

Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired
Public Meeting
Saturday, February 7, 2015
4600 Valley Road, Room 4A
Lincoln, NE

APPROVED MINUTES

Mike Hansen, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. The meeting began with introductions.

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

Commission staff present: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant, Lincoln; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director, Lincoln; Carlos Servan, Deputy Director, Lincoln; Carol Jenkins, Center Supervisor, Lincoln; Connie Daly, Lincoln District Supervisor; Wes Majerus, Program Manager-Technology, Lincoln; Bill Brown, Business Manager, Lincoln.

Public Present: Hubert Paulsen, meeting recorder; Sharon Brennfoerder, Terry Brennfoerder, Zach Haye, Barbara Epworth, Carol Gibilisco, Mark Bulger, Jeff Altman, Karen Anderson, Kayde Rieken, Nancy Oltman, Alli Laschanzky, Staci Cloyd, Bryan Freeman, David Shapiro, Kenda Slavin, Jonathan Sailors, Tammy Freitag, Glennie Weiland, Gail Crowe.

It was noted that public comments are welcome during the set Public Comment Periods regarding the agenda items or other relevant issues. Hubert Paulsen recorded the meeting and the recordings are available on the website. There will be no lunch served as the meeting is scheduled to adjourn at 12:25 p.m.

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

Approval of November 1st minutes

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

Focus Topic: WIOA – Reorganization and Impacts to Service Delivery

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) is the new Act amending the Workforce Act and the Rehabilitation Act which are the laws that NCBVI currently works under. WIOA was enacted July 22, 2014. It provides opportunities to advance a customer-centered workforce investment system driven by the needs of job seekers and employers, to support strong regional economies, and to provide individuals with pathways to the middle class and beyond.

There is much that is still not known about implementation of WIOA, at the federal and state levels. Regulations were to have been available mid-January, but will not be out until several months from now. Even Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in DC is waiting for those regulations before providing guidance to state agencies.

In Spring 2015, the Departments of Labor and Education plan to concurrently publish five Notices of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRMs) to implement WIOA. One of these will be a joint NPRM, involving jointly administered activities including unified and combined state plans, performance, and aspects of the workforce one-stop system. Another NPRM will implement the remaining provisions of Title I (Workforce Development Activities) and Title III (Wagner-Peyser) that are administered by the Department of Labor. Three additional NPRMs involve Department of Education programs, including one implementing Title II (Adult Education and Literacy) and two implementing the Title IV Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 of WIOA. These five NPRMs will be published in the Federal Register and posted on www.regulations.gov, where public comments can be submitted following publication. The U.S. Departments of Labor and Education will analyze the public comments, and anticipate issuing Final Rules implementing WIOA in early 2016.

Because many provisions of WIOA go into effect July 1, 2015, the Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration (ETA) also will issue operating guidance in Spring 2015 to support implementation. In addition, ETA intends to issue targeted guidance documents in the Spring, accompanied by technical assistance activities. Once issued, the guidance can be accessed at www.doleta.gov/WIOA/.

To achieve successful implementation and the full vision of WIOA, ETA will continue to consult with the workforce system and strongly advises states and local areas to begin planning and taking action to prepare to implement WIOA immediately.

The Department of Labor Employment and Training Administration released a 13-part webcast series called "WIOA 101". This webcast series is available on Workforce3One at <https://www.workforce3one.org/view/3001432333369774359> and can be viewed at any time. The webcasts are focused on describing the basic aspects of the law and can be thought of as one form of a "Plain Language WIOA." This link is also posted on www.doleta.gov/wioa, along with additional educational resources on WIOA. This is a great way to get a better understanding of the new law and some of the next steps.

The State Unified Plan under WIOA is due in March of 2016. The core partners are Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Adult Family Literacy, Wagner-Peyser, and Department of Labor or "Workforce". All are required to be a part of the Plan. Additional partners can participate in the plan but are not required. Federal Regulations and additional guidance will be forthcoming. Initial work on Nebraska's Unified Plan is likely to begin late spring or early summer 2015. In many states, Department of Labor considers the Combined or General VR Agency to be the required partner. In Nebraska, as you know, the General VR agency is within Nebraska Department of Education. As with other states having a separate VR agency for the blind, we are usually not appointed to the workforce boards. Most have never been involved with a unified state plan.

Nationally, there is work to develop a community of practice of state VR agencies to work on implementation strategies around WIOA. They are still working on the details of what this collaborative approach would involve. Last November, the fall meetings of the Council of State Agencies for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) focused on the new law. Because so much was unknown, the time was spent generating discussion, questions and concerns. Representatives of RSA were present; they pledged to take our issues back and to incorporate into the process of promulgating regulations.

NCBVI continues to be involved with the Nebraska Workforce system in several ways. At the state level, the workforce board (NWIB) will be disbanded when Governor Ricketts appoints a new WIOA State Board. Van Zandt attended the January NWIB meeting and is now on the mailing list for future meetings. There is even more emphasis than before to make the state and local area boards smaller and to increase the proportion of members representing businesses. This may make it more difficult for us to be appointed to the Boards. Van Zandt intends to attend all meetings of the existing and new state board. Whether or not the Governor views us as a required partner, we will stay informed and will participate to the extent possible.

There are three "local" workforce boards: Omaha, Lincoln, and Greater Nebraska. To some extent, things are business as usual for now. The changes that are in the works will be codified when the regulations come out. Until then, much is left to speculation. Nancy Flearl is on the Workforce Board (WIB) in Omaha. Each member is on a committee; she was assigned to the Youth Council. There are quarterly Board meetings and one hour monthly youth council meetings. They travel to resources in the community for youth to access, education, employment and resources/support for addressing barriers to their success. The Omaha Youth Council works with all the high schools to learn what is being offered for students that are not looking to pursue post-secondary degrees and want a vocational track, to help develop career paths

through internships and on-the-job-training (OJT); working closely with area businesses and the schools.

