

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired

Public Meeting of the Board of Commissioners

Holiday Inn Express Hotel & Suites

920 South 20 Street

Norfolk, NE

May 14, 2011

Approved Minutes

9:00 Call to order

Welcome and Introductions, Announcements concerning public comments, meeting agendas, open meeting act, proof of publication, recordings and lunch arrangements

Call to Order and Introductions:

Julie Johnson, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:05 a.m. and she welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Announcements Concerning Public Comments, Meeting Recordings, Lunch Arrangements and other Logistics:

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. Lunch will be on your own.

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 and NFB Newslines.

Commissioner Walla read the agenda items and introductions were made.

Commissioners Present: Mike Hansen, Designee of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska, Lincoln; Nancy Oltman, Hastings; Julie Johnson, Chairperson, York; Darrell Walla, Omaha; Jim Jirak, Vice Chairperson, Designee of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, Omaha.

NCBVI Staff Present: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director; Carlos Servàn, Deputy Director VR; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director IL; Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant; Connie Carlow, VR Technician; John Schmitt, VR Counselor.

Public Present: Dan Bird, NCBVI Driver and meeting recorder; Thomas Colbert and Patricia Colbert.

ACB: Mark Bulger, Howard Compton, Janis Compton, , Janette Hancock, Rosemary Hroche, Paulette Monthei, Ann Pelikan, Katie Redinbaugh, Kenda Slavin & Glennie Weiland.

9:05 Announcement of public comment protocol

Chairperson Johnson read the Public Comment Protocol which goes in effect as of today's meeting. The Protocol will be available at the meetings in both braille and print. The Protocol is stated below:

Public Comment Period Protocol

1. There will be no public comments outside of public comment time. If a Commissioner or the Executive Director has a question about the current topic and someone in attendance can answer it, that person may be called on for information. However the person may only speak to the question at hand and must be called on to speak.

2. Names will be taken at the beginning of the public comment time. Those individuals will get a turn to speak in the order the names were received. At the end of that series of speakers, names will again be asked of those wishing to speak. This process will continue until the public comment time has elapsed.

3. Persons who raise their hand to speak will not be recognized. Names should be given verbally.

4. Only the recognized person may speak. The speaker will address the commissioners from the podium or table designated for this purpose.

5. If the Executive Director or Commissioners have questions for the recognized speaker, discussion may proceed with only that speaker. No one else from the public may make comments at this time.

6. If individuals from the public attending the meeting insist on speaking during a time when they are not recognized after being warned, they will be asked to leave. Likewise if there is any other behavior the Chairperson deems inappropriate, i.e. excessive shouting, threats, obscenities etc. that person will be asked to leave.

Approve February 2011 meeting minutes

Commissioner Oltman moved to approve the Minutes of the February 5, 2011 Commission Board Meeting. Commissioner Walla seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all were in favor of the motion.

Executive Director Evaluation

The Commissioners reviewed and discussed the results of the 2011 NCBVI Staff Survey. The survey is conducted to assist the Board of Commissioners to ensure employee satisfaction, Executive Director Performance and excellent consumer services.

Commissioner Oltman explained why the Executive Director Evaluation is conducted in a public meeting. When NCBVI first became a Commission, the evaluation of the Executive Director was held in Executive Session, but later they found out that it was to be held in a Public meeting. The change was made at this time.

Director Van Zandt added that it is part of the Public Meeting law. Also, at an Independent Agency Director's meeting this was discussed by an Assistant Attorney General.

The survey questions are rated on a score of 1 to 5.

The executive director believes that it is respectable to be blind.

Overall Score: 4.67

The executive director listens to concerns from staff.

Overall Score 3.97

The executive director responds to concerns from staff.

Overall Score: 3.75

The executive director listens to concerns from consumers.

Overall Score: 4.46

The executive director responds to concerns from consumers.

Overall Score: 4.38

The executive director identifies priorities.

Overall Score: 3.96

The executive director ensures that identified priorities become completed tasks.

Overall Score: 3.79

The executive director negotiates creatively to hire quality staff.

Overall Score: 3.70

The executive director negotiates creatively to fund exemplary service delivery.

Overall Score: 3.96

The executive director delivers progressive steps toward true equality for blind Nebraskans.

Overall Score: 4.04

Overall Average Score for questions 1 to 10: 4.07

If you could change one thing at NCBVI, what would it be?

Changing Center Staff job descriptions and make them program specialist.

Adequate training when new software or changes in NIS or E-Force. There was not adequate training when we went with E-Force, which has caused great frustration with staff.

Allow the Orientation Counselors and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to have more discretion when it comes to provision of services and equipment to clients.

Center Staff positions upgraded to Program Specialists. We are all specialists in our specific positions. We provide information, teaching and training for all agency clients and also for staff.

Closer monitoring of staff. Some staff come to work whenever they feel like it (keep hours that are convenient only to them) and are not monitored.

Co-workers who abuse leave are released from employment.

Consistency throughout the agency and in all offices.

Have the agency contact the news media more often to publish news articles on the success of clients, vendors, employees, and to promote educating the public.

I would change the level of communication because when it comes to the goals, priorities, and objectives I know where to look to find them, but I don't necessarily understand where those ideas came from. We as staff gets reports on almost everything, but a report, a table, or a bunch of numbers don't always mean a lot to me. I find it better if it was communicated what they really mean on a level that everyone understands. I suppose the level of communication of information and the background information would be nice. It would also be nice if there was a section on the staff survey that allowed staff to make additional comments without having to go through the staff suggestion box.

I would like to see our Executive Director spend a day or so a few times a year visiting NCBVI offices, in addition to district staff meetings. Also, for this survey next year, it would help to have a box to mark unknown, as not all staff have day to day access to our director and it's not fair to rate the director on areas that we do not have an opportunity to observe.

I would like to see that Center staff becomes program specialists since they are specialized in whatever area they teach. They also get calls from all over the State with questions about their area of expertise. In addition, I think it is important for staff to evaluate their supervisors.

Evaluations are meant for improvement, and supervisors, no matter how good they are, still have some areas where they can improve.

