his life. Jodi Pfarr will present on Bridges out of Poverty for a full day on April 6. There will also be a Commission Forum and feedback on the videos Pathways to Independence. It was noted that the videos will be placed on the NCBVI website. After this happens, an email will be sent to the Commissioners, staff, list serve and other organizations as requested.

The commissioners are to inform Kathy Stephens of their plans for attending and let her know of any travel or lodging needs they may have.

NCSAB Bethesda – There were no requests from Commissioner to attend this event.

The Commissioner Guidelines were read for the record and are posted below.

## Consumer Convention Attendance Guidelines

Recognizing that the Commissioners serving on the Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired serve those people in the state who are blind; it is important for board members to be in touch with the people we

serve. Attendance at consumer conventions, whenever possible, is one way to measure the pulse of the blind Nebraskans. While not required, it is a great listening opportunity when commissioners attend the state ACB and NFB conventions. It is also important for board members to attend the national conventions of these groups to understand the philosophy of each organization, as well as how these organizations affect policy in each state.

#### PROPOSAL:

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.
5. Pay of per diems will be excluded.

Commissioner Johnson requested approval for funding to attend the ACB National Convention. Commissioner Hansen requested approval for funding to attend the NFB National Convention.

It was noted that funding will be limited to \$700. Commissioner Walla moved to approve both requests. Commissioner Oltman seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all were in favor of the motion.

### Permanent Affixing of Future Commission Meetings

Commissioner Jirak noted that this was his agenda item. His thought process is that the Board would know specifically when they are going to meet. After discussion it was the consensus to leave the date open with the months of February, May, August and November.

### Procedure for Conducting NCBVI Commission Board Business between Meetings

A procedure for conducting NCBVI Commission Board Business between Quarterly Meetings was read. It was noted that this Procedure was taken from the Open Meeting Act.

If an issue that requires formal action, or a vote of the Board, comes up between NCBVI Quarterly Board meetings, an emergency meeting should be called. When it is necessary to hold an emergency meeting without reasonable notice, the nature of the emergency shall be stated in the minutes and any formal action taken in such meeting shall pertain only to the emergency. Such emergency meetings may be held by means of electronic or telecommunication equipment. Complete minutes of such emergency meetings specifying the nature of the emergency and any formal action taken at the meeting shall be made available to the public by no later than the end of the next regular business day.

Reference: Open Meeting Act, 84-1411 (5)

## 2011 Staff Survey

The 2011 Staff Survey was discussed. It was decided to leave the questions in the survey the same as they were in 2010. The survey is to be disseminated to staff on April 1, 2011. It will be open for three weeks, closing at the end of the day on April 22, 2011. Van Zandt is to send an email to staff informing them of when the staff survey is available. Another email is to go out to staff towards the end of the three weeks reminding staff to complete it if they have not already done so.

## Public Comment

Shane Buresh reported that NFBN has LB 149 at the Unicameral. The hearing on the Bill is scheduled for February 8 at 1:30 p.m. The following constitutes the reasons for this bill and the purposes which are sought to be accomplished thereby: Creates the Blind Persons Literacy Rights and Education Act. The Act requires that blind and visually impaired teachers in Nebraska must possess competence by certification in the National Blindness Professional Certification Board or the State Department of Education by the 2012 school year.

Shane requested that the Commission write a letter in support of LB149 and in particular a letter talking about the importance of Braille.

Mark Bulger stated that he has a concern in regard to the request. Mark asked the Board if they have read the Bill or if they have been involved in the Bill. Mark stated that he believes that the Board needs to have collaboration with the educators before they make a statement on the Bill. The Board should speak with others involved in order that they understand the Bill.

After discussion, Commissioner Hansen moved that the Board write a letter endorsing the use of Braille. Commissioner Oltman seconded the motion. Voting yes: Hansen, Oltman; Voting No: Walla; Abstain: Jirak, Johnson. Motion Failed.

NBPCB Certification: Discussion of what is NBPCB? The associated costs? Benefits? Requirements? And staff time involved conducting the certification process?

The National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB) is a National non-profit entity. The NBPCB will provide approval to orientation centers for the blind for the purpose of providing immersion and training related to certification and continuing education. The primary focus of approval is that the orientation center be consumer driven, (i.e., is consumer-based in its model of rehabilitation). To be consumer-driven, a center must not only collaborate with consumer organizations of the blind, but maintain concerted efforts towards establishing Structured Discovery methods and an empowering philosophy about training. The NBPCB has an approval plan which is designed to determine whether an orientation center meets standards which make it a consumer-based program.

The NBPCB does not have any affiliation with any other organization. Director Van Zandt noted that she sits on the Board and so does Jeff Altman of the NCBVI staff. They are appointed Board members. The Board does certify Travel teachers and Braille teachers and agencies.

On the NCBVI website it states: Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired has been approved by the National Blindness Professional Certification Board (NBPCB). This approval is granted only to those agencies that meet strict standards for high quality services, uphold a positive philosophy of blindness and high expectations, adhere to Structured Discovery instructional methodologies, and are dedicated to assuring genuine Informed Choice for all consumers.