Jan Brandt serves on the Greater Nebraska WIB. At the last meeting it was stated that Board membership will be reduced. It will continue to have a business majority, and it will include VR; youth and community-based organizations, as well as transportation and housing organizations, will no longer be mandated. There are changes being announced which seem contrary to WIOA, but with no regulations yet, it is difficult to know. Here are some of the changes discussed by the Greater Nebraska WIB: WIOA prioritizes services to Out-of-School Youth (a hold has been placed on enrollments for in-school youth). It requires that at least 75 percent of funds available to local areas be spent on workforce investment services for out-of-school youth. It places a new priority on work-based learning by providing that at least 20 percent of local youth formula funds be used for work experiences such as summer jobs, pre-apprenticeship training, on-the-job training and internships that have academic and occupational education as a component. Title IV requires at least 15 percent of the funding to state vocational rehabilitation agencies to provide pre-employment transition services to support youth with disabilities in transition from secondary school to post-secondary school and employment. WIOA expands the in-school youth eligibility to include low-income individuals ages 14 to 21 who are English language learners and those who have a disability, improves Services to Students with Disabilities, increases individuals with disabilities' access to high-quality workforce services to prepare them for competitive integrated employment, requires better employer engagement and promotes physical and programmatic accessibility to employment and training services for individuals with disabilities.

Even with all the emphasis on the services to youth, there will no longer be an emphasis on literacy/numeracy statistics. The areas of literacy and numeracy had always been reported in past meetings and are certainly linked to youth achieving employment goals.

Connie Daly is on the Greater Lincoln WIB. The Career Academy is one of their projects – a collaboration of Lincoln Public Schools, Southeast Community College (SCC) and Lincoln's business and industries communities. SCC is developing curriculums and looking to business and industry for guidelines and suggestions for case studies, activities, projects, and real-world experiences that connect to student learning. Many of the pathways are offering students SCC quarter credits, giving them a significant jump-start on college and work experiences.

In Lincoln, businesses are struggling to acquire employees with skills relevant to available jobs while the workforce is struggling to find the job seekers with skills

necessary to qualify for these jobs. In 2013 Lincoln Knowledge Management Council was formed to work on identifying a solution to these concerns. The Knowledge Management Council (KMC) has determined the results of a business survey, when combined with household surveys, will enable the WIB to provide actionable data for organizations and individuals in Lincoln. The KMC is made up of volunteers in the Lincoln community who have taken an approach of partnering businesses, community resources, and educational institutions to look for solutions. The survey results will provide local business, leadership, and education vital information for strategic and succession planning. The survey will also identify available programs and focus on the underutilized resources available in our community.

Now, back to the National Picture. WIOA required the U.S. Department of Labor to establish an Advisory Committee on Increasing Competitive Integrated Employment for Individuals with Disabilities. The committee is set up to help job seekers, including those with disabilities, access the services they need to succeed in employment and match employers with skilled workers. It will work on ways to increase employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities or other individuals with significant disabilities in competitive integrated employment; the use of a certificate program under section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) for the employment of individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities or other individuals with significant disabilities; and ways to improve oversight of the use of such certificates. Integrated employment refers to jobs held by people with disabilities in workplace settings where the majority of persons employed are not persons with disabilities. In these jobs, the individuals with disabilities earn wages consistent with wages paid workers without disabilities in the community performing the same or similar work, earn at least minimum wage and are paid directly by the employer.

The committee consists of both federal officials and private citizens from specific groups identified in the WIOA legislation. The Secretary of Labor appointed 17 representatives from the following groups: Self-advocates for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities — Patrick Hendry, Mental Health America; Karen McCulloh, McCulloh and Associates; and Santa Perez, People First of Nevada. Providers of employment services, including those who employ individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities in competitive integrated employment — Brian Itzkowitz, Goodwill Industries of Arkansas, Inc.; and Christine McMahan, Fedcap. Representatives of national disability advocacy organizations for adults with intellectual or developmental disabilities — Alison Barkoff, Bazelon Center; Ruby Moore, National Disability Rights Network; and Mark Perriello, American Association of People with Disabilities.

Experts with a background in academia or research and expertise in employment and wage policy issues for individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities — Valerie Brooke, Virginia Commonwealth University; and David Mank, Indiana Institute on Disability and Community.

Representatives from the employer community or national employer organizations — Oswald Mondejar (MA), Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital Network, and Partners Home Care; and Steve Pemberton (IL), Walgreens.

Other individuals or representatives of organizations with expertise on increasing opportunities for competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities — Cesilee Coulson, Washington Initiative for Supported Employment; Sharyn Hancock, Workforce Essentials, Inc.; Rita Landgraf, Delaware Department of Health and Social Services; Lisa Pugh, Disability Rights Wisconsin; and Fredric Schroeder, Interwork Institute at San Diego State University.

There are also seven federal official members of the committee, including representatives of the U.S. Department of Labor, Education, and the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

The committee is required to meet at least eight times to accomplish its work. Within one year of the committee's establishment, the committee must submit an interim report with recommendations to the Secretary of Labor. Within two years of the committee's establishment, the committee must submit a final report with recommendations to the Secretary of Labor. The committee will also provide these reports to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions; and the House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

The first meeting took place January 22-23, 2015 in Washington, DC.