I would like to see training opportunities at consumer conventions treated as legitimate educational opportunities, especially when the training gained is not readily available elsewhere. If there is a preference for other training opportunities, I think staff should be aware of the level of funding and compensation training opportunities will qualify for.

Increase number of technology and counseling positions.

Nothing at the moment.

Provide support staff for all offices at least on a half time basis.

To run all districts without in house supervisors. Placing supervision for all under the central administration staff like is currently being done in the North Platte District. Also, more equitable treatment of all staff and elimination of preferential treatment.

The following discussion was held regarding the comments made.

Executive Director Van Zandt noted that the eForce training provided by Dottie Wilmott and the team of supervisors was very extensive.

The training did not consist of just one or two sessions, but staff was trained individually. On-going training is available as it is requested. Director Van Zandt added that Dottie did a truly excellent job with the eForce training. Dottie is available for questions on a daily basis. If anyone needs additional training they should let her know.

Bob Deaton added that he agrees with Director Van Zandt. Bob noted that some people take to technology well and others do not. Where people need more training, we individualize their training. A specialist was also brought in to work with blind staff in using JAWS with eForce. Bob Deaton noted that using eForce with Independent Living (IL) is more recent.

Director Van Zandt reported that NCBVI is currently in the process of updating staff to Word 2010. This is being done on a gradual basis throughout the year. Supervisors are asking what type of training they would like, if any. Some staff has requested to attend a one-day class in Word 2010. NCBVI has also contracted with a blind individual who is very tech savvy, to sit with individuals and train them with or without JAWS.

Carlos Serván stated that he echoes what has already been stated by Director Van Zandt and Bob Deaton. Carlos added that an individual from Accessibility.net was contracted with to work with JAWS users and eForce training. Carlos noted that eForce is a case management system. Staff who work with clients use eForce.

Director Van Zandt noted that it is the plan to link eForce to fiscal management within the next few years.

The Commissioners discussed the issue of allowing the Orientation Counselors and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to have more discretion when it comes to provision of services and equipment to clients.

Carlos Servàn reported that currently the supervisor approves all of the expenditures not as a means for staff to get permission for the purchase, but as a method of monitoring the expenditure. As humans, we all make errors and the supervisor is overseeing the purchase. Sometimes the supervisor may question a purchase, but this is not all the time. NCBVI is being more discrete about expensive equipment. There are some cases where a \$7,000 notetaker is being requested and there has not been enough evaluation to determine if the client is ready to start using this equipment. Perhaps the client could use a Netbook which is much less expensive. Carlos noted that in the past NCBVI was very lenient in the purchase of equipment and this became a budget issue.

Bob Deaton added that he feels that NCBVI has achieved more consistency in the purchase of equipment for clients. When there was greater discretion, there was also wider interpretation as to what type of equipment was appropriate.

Chairperson Johnson inquired as to the current NCBVI policy for purchasing equipment. If a college freshman is requesting a \$7,000 notetaker, what is the process?

Nancy Flearl reported that when the Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) is written, they factor in the rehab technology. They also do technology assessments. From there, the Technology Specialist, the consumer and the counselor is part of the assessment.

Once the equipment is identified, the client will write a letter formally requesting the equipment and this is made part of their record. The Technology Team has established technology guidelines that NCBVI staff follows which allows for consistency. In regard to the notetaker, it is required that the client does a reading test with Braille and they must meet a certain level of reading speed and fluency in Braille before we would look at purchasing a Braille notetaker. The client needs to have the skills to use the equipment.

The Commissioners discussed the comment regarding Center staff positions being reclassified from Orientation Counselor to Program Specialist.

Chairperson Johnson asked if this comment was an incentive for a pay raise. Director Van Zandt stated that she was unsure; she would have to ask staff.

Director Van Zandt noted that a Program Specialist must have an area of expertise. The NBE Counselor position was recently reclassified to Program Specialist. Director Van Zandt added that any State employee may request a desk audit review of their position from State Personnel. Position classifications are ultimately decided by State Personnel.

Chairperson Johnson requested that NCBVI look at the job descriptions for Center Orientation Counselor and Program Specialist to see where the Center staff most closely fits.

The Commissioners discussed the comment regarding closer monitoring of staff. Some staff come to work whenever they feel like it (keep hours that are convenient only to them) and are not monitored.

Executive Director Van Zandt stated that NCBVI field staff is out of the office a lot and they must work flexible schedules in order to accommodate clients. The supervisors monitor their work schedules. NCBVI does have accountability needs that must be met.

The Commissioners discussed the comment regarding Director Van Zandt visiting the offices more frequently.

Executive Director Van Zandt stated that she does attend the District Office meetings once a year and she does need to work on getting to the offices more frequently. This has definitely been a goal of hers, but work needs sometime prohibit her from traveling to the offices as often as she would like.

Commissioner Hansen suggested that Pearl get a driver to drive her around to the other offices so she can still get other work done while she is in travel mode.

Commissioner Walla suggested that when staff makes a comment they talk to their supervisor about specific personnel issues.

The Commissioners discussed the comment regarding having consistency in the offices.

Executive Director Van Zandt noted that the Deputy Directors and the District Supervisors meet regularly to set policy and procedure for NCBVI.

The Commissioners discussed the comment regarding this survey for next year having a box to mark unknown, as not all staff have day to day access to our director and it's not fair to rate the director on areas that we do not have an opportunity to observe.

It was noted that staff do not have to answer every question in the survey. A box for "unknown" could also be incorporated into the survey. This issue will be address before the 2012 State Survey is sent out.

The Commissioners discussed the comment regarding staff evaluating their supervisors.

Director Van Zandt stated that she could explore this issue to see what could be incorporated. Commissioner Hansen added that perhaps the supervisor evaluations could parallel the procedure that the Board uses to evaluate the Executive Director. The Board requested that NCBVI explore this issue and report back to them.

The Commissioners discussed the comment regarding training opportunities at consumer conventions treated as legitimate educational opportunities.