This means that NCBVI Training Center has gone through an assessment by this Board. This assessment is not parallel to any other certification.

Each training center must apply to the NBPCB for approval status. At least one member of the board of directors of the NBPCB and a second person designated by the board member will make a site visit to the orientation center to perform evaluation duties. The team will conduct an evaluation of the program based on the agency approval evaluation checklist. An orientation center that meets these standards will be granted approved status. Continued approval is contingent upon follow up evaluation by the NBPCB on an annual basis. An agency that is not granted approval will be provided with the written report which shows the center's areas for needed imp Center Approval Evaluation.

The evaluator will make a site visit to the orientation center, touring all areas of the facility and living quarters. The evaluator will interview the director and will meet with staff and students. The NBPCB board evaluator will write a narrative response that addresses each of the points listed in the evaluation checklist. Based on that response, the evaluator will provide a percentage score for each of the six sections of the evaluation.

An orientation center must achieve 80% on each of the six sections in order to be granted approval.

The fees that are posted on the NBPCB website are not correct. The fees are currently under assessment. Van Zandt is on a Task Force to look at the fees. NCBVI originally paid \$7,500 for the initial assessment which took place approximately three years ago. There have not been any annual fees billed since that time; nor will there be. There will most likely be a three to five year re-certification or re-approval process and this will probably incur a fee. The cost for this fee has not yet been determined. The goal is to keep the cost low, but cover the cost it takes for a Board to do an assessment.

No staff time is involved in this process other than the time it takes to give a Center tour. In terms of benefits, because NCBVI is an approved Center, we were able to get the intern we currently have. The Texas Agency for the Blind is paying NCBVI \$3,500 to \$4,000 per month for his training. Therefore, NCBVI benefits from the expertise of the national Board, we are benefitting by bringing in an intern who has been a good resource for us. Van Zandt stated that the reason she is on the Board is that consumers can benefit when they go to a Training Center, they know what they will be getting.

Jeff Altman noted that there have been questions about what other types of certification are available. Most of the other certifications are more of a general type of certification. The NBPCB certification process is the only one specifically addressing the consumer-driven and structured discovery aspects of blindness skills training. It helps NCBVI maintain its quality training services by maintaining the types of things necessary to pass the certification.

Commissioner Hansen stated that it is his understanding the NCBVI's certification runs out this year. Director Van Zandt stated that there are about three state agencies who are up for renewal, but because the NBPCB is in the process of figuring out the renewal, it will not expire. It was the consensus that a decision regarding recertification does not need to be made at this time. Van Zandt stated that the process of the recertification is being assessed by the NBPCB Board to decide how to proceed with renewals. Van Zandt stated that when this gets decided she will provide this information to the Commissioners and then they can decide what they wish to do.

#### Announcement and Location of November Meeting Date

The November meeting will be held on November 19, 2011 in Lincoln, NE at a location to be determined by Director Van Zandt. The Focus Topic will be the Center Apartment Resource Position. A tour of the Center Apartments will be given after the meeting.

#### Public Comments

Howard Compton asked Van Zandt how she got on the NBPCB Board. Van Zandt stated that she was asked to be on the Board by Dr. Edward Bell, Director of the Professional Development and research Institute on Blindness at Louisiana State University.

Mark Bulger noted that in regard to structured discovery he feels that Nebraska should be proud of their innovations and hard work and dedication to make Nebraska one of the best known places to get structured discovery training in the Country.

As he understands it, structured discovery is an alternative method which is opposite of traditional. Mark stated that he feels that Nebraska should also offer its clients more traditional methods of training. For example, the term immersion, he would also like to hear terms such as “being safe travelers” and “comfortable in your environment.” Mark stated that he feels Nebraskans need to know that there are choices out there and they need to be offered choices. Mark suggested that Nebraska have a dual certification in order to have the best of both worlds.

Amy Mason stated that she does not believe that dual certification would be in our best interest because it seems that structured discovery is very different methodology than traditional training.

Nancy Flearl noted that NCBVI does use structured discovery as a method of training, but it is not the only method we use. There are many people that we work with that we do not use sleep shades with, we meet with them individually in their home or they come in for group teachings. NCBVI individualizes the training to maximize their independence and to help them feel comfortable and confident. Nancy added that NCBVI uses a variety of methods of training.

Bob Deaton added that NCBVI does not discourage the use of vision for those who have some functional vision. We will use the methods of training that work best for the client.

## Final Announcements

The next NCBVI Commission Board meeting will be held on Saturday, May 7 in Norfolk, Nebraska. The commissioners will conduct the evaluation of the Executive Director at this meeting.

The August Commission Board meeting will be held on August 6 in York, Nebraska. The Focus Topic will be Partnerships.

## Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Stephens

Administrative Assistant

NCBVI

Julie Johnson

Chairman

NCBVI Board of Commissioners