Technical Assistance on the Independent Living Programs and Informational Update regarding the Transition from the Department of Education to ACL. WIOA transfers the Independent Living Services (Part B) and Centers for Independent Living programs funded under Title VII, Chapter 1 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by WIOA (P.L. 113-128) (Rehabilitation Act) from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), U.S. Department of Education, to the Administration for Community Living (ACL), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The transfer of the Independent Living (IL) programs aligns with the mission of ACL to maximize the independence, well-being and health of individuals with disabilities across the lifespan, and their families and caregivers.

This technical assistance is being issued by ACL, in consultation with RSA, to provide initial information on the implementation of changes from WIOA regarding State Plans for Independent Living (SPIL), and monitoring of centers for independent living (CILs). ACL and RSA are partnering on a thoughtful and carefully constructed transition that ensures continuity, while minimizing program disruption. As this transition progresses, grant management continues to be administered by the IL program staff at RSA. ACL is

providing policy, legal, and programmatic direction throughout this transition. As the transition plan develops, we will continue to communicate with grantees of the IL programs and their stakeholders.

A SPIL has already been approved in each State through fiscal year 2016. The law remains unchanged that the SPIL continues to govern the provision of IL services in the State. Each State is expected to continue its support, including specified obligations, for an approved SPIL. Any amendments to the SPIL, reflecting either a change based on the WIOA amendments or any material change in State law, organization, policy, or agency operations that affect the administration of the SPIL, must be submitted by the State to RSA until the transfer of the IL programs to ACL is complete. ACL will perform policy, legal, and programmatic review for each amendment, working with IL staff at RSA. Any amendments to a SPIL, including amendments affecting designated State entities (DSE), must be developed in accordance with section 704(a)(2) of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended. Amendments must be signed by three parties: the chairperson of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), acting on behalf of and at the direction of the SILC; the director of the DSE; and not less than 51 percent of the directors of the CILs in the State. At this time, amendments must be submitted by hard copy to RSA. The current online system cannot accommodate the additional signatories required by WIOA.

Funding for Services to Older Individuals who are Blind will remain under the auspices of RSA. No imminent changes are apparent.

Changes relating to youth services may be the most difficult to interpret and to implement. As stated above, there are new requirements for expenditures at least 15% of the Basic Support grant. We do know that coordination and administration of such services cannot be included in the 15%, nor is there any additional funding. A new category of services is PETS, or Pre-Employment Transition Services. We do not have an exact definition of what is covered by PETS.

There are a few programs that are completely repealed. One that does affect NCBVI is In-Service Training. We used to receive about \$20,000 to \$22,000 per year for staff training. We have always spent far more than that to invest in our staff in order that they can stay current with everything. This funding will go away. There are also three parts that have been repealed that we do not work with.

Years ago, Director Van Zandt was on the Workforce Investment Board. This position is appointed by the Governor. Several years ago it was decided that they needed to make that Board smaller and Van Zandt is no longer on that Board. People can attend

the Workforce Board meetings and we still have a presence in the three Workforce areas. Van Zandt noted that she attended the WIA Board meeting in January and she intends to attend the WIOA Board meetings once that Board is established.

Chairperson Hansen asked Director Van Zandt to comment more about the new emphasis that WIOA will be placing on services for the youth, with there no longer being an emphasis on numeric and literacy statistics.

Director Van Zandt stated that literacy and numeracy are two measures which the Workforce Boards have always had as a part of their requirements for programs that the One-Stops provided to youth. This is not something that Rehab has used specifically. It was a surprise to the WIA Board a few months ago that they would not be tracking these since there is more emphasis being placed on youth. This will have little effect on NCBVI.

Commissioner Johnson asked about planning. Some of the big programs will require quite a few changes. Director Van Zandt noted that NCBVI is "on it." Bill Brown has already begun working on setting up coding within the business system so that expenditures that we do for youth will be seamless item in what is funded. Regulations will not really change how we do some of our Programs like WAGES. Whether this fits with VR, specifically PETS, could be different. We have a new program with the Abilities Fund that is helping us to help people become successful in self-employment. This is in line with a lot of the changes with the emphasis on competitive integrated employment. With regard to the State Plan, Van Zandt sent an email to all the other directors of State VR agencies across the country to find out if their agency for the blind has ever been involved in a unified State Plan. None of the respondents had been. Most often, Governor's recognize the General VR agency or the Combined Agency as the Vocational Rehabilitation agency. The separate agencies for the blind are often not considered as part of Vocational Rehab and they are not appointed to the Boards. The fact that Director Van Zandt was on the Workforce Board for years, from its onset, was really quite a feat because most states did not have representation of the Blind agency on the Workforce Board. What will happen with WIOA is not known. It is known that those Boards were huge because there were many requirements of who had to be on it and it had to be a majority of business representatives. Bob Deaton, Deputy Director, will be writing the State Plans going forward, and therefore, he will be paying close attention to how it will all work and where NCBVI will fit in the scheme of things. Director Van Zandt noted that when we first read about the new law and the changes, we thought it would be no problem because the Commission already invests a lot of time in youth because we know what a difference it makes as people get older. Director Van Zandt added that the changes being made are somewhat worrisome to some other

agencies because there is some aspect about it that could mean that it is a very narrow part of time for students out of school. If the regulations become so narrow, exactly how agencies will comply could be a problem, but we don't know yet.

Commissioner Newman noted that sometimes rules such as these come about because people are not doing the right thing. It is good to know that NCBVI has been doing the right thing all along as it relates to youth programs.