Commissioner Hansen inquired as to when NCBVI sends a staff person to training, not a consumer convention, is the funding level different than what is provided when attending a consumer convention.

Director Van Zandt stated that when a staff person wishes to attend training they need to get permission to attend. Sometimes a supervisor sees training that they feel someone needs to attend. In these cases, NCBVI does provide full funding, but this is usually one or two people going to training and bringing back the information. Director Van Zandt noted that NCBVI does provide support for many training opportunities. With a consumer convention, because many staff members want to attend, NCBVI has going to a partial support. This year NCBVI is providing support for staff up to \$700 for attendance at National Conventions. Director Van Zandt noted that she does get full support for attendance at consumer conventions, but she attends both the ACB Convention and NFB Convention each year and she feels that as Executive Director she needs to attend. Director Van Zandt noted that staff is allowed to use work time for attending the national conventions. Director Van Zandt stated that management staff has spent a lot of time figuring out what they feel is the best method for support.

The Commissioners discussed the comment regarding increasing the number of technology and counseling positions.

Director Van Zandt noted that this is a budget/funding issue. Van Zandt noted that developing a Program Manager of Technology position is in the plan.

The Commissioners discussed the comment regarding providing support staff for all offices at least on a half time basis.

Director Van Zandt reported that Sherrie Bruegman, VR Technician in the North Platte office, is currently working in the Kearny office one day per week. Connie Carlow, VR Technician in the Norfolk office, and Josie

Rodriguez, VR Technician in the Scottsbluff office, are also available to provide support to the Kearney office.

The Commissioners discussed the comment regarding running all districts without in house supervisors. Placing supervision for all under the central administration staff like is currently being done in the North Platte District.

Commissioner Hansen noted that it would be difficult to have the Deputy Directors supervise all offices given all the other duties they have. Commissioner Hansen stated that having the Deputy Directors supervise the North Platte District should provide consistency in those offices.

Director Van Zandt noted that the Deputy Directors and District Supervisors communicate ongoing regarding field services and they have meetings that also include the Director of the Center, the Business Manager and herself.

Director Van Zandt stated that it is her understanding that some staff feel that we need to get a District Supervisor back in the North Platte district and others feel that all supervisor positions should be eliminated and the Deputy Directors should cover everything. Director Van Zandt stated that the Deputy Directors have a lot of other duties. Van Zandt stated that there could possibly be a Field Supervisor position that would cover everyone, but she personally feels that the direct supervision that District Supervisors current offer to staff is amazing.

Commissioner Johnson inquired as to what the long term thinking is for the District Supervisor position for the North Platte District.

Director Van Zandt stated that her long term thinking is that NCBVI does need an on-site supervisor for the North Platte District. There is a lot of mentoring and coaching work that can be completed by being on site.

The Commissioners discussed the comment regarding having the agency contact the news media more often to publish news articles on the success of clients, vendors, employees, and to promote educating the public.

Chairperson Johnson agreed that this is a great idea and staff should proceed to get this going.

The Commissioners discussed the comment regarding eliminating preferential treatment.

Director Van Zandt reported that she does follow-up with personnel issues when she is aware of what they are. Chairperson Johnson stated that without specifics, the Board is unable to respond.

What is the best feature about working at NCBVI?

Our Team.

Co-workers are helpful and supportive.

Commitment to clients, a genuine belief in blind people, the attitude that it is respectable to be blind, and good teamwork.

Constantly learning.

Coworkers.

Flexibility, making a difference, something new every day.

Good team, with a positive philosophy.

Helping clients to succeed and providing a positive example of how to be blind while living a productive and fulfilling life.

I enjoy working at NCBVI because of the level of team support we have.

My team!

Other staff, team concept, clients.

Passion for improving opportunities for blind people.

Seeing consumers succeed.

The dedication staff shows toward clients.

The opportunity to change the lives of blind Nebraskan's both young and old.

The variety and challenges that come with each new day.

The variety of things we do at work.

The work environment. Everyone is dedicated and shares in the same goals. This common denominator creates pleasant work relationships.

We have management that care for us as individuals.

Working toward the common goal of independence and employment for blind people.

Working with the clients. The team culture felt throughout the entire agency.

The Board of Commissioners discussed the comments from staff relating to what they like about working for NCBVI. Chairperson Johnson noted that 11 comments related to supportive team environment, 9 comments related to genuine belief in blind people, 4 comments related to constant learning and variety and one comment related to flexibility.

Commissioner Hansen suggested that the Board respond to the staff and thank everyone for their participation in the staff survey.

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

Commissioner Hansen moved to give the Executive Director a 1.5% raise contingent upon if other managerial staff receives a 1.5% raise from the Governor. It was noted that the Executive Director deserves a higher raise, but they are honoring the budget concerns of everyone. Commissioner Walla 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.

Executive Director Time Sheet Certification Submission

Commissioner Oltman moved to continue with the current method being used for the Director to submit her timesheet to the Board. The Director submits her timesheet 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 Hansen seconded the motion.

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

Public Comment

Patricia Colbert: Patricia stated that on January 13 she was classified as legally blind when she went for her eye appointment. Patricia added that she and her husband do not have insurance since they have been out of work for a while. Patricia stated that she called NCBVI, the Lions Club, and many different agencies inquiring about any assistance they could possibly provide to her. Patricia stated she received a letter from NCBVI stating they could not help her in any way at all. Darrel, who she has been working with made a phone call to check the situation out. Patricia stated she called the office back but does not remember who she talked to because she has talked to so many people over the last few months. When Darrell found out that NCBVI totally rejected her, he stated he would follow up because he knew NCBVI could help. Patricia stated she was not looking for a freebee and would be happy to pay. Patricia noted that John Schmitt was eventually sent to her house and she was informed that NCBVI could help her. Patricia said her question is, does NCBVI automatically say no, do they wait and check the situation out, or does the Board try to find someone to help them.

Director Van Zandt thanked Patricia for bringing the concern. Director Van Zandt stated that misunderstandings are sometimes a communication issue. Van Zandt stated that if a person has a valid need and qualifies for NCBVI services, we want to provide those services. We hope that this sort of thing does not happen and that we do reach the people that need the services.