Director Van Zandt opened the floor to the Leadership Team for comments. No one had any additional comments and they noted that Director Van Zandt covered the topic very well.

Public Comment

Mark Bulger – Mark thanked the Board for their service and for the opportunity to speak. Mark stated that he did some research to see what WIOA all entailed and Director Van Zandt already answered most of his questions. He sees this new law as an attempt to strengthen the collaborative relationship between vocational rehabilitation agencies, the clients, and the employers. Mark asked if there is going to be more collaboration with the other rehab services in the state that are non-blindness related. Mark stated that he sees the Advisory Committee as being an integral part of representing the blind with employment opportunities. Mark stated he feels it is very important that we get representation on advisory committees and boards to make sure the interests of the blind are covered. Also, if he is to understand how this all shakes out, he would say there are two primary goals. 1. Pre-employment emphasis on the youth, and 2. The people that are in the workforce, keeping them retained. Therefore, anyone who does not get a job before the age of 24 is probably not going to get the services they would like in the future. His concern is what happens to the people who do not fall between the retention and the pre-employment gap. Lastly, since retention and employment is the critical thing, the best job to have is the one you have right now, even if you are losing vision. Mark asked if NCBVI has the low vision resources to help people retain their jobs as their vision continues to decline.

Director Van Zandt – Van Zandt stated on connecting with other rehabilitation programs, the Commission has a Memorandum Of Understanding, an Agreement with VR General Agency that anyone who is blind and has other disabilities will be served by NCBVI. The VR General Agency works with all disabilities except for blindness. The Commission already collaborates with folks in other agencies who have any expertise that we do not. Our counselors and instructors who are out within the state work with other professionals quite a bit when they have clients with multiple needs. The

Commission does recognize that this is important.

The Advisory Committee is at a federal level. There are 17 representatives from the following groups: Self Advocates for Individuals with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities, Representatives of National Disability Advocacy Organizations for Adults with Intellectual or Developmental Disabilities, Experts with a background in Academia or Research and Expertise in Employment and Wage Policy, and representatives from the employer community or the national employer organizations and other organizations with expertise in increasing opportunities for competitive integrated employment. Dr. Fred Schroeder who is representing San Diego State University is a blind guy and was in the past the United States Commissioner for Rehab Services Administration. He has been appointed by the President to this Board.

For job retention, Director Van Zandt stated that she does not think it would be the case that people over the age of 24 could not be served. While there is a strong emphasis on youth and transition services, with the new category of pre-employment transition services; the Commission will still have grant funds to work with people who would like to go to work.

With regard to the low vision issue, our staff does a lot of low vision work with people and we continue to provide training on low vision aspects that will help people do their job and live independent lives.

Commissioner Hansen noted that WIOA is a funded mandate and since we are receiving funds they do have the right to tell agencies how they want the money spent. However, since NCBVI is already doing most of the mandates at the current time, the new laws will not have the impact on the Commission that it may have on some other agencies.

Commissioner's Report

Chairperson Hansen reported that it has been an on-going project for him to improve the information that the Commission Board has access to. In that regard, Chairperson Hansen keeps updating the Commissioner Packet as new information is gathered. Each Commissioner has the Commissioner Packet on a thumb drive so it is easily accessible electronically.

Chairperson Hansen stated that he had the opportunity to meet with Dr. Nancy Stelter a few weeks ago about her progress with the work that she has been doing for the Commission. This will be discussed in more detail later in the meeting.

Chairperson Hansen noted that the Lincoln District Supervisor, Connie Daly, asked him to participate in a promotional video that NCBVI is working on. He has had some contact with the production group about what he does as a blind person in his career. The finalized video should be a great resource for years to come.

Commissioner Newman noted that the Commissioners sometimes receive emails that pertain to changes and happenings within the Commission. Commissioner Newman stated that the commissioners have received some emails wherein staff says good things about their supervisors and the public is saying good things about our staff.

Report from the Executive Director

Here is a snapshot of many of the tasks I've worked on during this past quarter. Lincoln Relocation: bid opening 12/17; visited bid sites, Q&A with AS Building Division reps; contract award date 2/20/2015; occupancy by 9/30/2015. Four bids were received for office space for the Commission. One of the locations would be a brand new building which is not even built yet. This would be located around 16th and Old Cheney. The other locations are 48th and Old Cheney, 1135 M Street, and our current location in the LMEP building. Numerous meetings were held with the State Building Division. We have it narrowed down to two locations, 1135 M Street and our current location.

Building Leadership team

Researching Database Systems

Friends of the Commission meetings

Attended Outlook Nebraska (ONI) Annual Banquet in Omaha

Attended Council of State Agencies for Vocational Rehabilitation and National Council of State Agencies for the Blind meetings in Miami

Mayor's Multi-Cultural Advisory Committee – presentation on blindness with Larry Mackey

Attended numerous WIOA and RSA webinars

Met with Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Director re: budget and services initiatives

Attended Nebraska Business Enterprises (NBE) Vendors Committee Quarterly Meeting

Attended Supervisors Meetings

Submitted Federal Reports

Annual Report to the Governor; also submitted it to all members of the Unicameral

Explored Succession Planning and related training opportunities with state personnel

Managed absence of key players from Leadership Team

Developed and submitted Deficit Request for Transition Coordinator

Independent Agency Directors' Meeting

Brought Melissa Hilty our new rep from Gov's Policy & Research Office in for a tour

Brought John Jelkin our Assistant Attorney General in for a tour

Responded to a request for public records for the past three years

Working with direct reports on Annual Goals and Performance Assessments
Attended State WIB & got on mailing list for future meetings
Spring State Staff Meeting is in the works
Working with Center and Field Supervisors to communicate how we are managing the staff shortages, especially in the North Platte District
Also working on ways to keep consumers and staff current on changes being made in our approaches in the Center and Field, to help increase usage of the Center so that more clients will benefit from the intensive services provided.
Connie Daly is working with a company to do video promotions. I reviewed and gave feedback.

We revised the Independent Living (IL) Application for Services and IL Rights and Responsibilities, which now reflect the elimination of the mediation process which is replaced with informal review. We are in the process of having these replaced in eForce and also the Spanish versions will be available shortly. Mediation and more formal process are required by the Rehab Act for VR services; not required for IL. We make every effort to resolve any issues to everyone's satisfaction at the informal level.

The Single State Audit was completed by Nebraska State Auditor; there were no findings which is a good thing.

This past quarter we arranged for and trained staff from the South Carolina Commission for the Blind. We are also now communicating with Virginia, Utah and Iowa, all of whom have reached out to us to learn more about how we operate our Center. We are pleased to be considered a role model for quality services across the country. In the past, Commissioner Newman asked me what other states have sent staff or clients to us for training and/or learning about our Center. Over the past 15 years or so, we have hosted people from state agencies including:

South Carolina – Center director and two other key staffers came for a few days;
Travel and Shop Instructors came for a week
Oregon – sent their whole Center staff for a week
Pennsylvania – sent a newly hired agency Director to us for several weeks; also sent a travel instructor for Immersion Training
Texas, Missouri, Iowa, South Dakota, Kansas, Mississippi, Michigan – all sent various groups of staff or clients to spend varying amounts of time with our agency.
There may be more, but these are what I know for sure.

Field Services

During our first quarter of Federal Fiscal Year 2015 (October 1 through December 31, 2014), we served 487 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients in all statuses. Seven (7) were closed having achieved their employment goals. Ten (10) were closed without achieving employment (refusing further services, unable to locate, and other reasons).

In the Independent Living (IL) track, 380 clients were served, in all statuses. Ninety (90) were closed successfully, with one (1) transferring to VR services; sixteen (16) were closed without achieving their goals (withdrew, moved, deceased, and other reasons).

Bob Deaton

Annual Report to the Governor submitted

2014 Annual 7OB Report submitted to RSA

2014 Annual 704 Report submitted to SILC for transmittal

Certification of completion of 1-Touch Self-Defense training scheduled for February 10

2015 \$10,000 grant application from the Enrichment Foundation for PILBO approved

Carlos Serván

We started to work with The Abilities Fund. Each district scheduled days for training and should be taking place in February and March.

Bill and I are working on creating the new NBE/Business Office position. The PDQ (position description questionnaire) should be done by the end of February and then wait for State Personnel to process it.

Nebraska Center for the Blind

11/1/2014-2/7/2015

4 Current Clients; another 1 starts in March

1 Staff Trainee; another starts February 9

1 Three Day Stay

Tours: Nebraska General VR, Madonna Assistive Technology, Easter Seals, Abilities Fund, NCBVI's State Policy Advisor, Union College Social Work Students, and 3 NCBVI clients

Activities: Thanksgiving Luncheon, CAP Seminar, Ringing Bells for Salvation Army with Food Court Lunch at Gateway Mall, Dialog Seminar, Decorated the Christmas Tree, Holiday Party, Lion's Club Meeting and Dinner, and TDL Apartment Activity

The Bryan Nursing students are also coming to the center throughout the semester.

Center Staff participated in Winnerfest, and the center supervisor is participating in NRLI.

The center is also starting to work on a brochure, video, and an Open House to promote the center.

The center supervisor will begin speaking at consumer organizations, conventions, and other areas to promote the center throughout the year.

The center is going to be training the shop and cane travel instructor from the South Carolina Commission for the Blind the last week of January.

The Utah Commission for the Blind and the Virginia Commission for the Blind are interested in visiting our center to see how they can improve their centers.

The Iowa Department for the Blind is interested in coming to see our client apartments.

Field Services by District

North Platte District by Sarah Stewart

The North Platte District has experienced some challenges in the last quarter. Two staff members resigned from their positions in the North Platte office. Scott Pavelka, North Platte VR Counselor ended his employment with us on November 21st. Jamie Forbis, North Platte Orientation Counselor had her last day on December 19th. We were sorry to see them go but wish them the best in their future endeavors.

Some happy news in our district was that Cristal Dimas, husband Mario and son Julian welcomed the newest addition to their family, Gabriel Ethan on December 17th. Everything is going well and Cristal reports he's growing fast. We are all excited for them. She will be on maternity leave through the middle of March.

The remaining staff members are working hard to continue to serve all our clients and have taken several new referrals. The other districts and the center have been generous in offering their support and assistance to us, which is very much appreciated. Interviews for the North Platte Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor position were held in January. We were glad to have some good candidates and we hired Frederick (Fritz) Nuffer for the position. Fritz brings many years of experience working for the state with Department of Developmental Disabilities. We are very excited to have him join our team. He is scheduled to spend a week in the field and then begin center training in February. Please join us in welcoming him to the agency.

Cristal Dimas served on the Winnerfest Committee this fall. Winnerfest was November 6-8th at the Aurora Leadership Center. Cristal and I both worked the program and Adrienne Moody, Kearney VR Tech, observed on Saturday. It was a large group of kids with a few first time attendees, which is always nice to see. The committee did a great job planning and it was an informative and fun program. The kids really seemed to enjoy the Edgerton Explorit Center and the mall activity.