Patricia stated that when she called back, they finally sent John Schmitt out to see her. Director Van Zandt stated that she is glad that she finally got connected. Patricia stated that she was seeking to have surgery performed on her eyes so she could continue working.

She was specifically looking for assistance with a surgery. Her doctor told her that without surgery she will eventually be totally blind. When she called the office, the lady answering the phone told her that she may be legally blind now, but if you have the service of surgery, you will not be blind anymore.

Note from John Schmitt:

I spoke with Mrs. Colbert this morning about her comments at the Board meeting on Saturday. She had numerous contacts/letters she went over with me, but could not find anything relating to our agency turning her down for services. She had been rejected by HHS for services, and had contacted the League of Human Dignity, the Area Agency on Aging, and others, so I believe she got NCBVI mixed up with HHS. In the end, she admitted that she could not find anything that indicates anything other than that she HAS been accepted for services by us. I hope this clears things up.

John C. Schmitt, M.S.Ed.

Rehabilitation Counselor II

Nebraska Commission for the

Blind and Visually Impaired

Bob Deaton:

Bob stated he wanted to comment on the discussion of the North Platte District. Bob and Carlos discussed this issue with the North Platte District staff in December and he mentioned to them that there was a perception that North Platte needs to have an on-site supervisor. One thing that made it possible to supervise the North Platte District from a distance is the fact that we have experienced staff in that District and staff were doing well.

The reaction from the staff in the North Platte District was who had that perception and it was not coming from them. Bob informed them that it was his perception. The North Platte District staff appears to be satisfied with the way things are.

Paulette Monthei: Paulette stated that she has a question regarding training and communication to the different offices from the management level down to the case managers and counselors. Has NCBVI considered a policy academy that would work with the management team to have other liaisons to the policy academy within the offices who are well informed and involved with the policy making process so when a district manager is out of the office so there is other staff knowledgeable in the issues.

Director Van Zandt stated the NCBVI is kind of a flat organization. The way it works now is if a counselor has a question about policy or procedures, they can call their supervisor, they can call a counselor in the next office, they can call a deputy director, or another staff member. NCBVI also places policies and procedures on the W: drive of the computer which all staff have access to.

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

Report from the Executive Director

Director Van Zandt addressed the question of physical restoration which is the terminology that is used in the Rehab Act. If an individual is legally blind they are eligible for physical restoration. In a case where the person is employed and they are losing their vision, if the surgery will help them stay employed, they are absolutely eligible for services. Director Van Zandt noted that there is also a general Voc. Rehab agency and people often times get NCBVI confused with these other agencies. NCBVI does provide surgeries. To say that after the surgery you will not be blind, is not something that is relevant. The point is that they will be able to work and be employed and keep their employment or become employed if they are currently not employed. It is not relevant that the surgery will in fact make them not be blind. NCBVI will close their case as successfully employed, which is the goal.

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 – May 14, 2011

State Staff Meeting, held in April, was an excellent training and team building event. Additional funding was sought, including \$4,900 from a Department of Labor grant which was approved but needs formal approval from Governor Heineman. We also received funds from the federal Technical Assistance and Continuing Education (TACE). It was good to have three Commissioners attend parts of the meeting.

Agency Approval Renewal cost is \$3000 every three years; amount we received from training the Orientation and Mobility intern from Texas was \$12,000. We were chosen to provide the training because we are an Approved Agency through the National Blindness Professional Certification Board.

Carlos Serván and I met with the Director of State Administrative Services to discuss the loss of our vending sites at state buildings in Lincoln, and to explore options for better communication and partnership in the future.

A day-long training on the SEARCH Project, was held in Grand Island. Representing the Commission were myself, Sarah Stewart, Denise Johnston-Rauterkus, and Connie Daly. People from hospitals and businesses, Voc Rehab, and the schools involved attended.

The Transition Team held a final meeting. More of the Opening Doors handbook will be printed and distributed. Future trainings may be held, but most work on transition from here forward will be done by communication between our staff and educators or other stakeholders, as well as with parents, families and the students themselves.

I also provided a panel presentation at the Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired, as a part of their Spring educators' conference.

I presented and held a Public Forum at the ACB-N State Convention. A lot of very good comments were made at the forum.

Other meetings attended included Independent Agency Directors Meeting, Dept. of Education Transition Advisory Committee, National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (I continue as Treasurer for NCSAB), American Foundation for the Blind Program Committee, National Blindness Professional Certification Board (conference call), a facilitated meeting of NCBVI, Voc Rehab, and leaders of the SILC (Statewide Independent Living Council). I also met with Friends of the Commission and the Nebraska Blind Vendors Committee.

The Director and Park Ranger from Homestead National Monument, Beatrice, contacted me and came to the Center to present the agency with a plaque. 'Homestead' garnered national praise and an award for the work they did to make the park fully accessible. Center Staff, clients and other agency representatives provided the ideas and suggestions which made that achievement possible. The plaque now hangs in the Center's Dining Room.

During the past quarter, I completed and submitted our report to RSA on the In-Service Training Grant and completed a draft of the State Plan for Federal Fiscal Year 2012.

Staff Update

Sherrie continues providing support to the Kearney office once per week.

We interviewed for the Kearney counselor position. We offered the job to the top candidate but she decided to take another offer closer to her new home town. The second top candidate wanted at least \$60,000 per year as her current job was paying her that much. The third top candidate decided not to move from California to Kearney, as she relies on public transportation. We reopened the job and the closing date was May 2.

After the second set of interviews, we were happy to offer the position to an excellent candidate, Cristal Grado, who did accept the position. Ms. Grado is bilingual (Spanish and English), has a bachelor's degree in family studies, and has been working at Kearney Youth Rehabilitation and Treatment Center. She also has experience working with Children and Family Services. Cristal will start her Center training Monday June 6.

Nebraska Center for the Blind

Total Full-time Clients served from 1996 through April 2010: 185. 86.5 percent achieved their employment goal: 106 Competitive Employment; 23 Homemakers; 36 are still students; 10.5 percent are not working.