I want to thank the staff members of the North Platte District for all their hard work in the recent months. I appreciate their strong commitment to our clients and to our team. It's been a challenge for all of us to deal with staffing changes and I really admire their willingness to come together and support one another in continuing to provide quality services in the face of adversity. I am so grateful and proud to work with them. We had three successful closures this quarter: Tree Trimmer/Arborist, Maintenance & Repair worker, and Job Retention for a Randolph-Sheppard Vendor.

Omaha District Highlights February 2015 by Nancy Flearl

Everyone had a chance to meet both of the new employees at our last board of commissioner's meeting. Tim has embraced his position and is doing great work with his counseling, motivational interviewing and reaching some clients that have been struggling. We had the pleasure of having Kim Schnitzer with us over the holiday's as the center was closed. She had time to shadow staff, but contributed a great deal as well. She will be a true asset to our team.

We have had staff taking vacation during November and December and are getting back into the routine of things.

Lincoln will be holding an Employment Skills workshop in February and some of our staff and clients will be assisting, rather than having our own in March.

We are discussing ways that we in the field can be working closely with center staff to provide the vocational counseling while clients are attending the center. The focus on the end result of their training is about employment. Helping them to realize how important what they are doing is for their future. But also in helping them realize the discrepancy between what they want to do, what their present skill level is, so they know what the need to do to achieve their goal. A lot more research into what they are doing and plan to do.

We have had a client find employment with a Randolph shepherd vendor, production worker, front desk clerk, Security Guard, Industrial/Mechanical Designer and assisted 2 people maintain positions as a receptionist, production worker.

Cheryl is working with the committee to plan a group teaching for Older Blind individuals.

Kathy is working the Winnerfest committee. Kelly is willing to always help. Tim will be working it as it is his first year.

Kelly continues to assist with teaching technology of JAWS and Zoomtext to transition age students, along with independent living skills. They make it a point to mail out the information and schedules for TABS, Winnerfest, WAGES so school districts are aware of the skills being addressed and that they can share and promote these programs to new students that would potentially benefit from our services.

Elaine has been working with clients to prepare them for both the Nebraska Center for the Blind and Helen Keller National Center.

All the counselors have been remarkable in their support with several VR counseling positions open. Likewise, they are being very supportive of the new staff as they begin their new positions.

With the beginning of a new semester, Larry has been quite busy. He helped with the remodel of the computer lab. It is about 90% complete. It looks so much better. They are looking to start the renovation of our kitchen in the next month or so. It too is long overdue and will afford us more room to work and provide instruction.

Ashley has been quite busy networking with employers, attending chamber events and working with consumers on networking in the community.

We are so thankful to Dottie for her work with eForce and training Tim and looking at ways to default language that will make the development of the IPE a bit more streamlined.

We will be having our district meeting with training on NBE as the counselor's need to know what our role on this team needs to be and how best to prepare and support new vendors. We will also be reviewing NCBVI Rules.

Monique is always there to help; she has worked with counselors on resumes and tracks all the items we order to make sure we are receiving them. She is very detailed, following up with doctor's to get necessary medical info as well as paying those ever important bills.

What a team!

Lincoln District by Connie Daly

This quarter, my team took a tour of the Dog guide school in Washington, KS. Amy Buresh went to Missouri to look at case management systems and their accessibility. Shane is coordinating Winnerfest. Eric is coordinating a program called ESP-N. ESP-N stands for Employability Skills Program – Nebraska. It is a five day intensive program to prepare people for finding a job. The program is modeled heavily after the training that took place this past summer with Karen Wolffe. Omaha provided the training to their clients and they will assist us with it; scheduled for February 19 – 25.

We are developing three videos that are approximately a minute and a half each. They will feature blind people working in different occupations. There will be one featuring food services, auto mechanic and a network specialist. These videos will be targeted to businesses.

We had clients get jobs as an elementary teacher, a high school teacher, a food service worker at McDonalds, a customer service representative at Nelnet and a Life Coach. We assisted clients in maintain employment at Apogee, UPS and two vendors.

Business Office - Bill Brown

Federal Reporting including SF- 425's and RSA-2 and RSA-15

Look at Building Proposals

Look at Case Management systems including trip to Jefferson City MO

Attend Meetings discussing WIOA and its impact.

Attend to some personal and Family Health Issues.

Kathy Stephens – Administrative Assistant

Kathy worked on formatting the 2014 annual report to the Governor. A copy of the annual report was also forwarded to all the State Senators using a new feature on the Nebraska Legislature website to submit an agency report to the Legislature.

I continue to work on surplus of outdated agency equipment. Also, I am working with Don Ward to surplus old vending machines. The State has a new ECM server which is now used to surplus vending machines that are recycled at Alter Scrap and miscellaneous items that are recycled. I am still learning the new system and I am hopeful that State Surplus will provide additional training on using the system server. A manual was provided, but sometimes I find it helpful to go to hands on training. I believe that Bill, Dave and Wes also have access to this server.

Two new phone systems were ordered and installed for the Lincoln office reception area. The old phones were having several issues and it was indeed time for an upgrade. Cheryl and Stephanie stated that they are pleased with the new phones.

HR Quarterly Highlights – Dave Robinson

1. Tim Jefferson completed his Center training on October 31, 2014 and assumed his VR Counselor duties in Omaha on November 3, 2014.
2. Scott Pavelka, VR Counselor in the North Platte office resigned his position on November 18, 2014, effective November 21, 2014 and pursuant to agency and labor contract terms, as a result of the abrupt, short notice, left employment in less than good standing.
3. Kim Schnitzer was hired as the new VR Counselor in Omaha, to replace the position vacated by Carol Jenkins' as a result of her promotion to Center Supervisor. Kim was already a state employee in the Dept. of Corrections Adult Parole Division. She began her duties on November 24, 2014.

4. A job posting for the position vacated by Scott Pavelka was posted internally, ending on December 2, 2014 and there were no internal candidates. The position was posted externally and besides the state's jobsite, was advertised in newspapers in North Platte, Kearney, Grand Island, Hastings and Scottsbluff. The position was advertised until December 29, 2014 and twelve applications were received.
5. Jamie Forbis resigned on December 19, 2014. We will defer advertising for the position for a while.
6. Frederick "Fritz" Nuffer was hired to fill the position vacated by Scott Pavelka. Fritz comes to the agency from DHHS, where he is currently a Developmental Disabilities Service Coordinator. He started with our agency on February 2, 2015

Technology Program Board Highlights by Wes Majerus

Operationally, I have had a number of projects this quarter. The Commission continues to analyze case management systems with the possibility of replacing eForce. This quarter, we began discussions with Libera regarding their System 7 case management platform at the recommendation of some fellow participants of my NRLI cohort. We also took the opportunity to travel to Jefferson City, MO to discuss both AWARE and Libera with Missouri General and Missouri Blind, respectively. Although the examination of Missouri General's AWARE implementation was beneficial from the standpoint of learning how an agency goes through the process of implementing the AWARE system, some blind staff who were present wanted to visit another agency to look at AWARE from a non-sales, accessibility perspective. For this reason, we are scheduling a trip to Oklahoma to examine AWARE with one of their JAWS users. We are still determining which system we would like to implement. We have seen Libera working with JAWS in Missouri, but may have a demo of the system with Libera representatives here at NCBVI to get a more hands-on look at setup and usage of the system.

This past week, the Lincoln Offices of NCBVI had the opportunity to examine a Lexmark copy machine with an accessibility solution installed. We worked closely with SolutionOne, a local office equipment vendor to obtain a demo unit with the appropriate software. Although the solution doesn't help with all features of the copier, it does provide independent access to copying and faxing non-visually. The unit also contains a speech solution that allows the copier to report its status audibly and announce whether certain copier doors are open or whether a jam has occurred. We believe that this will be beneficial for our staff both from a usage standpoint and to demo to other agencies what is possible. In addition to the copier, we plan to implement software to deal with inaccessible PDF's at the level where they are scanned from the copier. We believe that the software can add text to the PDF files through optical character recognition and make them more accessible.

I continue to support staff computer issues around the state and ensure that the staff has the technology it needs to complete job duties. We have been working to determine why the Omaha office's network connectivity has been problematic. Over the past month, we have learned that the OCIO will be upgrading network infrastructure to the Omaha State Office Building, which will improve network reliability for our agency, as well as the 9 other agencies in the building. With this upgrade, the network reliability should improve and the cost to provide the network to each agency will decrease.

Some work has been done on an accessibility front. I am attempting to learn about some new updates in the Workday system that is used for employee benefits. I have been asked to test some new components of the system during February. We have been asked to test the state's accounting system upgrade for accessibility, but are not sure when this will occur. I assisted Dr. Van Zandt with an information request from the LaBarre Law Offices in gathering emails related to accessibility work we have done with the state.

The Tech Team has had two meetings this quarter. Topics discussed have included modifications to the tech curriculum in the Center, future Windows versions and thoughts on their roll-out within our agency, new computer procurement, rolling out new screen reader versions within the agency, and training on the use of new screen readers. We would like to be more informed about both NVDA and Window-Eyes screen reading software, and are looking for training on these two platforms. As the Commission is planning to host another college workshop this summer, the Tech Team will assist with technology demonstrations, as well as providing a time for students to make appointments for individualized tech consultation and assistance.

Chairperson Hansen stated that prior to the November 2014 Commission Board meeting, Director Van Zandt, Bill Brown, Wes Majerus and he attended the NITC meeting and it was to answer questions to them about our proposal to move forward with the AWARE product. Director Van Zandt stated that we are looking at a second product called Libera. Chairperson Hansen noted that he thought we had settled on AWARE and had hoped to move forward with that, but now he sees we are investigating a second program.

Director Van Zandt reported that as we got into the work with the system, we ran into some snags. Some of the snags had to do with accessibility, some with how well the company worked with the agencies and what the impression was from other agencies like ours who use the different systems. At this point we began exploring and comparing the two different systems AWARE and Libera. Therefore, the trips to

Missouri and Oklahoma are an opportunity for a team of our staff and staff from the other agencies to sit down and explore the different systems to evaluate what will work best for NCBVI. We did check with NITC to make sure it would not be a problem to look at a different program. NITC assured us that it is not a problem that we look at another program. Basically, it was the project that they approved, not the product.

Director Van Zandt reported that NCBVI received a request for public records which requires a specific procedure to be followed for public record requests. The request was for the period of January 1, 2011 to date and two major areas of emphasis. One emphasis was any documents relating to accessibility between NCBVI and the Nebraska Information Technology Commission. The second part was for all requests by Commission staff, consumers or members of the public that software or other information technology be made accessible in a non-visual manner or request for accommodation to access the technology in a non-visual manner. When a formal request is received, you have four business days to comply. All the material was gathered electronically and sent by the deadline.

Commissioner Jirak noted that Director Van Zandt reported that the Center Supervisor will be visiting consumer groups to promote the Center. Commissioner Jirak asked if whether this will be on a local level or a state level.