Center Activities this past quarter:

Make-up and grooming, Valentine's buffet, Mocktail party to practice networking, Lied Center concert, picnic, Morrill Hall, Wizard of Oz play by the clients, ACB-N State Convention.

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.

Deputy Directors and North Platte District

WAGES: We have 8 applications from clients. We want to start having all participants to get part time training at the center, as a result this year we will have five participants attending the center for a portion of the program.

Five older blind clients attended the North Platte group training FYI (For Your Independence) in April.

Production of the "Pathways to Independence" video series has concluded. DVD copies have been distributed to each office. Orders were received for 25 copies of the "Pathways to Independence" video series from state rehabilitation agencies in Hawaii and Alabama. The 2-DVD set is selling at \$25 per set. The videos are also available at our website: www.NCBVI.ne.gov, for viewing and download.

Bob Deaton made a presentation to about 180 people, about our services, at the JAM in Gering May 5th. JAM (Joint Agency Meeting) is a public forum for the Panhandle area. Scottsbluff staff also had a booth for distributing information about blindness and the Commission.

Lincoln District Activity Report – Connie Daly

This quarter we had people get jobs as a Mental Health Counselor, Environmental Services, Food service worker, Massage Therapist, HHS Chore Provider, and Self Employed day care provider. We set up an internship for a client at Canine Design. The Lincoln District helped arrange an internship for an Omaha client at Kenexa and also helped enroll a center client in green construction training. The Lincoln District also facilitated network training for 2 center clients. We are working to develop internships at People's Health Clinic and HyVee stores. We made a joint contact with the general Vocational Rehabilitation agency and TMCO. TMCO is a manufacturing company in Lincoln.

We had two sessions of GATE group training and have been unable to reschedule the third session because of illness of participants. We have brought on a temporary Orientation Counselor to help during Candy Laursen's medical leave. The intern was working 20 hours a week and we have increased it to 30 hours so that she can work with people outside of Lincoln.

Omaha District Update – Nancy Flearl

We have had a busy quarter. Several staff and clients attended the ACBN convention at the end of April.

Our group teaching sessions for older blind individuals will be wrapping up in May. We started out strong but have had a number of people drop out. This has been true in Norfolk as Glenn had planned on 4 of his consumers attending the North Platte session in April, but all backed out. We will continue to monitor the need and hold one in Norfolk as needed.

We have staff and consumers alike that are busy preparing for our summer transition programs.

We now have 10 younger students working in group teaching on IL skills that are also interested in our summer program Project Independence. It should make for a wonderful group this year.

Referrals remain pretty steady. We have had several referrals from area school districts that are also encouraging.

Several people have found employment. I had reported one person at our last quarterly meeting that was hired by a major employer, but this did not work out for several reasons. But this same person will be starting a full time job on May 2 at Marriott Reservations. We have had someone hired as a Customer Service Rep at a rural telemarketing firm; another as a housekeeper for a retirement community; and a person hired at the VA as a Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist. Several others we are closing as maintaining their employment.

We have a couple of consumers completing their training at the Nebraska Center for the Blind and are now in the job search. People are getting a lot of interviews and we have had some great contacts in doing job development. I hope to have more exciting placements to share in August. It is encouraging to have so much activity.

We have worked in partnership with area resources that provide vision services to blind and visually impaired and Outlook Nebraska to develop a Coalition of Vision Resources for Iowa and Nebraska. It is recognized that as you move west the services that are available become more limited.

People often do not know of resources that can assist them in maintaining their independence and employment. Outlook Nebraska provided funding for a resource booklet. Eye doctors and specialists across the state will be discussing this with staff to better refer and connect individuals with needed services. They will encourage these resources to come in and do a lunch and learn about specific services. In meeting with the presidents of the Optometric Association and Academy of Eye Physicians and Surgeons, they did not realize that early referrals make a difference in maintaining employment and older individuals remaining in their home. This is all about working in partnership.

Nebraska Business Enterprises

Don Ward had a meeting with the Kearney Post Master office the week of April 18, and we were offered to provide vending at that location. We will move our machines there soon. Carlos Serván and a blind vendor met with the Air Guard in Lincoln to explore the possibility of providing cafeteria services there one weekend per month, twelve months per year. The State Office building in Omaha and the Department of Roads may open for bid soon, anywhere from one to three months; and we plan to bid on those buildings.

Client Assistance Program (CAP) – Victoria Rasmussen

I have had one CAP case during this time. This individual requested NCBVI assist with an upgrade for JAWS to assist with his self-employment. He had contacted the Commission to see if they would help with this financially and he was told probably not but that he should reapply for the official discussion and determination. He contacted CAP to see if it was something the Commission could do or should do? In the process I gave a financial resource who could possibly help pay for this. His request was granted through Modest Needs and did not need to reapply with the Commission.

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Placement Committee

The Committee is working on a PSA (public service announcement) promoting the Commission for the Blind for television. It has been completed and will be viewed by the Placement Committee to offer any ideas of suggestions before the final copy.

Business Office

Kathy Stephens – Administrative Assistant

Beginning to work on yearly inventory (bar code scanning).

Assisting Pearl with NCSAB Post Conference invoicing activities.

Completed registrations and hotel arrangements for ACBN Convention in Columbus

Beginning to work on arrangements for National ACB and NFB Conventions.

Worked with Nebraska.gov to implement the on-line staff survey for 2011.

Attended Pre-Audit Authorization mandatory training.

Assisted with the State of Nebraska Food Drive.

Dave Robinson – Personnel Officer

Completed training Connie Carlow in the paying of agency operations bills. We'll have her prepare a small amount of bills, on an ongoing basis, so she'll keep the training on her mind and be prepared to step in, for any extended absences by Dave.

Sarah Stewart resigned from the agency, effective April 12, 2011. Her position in Kearney was advertised and closed on May 8, 2011.

Open enrollment for the plan year July 1, 2011 to June 30, 2012 is in progress and is scheduled to end May 20, 2011. Each health plan's cost increased slightly and all plans provide more coverage, with the onset of health insurance reform.

Chairperson Johnson inquired as to what the requirement is for CEU hours for the CVRCB. Director Van Zandt noted that the CVRCB is set up in State Statute that provides for the training that a counselor who works with blind and visually impaired Nebraskans must have. Counselors can become certified through a process, which includes the four months training for staff and the on-going continuing education hours. Every three years the counselors must submit a recertification and show that they have completed at least 60 CEU's for the three year period. The idea is that training and learning should be ongoing.

Chairperson Johnson inquired about the surveys that clients fill out when they complete training. Chairperson Johnson noted that the commissioners currently receive the surveys completed by clients that complete Center training and she would also like to receive the surveys from clients at case closure from this point forward.

Director Van Zandt noted that the interviews are done by an external source. The results are forwarded to Carlos Servàn. These surveys will also be forwarded to the commissioners and Director Van Zandt.

The commissioners requested that the names be deleted from the surveys before they are forwarded to them.

Chairperson Johnson inquired as to if there were any plans to conduct another State wide needs assessment. Director Van Zandt noted NCBVI has completed two needs assessments. Director Van Zandt noted that while it could be done again, they are quite expensive and while they may spotlight some issues, she does not believe they provide a lot of information. Director Van Zandt noted that she is in favor of research and she does believe that it is valuable, but she does not plan to conduct a needs assessment for the next few years. The Rehab Act wants Comprehensive Needs Assessments every three years. NCBVI does not conduct them just every three years, but continuously throughout every three years. This is what has been written in the State Plan and it has been approved.

Bob Deaton noted that the positive thing about conducting Needs Assessments is that they are a powerful tool to take to the Legislature because it is a survey conducted by an outside party. Otherwise, what we have actually learned through them has not been terribly significant.

Report from the Chairperson

Chairperson Johnson reported on her activities as follows:

Reviewed different types of parliamentary procedures.

Learning about Kindle for PC.

Reviewed the ACB Grant materials.

Read the 2012 State Plan and the revisions.

Involved with the VIPS group in York.

Developed the new Public Comment Protocol.

Reviewed RSA documents.

Reviewed VR and OIB stats.

Reviewed financial documents.

Watched all the Pathways to Independence videos.

Read the Center Newsletter. Chairperson Johnson encouraged the other commissioners to contact Fatos Floyd about their submission of an article for the newsletter.

Read Staff Survey and compiled results.

Work with the local Lions Club in York.

Making plans to attend the ACB National Convention in July.

Intended to attend the State Staff meeting, but was unable to fit it into her schedule.

Chairperson Johnson invited the other commissioners to report on their activities.

Commissioner Hansen reported that he, Commissioner Walla and Commissioner Oltman attended the State Staff meeting.

Commissioner Jirak reported that he and Mark Bulgar were invited to the Center for the Blind in Lincoln to talk about the ACB philosophy. It was noted that Mark Bulgar gave a dynamic presentation.

Director Van Zandt noted that the Center will plan to have a representative from ACB and NFB come and present to clients each year about their organization.

A lunch break was taken at 12:05 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 1:05 p.m.

Old Business

Budget Update

Bill Brown, Business Manager, submitted a report to the commissioners for their information and review. The report noted that NCBVI is still operating on the last of our Fiscal 2010 Basic support grant and we have spent most of our State fund match for Grant year 2011. We are within a few thousand dollars of having spent all of our FY 2011 State funds and most of the match has been accomplished for our Federal Fiscal year 2011 Grant. NCBVI does not yet know the amount of the Federal Fiscal year 2011 Grant because that information has not yet been released. Looks like it could be a little smaller than our 2010 regular appropriation from the feds but we have not received official word. NCBVI is in good shape to keep the numbers in balance.

NCBVI will again carryover a major portion of our 2011 federal grant into 2012. Social Security reimbursements have brought in over \$400,000 this federal fiscal year and that is a positive sign. Short term, and over the next 3 to 4 years, our financial condition appears to be pretty stable. We will see what happens with proposed federal grant cuts. Significant federal grant cuts could make our 3-4 year Carryover Scenario a 1-2 year scenario pretty quickly.

As for the state budget, the Appropriations Committee has proposed a funding level equal to the request we made in September which was only a level request. We feel very good about that proposal as many state agencies are being pinched severely. Our Senior Blind state funds remain level where they were last year for both 2012 and 2013. In all, NCBVI's

financial condition is pretty healthy. The final results will be made known by the Unicameral by Tuesday, May 17, 2011.

Discuss and act on the State Plan 2012

The State Plan 2012 and revisions were previously forwarded to the Board of Commissioners for their review. The commissioners reported that they have read the State Plan 2012 and the revisions, and they are comfortable with the way it reads. The public will be sending comments regarding the State Plan 2012 to the Board and Director Van Zandt for their consideration. At this time, there will be a final review of the State Plan with possible minor revisions. Director Van Zandt noted that the State Plan 2012 is due by July 1, 2011. The approved State Plan 2012 will be placed on the NCBVI Website.

Commissioner Hansen moved to approve the draft State Plan 2012 as is with allowance for grammatical corrections and possible adjustments. Commissioner Walla seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all were in favor of the motion.

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®

May 9, 2011

Jamie K. Forbis, Outreach Coordinator

Welcome to spring! Not much has happened as far as new features or presentations with NFB-Newsline® this quarter, but boy oh boy do I have some hot stats to tell you about!

February was the coldest month this quarter with only 5 new registrations. With 1,489 subscribers a total of 18,187 minutes were spent reading Newsline content. The majority of those minutes were spent reading the state newspapers, with that channel accessed 4,126 times. The TV listings channel comes in second at 501 accesses and in third place is the local channel with 95 accesses. The average call lasted 15.65 minutes and out of 1,161 calls 40.48% were made through the local access number.

Marching On... Seven new subscribers were added in March bringing the total number of subscribers to 1496! The subscribers read 18,042 minutes of content with the state newspapers accessed the most. The state newspapers were accessed 4,481 times with TV listings coming in second once again with 471 and the local channel trailing behind with 133 accesses. Subscribers spend on average 15.33 minutes on the phone, and 44.68 of the calls were made using the local access number.

April showers bring May flowers, and April's stats are just pouring in! Fourteen subscribers were added to Nebraska NFB-Newsline® in April! Wow! This brings the total up to just over 1,500 at 1,510! At of all those readers 20,089 minutes were spent reading content on Newsline. The

average call lasted 17.98 minutes and 45.48% was through the local access number. The state newspapers were still accessed the most at 4,414. TV listings were accessed 395 times and the local channel was accessed 131 times.

May I continue with more wonderful stats? Already this month 5 new subscribers have been added, 10,285 minutes have been read and the local access number was used 51% of the time! It's still early, so we'll see how the rest of the month adds up.

As the sun heats up and the days get longer subscribers tend to read less, so I'll be interested to see how the current 1,515 subscribers do. Enjoy the warm weather and happy reading!

Client Assistance Program complaints or issues

There has been one CAP case during the past quarter. This individual requested NCBVI assist with an upgrade for JAWS to assist with his self-employment. He had contacted the Commission to see if they would help with this financially and he was told probably not but that he should reapply for the official discussion and determination. He contacted CAP to see if it was something the Commission could do or should do? In the process I gave a financial resource who could possibly help pay for this. His request was granted through Modest Needs and did not need to reapply with the Commission.

The website is www.modestneeds.org

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THOSE WHO WOULD OTHERWISE FALL BETWEEN THE CRACKS. NOT DESIGNED TO BE AN ONGOING SOURCE OF SUPPORT FOR PEOPLE WHO NEED LONG-TERM FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE. 4 TYPES OF GRANTS AVAILABLE: 1) SELF-SUFFICIENCY 2) NEW EMPLOYMENT 3) INDEPENDENT LIVING AND 4) NON-PROFIT GRANTS. SEE WEBSITE FOR MORE INFORMATION.

Update on Randolph-Sheppard Program Bids

Carlos Servàn reported NCBVI is looking into getting vending in Post Offices across the State. Don Ward, NBE Program Specialist, had a meeting with the Kearney Post Master office the week of April 18, and we were offered such location and will move our machine there soon. Carlos and a blind vendor met with the Air Guard in Lincoln to see the possibility to provide cafeteria services there one weekend per month, twelve months per year.

The State Department of Administrative Services has informed us that the State Office building in Omaha and the Department of Roads will be open for bid in the near future and NCBVI does plan to bid on those locations.

On September 30 and October 1, 2011 State NBE training will be held in Omaha. The ACB and NFB will be invited to attend. Carlos Servàn noted that he feels this will be a very good training.

Public Comment

Paulette Monthei: Paulette stated that her question relates to the State Plan and a question regarding if the consumer satisfaction surveys that are submitted. Paulette asked if there are surveys done for people who are exiting the system.

Chairperson Johnson stated that the surveys that she is asking for are when the cases are closed regardless of the status of the closure. This includes successful and unsuccessful closures.

Paulette stated her next question relates to the Needs Assessment which is a part of the State Plan Process. It was mentioned that NCBVI has done the Comprehensive Needs Assessment from Mississippi State in the past. Because the law does not stipulate how the Needs Assessment needs to be completed, one thing that NCBVI may take from the National Independent Living Council is that their agencies do peer reviews. Therefore, the cost for the assessment would be less from these other entities.

Mark Bulger: Mark commented regarding the certification from the National Blind Professional Certification Board, (NBPCB). To start with, Mark went on record to state that he believes that certifications are a wonderful thing and we need to provide reasonable assurances to our clients that we are maintaining high standards. That being said, in an ideal world he would like for NCBVI to be able to hire specialist that have earned degrees at University levels in the areas of Rehabilitative or Vocational Counseling and O & M Instruction.

Mark recognized that currently in Nebraska we do not have a college or university that offers that type of certification or training, and subsequently, as he sees it, part of the reason for the certification from the National Blind Professional Certification Board is so that we can “grow our own.” While this may be the best we have now, he would strive for more. As blind people, we have specialized needs and require services that are unique from the disabled community. Mark stated that his desire is at some point to set the bar a little higher and establish a vision for the future.

Chairperson Johnson stated that he had a question about clarity. The National Blind Professional Certification Board and the college courses to prepare Vocational Rehabilitation counselors. She sees as two separate things.

Mark stated that they are separate today. NCBVI is substituting the ability to hire specialized people with undergraduate or masters degrees for Vocational Rehabilitation counselors and instead suggestion that the Nebraska Center for the Blind can self-certify and self-train. Mark stated that while he supports any type of certification that enhances services he does not want this to be a long term solution to getting the best possible people.

Chairperson Johnson stated to clarify the CVRCB certificate is different than the National Blind Professional Certification Board certificate that is up for renewal.

Director Van Zandt stated that the agency approval from the National Blind Professional Certification Board is specific to a consumer oriented and generated structured discovery focus residential training center. This same Board approves and certifies O & M instructors and Braille Specialists. The

Board does not do anything regarding Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. It is the State of Nebraska Law that is specific to the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. Director Van Zandt noted that NCBVI has a very good training program.

Mark asked if NCBVI is getting as much from the Certification Board as we are giving. Director Van Zandt stated that because NCBVI has the agency approval, we were able to be the site for a Texas individual to receive training. NCBVI benefitted financially by receiving about \$12,000 from that agency and in addition we got the value of what the person added while he was here because he was not just a student but he assisted in the Center with our travel instructor.

Director Van Zandt noted that NCBVI's priority is to train clients and to train Nebraskans. However, we have the capacity to train our own staff as we hire them and we have the capacity when someone comes from another state or inquiries from another state to assist.

Mark asked if the certification is mostly tied to the Orientation Center. Director Van Zandt stated that the National Blind Professional Certification Board certification is tied to the Center. The State Certification of VR Counselors is different.

Bob Deaton: Bob responded to Mark's question regarding what we can do to help develop an academic program for producing the type of professionals we are looking for. Bob stated that while he thinks this would be a fine thing, he does not believe that we will ever make much progress in this area because people would need assurance that there would be jobs available for them when they exit the program. In Nebraska there may be one or two job openings in the course of a year.

Paulette Monthei: Paulette spoke regarding the counselor training issue. The reality is that when Rehabilitation Counselors go through the University training it is a general list approach that they are receiving. Paulette stated that CEU training hours target opportunities through organizations for specific training.

New Business

Discuss and act on review of ACBN grant

Per the request of the Board of Commissioners, numerous documents relating the ACBN grant were forwarded to the commissioners for their review. These documents documented how the grant funds were used by ACBN.

Commissioner Hansen reported that the NFB greatly appreciated ACB's explanation of how the funds were used. There is no doubt that the funds were used correctly. The Commission Board stated they were satisfied with the information they received and that they consider the matter closed.

Commissioner Jirak requested that Commissioner Hansen as the NFB designee communicate to NFBN President Amy Buresh a concern that the ACB membership has spoken to him about. When the presentation was made by Amy Buresh in February 2011, it caught many ACB members by surprise. Having said this, knowingly or unknowingly, Amy Buresh in her letter implicated alleged mismanagement of the handling the funds of the grant and in his view she called into question the incompetency of the Executive Board of the ACB and indirectly the NCBVI Director and her

staff. Recognizing that everyone is entitled to their own opinion, there is a term in the law that could be used to describe what was done and that term is slander. Amy Buresh may not have meant anything by it, but this is how some of the ACB membership took it. Commissioner Jirak stated that going forward, using the resources of the laws that are vested to corporations in Nebraska, the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska will, if need be, take necessary action to clear our good name.

Commissioner Hansen stated that he does not believe that ACB-N needs to do anything because they have done a spectacular job in showing that everything that did transpire was done absolutely correctly.

Discuss and act on parliamentary procedure for NCBVI Board meetings

Commissioner Hansen noted that he has been researching the NCBVI adopting a form of parliamentary procedures. He suggested NCBVI adopt Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 10th Edition for the Board to follow as a guideline. Commissioner Hansen recommended that the Board not establish By-laws, but handle items through Resolutions as this is what the State Attorney General Office recommended to him.

After brief discussion, Commissioner Jirak moved to adopt Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 10th Edition as the official set of Parliamentary Procedures for the NCBVI to follow. Commissioner Walla seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all were in favor of the motion.

Kathy Stephens will check on the price of getting copies of Robert's Rules of Order, Newly Revised, 10th Edition in several different formats. A copy will be obtained for each commissioner as requested.

Discuss and act on allowing submissions from the public of agenda items

Chairperson Johnson stated that in order to obtain a “no surprises” concept for NCBVI Commission Board meetings, she is suggesting that the public be given the opportunity to request an item be placed on the agenda of the Commission Board meeting. Letters to the Board, etc. should be submitted in advance when possible. This would allow for the Commissioners and Executive Director to come to the meeting prepared to speak about the item. This would also ensure that the item be given adequate time for discussion on the agenda. Chairperson Johnson noted that this procedure would not eliminate the Public Comment periods during the meeting.

All commissioners agreed to this new procedure by consensus. It was decided that a call for submission of agenda items would be sent out as a part of the announcement of the Commission Board meeting. A note about submission of agenda items will also be made at the end of the Minutes of Commission Board meetings. It was noted that just because an item is submitted, it does not mean that it will automatically be placed on the agenda. This will depend on the relevance of the item and the number of items submitted.

Discuss and act on audio/video streaming of board meetings

Commissioner Jirak had suggested that NCBVI look into streaming of Board meetings over the internet similar to what they did with the recent ACB-N convention.

Commissioner Hansen asked what the benefit of this would be as individuals would not be able to interact with the Board with audio/video streaming. The Board meetings are already recorded and the audio is placed on the NCBVI website.

Kathy Stephens reported that she and Bill Brown did meeting with Dean Jeffery from the Office of the CIO to discuss a Microsoft Office program called Live Meeting. This is a process wherein individuals are sent an email invitation to join the meeting. On the date and time of the meeting, they click the "Join Meeting" link and are connected to the meeting. Kathy and Fatos Floyd tested "Live Meeting" earlier in the week to ensure that it is accessible, which it was. Additional testing and research is needed and additional information will follow.

Director Van Zandt noted that whatever we do needs to be in compliance with 508 Regulation and Public Meeting Law. Therefore, additional research is needed.

Public comment

Paulette Monthei: Paulette stated that regarding the streaming of the videos there is nothing in the Act that prohibits this and some States are using it. Usually, the way they are doing it is they are doing live feeds from District Offices or Universities. Paulette recommends, since we are looking at Section 508 requirements the 504 requirements and the Public Meeting requirements, which does require audio and video since we serve deaf/blind clients, we would also need a cart reporter to type as the meeting goes. Paulette recommends that we contact the Disability Business Technical Assistance Center because they do webinars all over the nation and they may have ideas for NCBVI to utilize.

Howard Compton: Howard stated first and foremost he wants to extend a heartfelt gratitude to Bob Deaton and Dr. Pearl Van Zandt for their assistance through the possibility of the ACB-N audit. Secondly, regarding Robert's Rules of Order, if you Google Robert's Rules of Order there is a website out there where you have the ability to type in your question and the parliamentarians from England, France, the United States, etc., will answer your question.

Lastly, he would like a clarification regarding allowing submissions from the public for agenda items. Howard asked if NCBVI is going to restrict any and all verbal communications during the meetings because they are written.

Chairperson Johnson stated "not at all." There will be no change in the Public Comment section.

It was decided to add a note about submissions at the end of the Minutes of the meetings.

Final Announcements

The next NCBVI Commission Board meeting will be Saturday, August 6, 2011 in York, Nebraska. The Focus Topic will be Partnerships with the Commission for the Blind.

Adjourn – The meeting adjourned at 3:02 p.m.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the August 6, 2011 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

Chairman

NCBVI Board of Commissioners