Director Van Zandt reported that Center Supervisor Carol Jenkins will attend as many state and local consumer meetings as she can. Supervisor Jenkins will be reaching out to all the opportunities that are out there to promote the Center. Director Van Zandt noted that she is typically on the agenda for ACB and NFB conventions and she will have Carol report with her and have part of that time on the agenda. If consumer groups would want to give Carol a place on the agenda that would be even better.

Commissioner Jirak inquired about the request for documentation. When the email request came out he was a little concerned about the four day turn-around that was built into the request. The concern he had was the short turn-around time to gather the documents and he wondered if any time was taken away from serving clients to comply with the request.

Director Van Zandt noted that the four day requirement is written in the law. Gathering the information did not impact any services to clients. Most of the gathering of documents was completed by Wes Majerus and her and everything was compiled electronically so no copies were needed. Director Van Zandt reported that she did send a note to all staff asking them to send her any documents that they may have.

Chairperson Hansen asked what the dates of the Spring State Staff meeting in Grand Island will be. It was noted that the dates of the meeting are April 14, 15 and 16. The meeting will be held at the Fairfield Inn in Grand Island.

Break - A break was taken at 10:35 a.m. The meeting resumed at 10:54 a.m.

Unfinished Business

Budget and Biennium Update

Director Van Zandt reported that the NCBVI budget is in good shape, both the workings of it and the biennium request which was submitted last Fall. The new budget will take effect July 1, 2015 and go through June 30, 2017.

We will have an Appropriations Committee hearing on Thursday, March 5. This is a tentative date and a time has not yet been set. We have been reaching out to educate senators and the budget people. We have a budget analyst in the Governor's office and in the Appropriations Committee that we work with. There are many new senators and they are all in the process of learning what all the agencies do. The Governor has come out with his Budget recommendations and NCBVI is in very good shape. Governor Ricketts has approved our request for increased federal funds and the salary increases to keep our staffing at the current level was also approved. NCBVI is also working in some funds to cover some retirements that may come up over the next few years.

We have been working on preparing for our testimony before the Appropriations Committee and a number of people have mentioned that they will be especially interested in hearing from consumers and in particular those that are served by transition services. We are hopeful that people will attend that hearing and/or communicate with their senators the importance of the services for the blind as a separate agency. In general, as far as the budget goes, NCBVI has had a lot of carryover of federal funds because of the social security reimbursement. The feds require us to spend that social security money before we start spending the grant money. This is part of why we had so much carryover. As of to date, most of the social security money has been spent so we are now spending last year's grants and working on the State match that we have. Bill Brown is very good at balancing what needs to be spent for which grant and informing the staff who pay the bills exactly how things need to be worked at each point. Director Van Zandt asked if anyone had any questions. There were no questions.

NFB Newsline® Update

Nebraska NFB-Newsline®
February 2, 2015
Jamie K. Forbis, Outreach Coordinator

Nebraska NFB-Newsline® has been fairly quiet this quarter. Baltimore, on the other hand, has been busy adding new features and publications. Below is a summary of the additions and this quarters stats for Nebraska.

Once again during the holiday season circulars for many retail stores were added. This provided subscribers with the perfect excuse to check out all the sales in their area! Unfortunately posting of store circulars is very time consuming, so it can only be offered during the holidays. The Target circulars, however, are continued to be available all year long.

Two new publications were added to the Breaking News Online section in December. First is the Newser which is a snap shot the day's most important, thought provoking and lively news handpicked from hundreds of US and international publications. The second new publication is the Voice of America (V O A) which started in 1942 as a radio news service. It is a dynamic multimedia broadcaster funded by the United States Government.

Also announced in December was the addition of a new feature to make reading long publications even easier. The "Continuous Reading Mode" allows subscribers to read straight through a publication without having to select the next section. Just press 99 after the sections of a publication are read and continue reading mode will begin. The skip features are still available and to skip an entire section just press star. This will help stream line the reading experience for subscribers.

Now on to the stats in Nebraska. Currently Nebraska NFB-Newsline® has 1,804 subscribers; 11 of which were added in January, 16 in December and 2 in November. Over the phone in January 18,697 minutes were read with the average call lasting 13.30 minutes. The number of subscribers using the local number is down at 34.97% for January. The other ways of accessing Newsline in January were via the web with 2,990, mobile sessions' 211, In Your Pocket 1,004 and E-mail deliveries 688. The Nebraska publications were accessed 2,714 in January, with the local channel accessed 97 times. The total accesses for local weather and emergency alerts were 184, the national newspapers 794, breaking Newsline 91, magazines 94 and TV Listings 504 times.

In December 16,490 minutes were spent on Newsline via the phone with the average call lasting 12.02 minutes. The percentage of calls made through the local number was

37.18%. Subscribers read content on the web 3,857 times and on the mobile app 195 times. Deliveries to In Your Pocket were 1,544 and E-mail 685. The Nebraska newspapers were accessed 3,185 times during December and the local channel 116 times. The local weather and alerts got accessed 167 times, national newspapers 728, breaking news 210, magazines 89 and TV listings 613 times.

Last but not least in November 13,382 minutes were spent on the phone with an average call of 11.03 minutes and 36.02% of the calls were made using the local number. Subscribers accessed the online system 4,306 times and the mobile app 165 times. The in Your Pocket deliveries totaled 1,777 and E-mail deliveries totaled 609. Content accessed during the month included Nebraska newspapers 3,251, the local channel 70, local weather 180, national newspapers 710, breaking news 223, magazines 154 and TV listings 547.

This concludes my quarterly report of Nebraska NFB-Newsline®. As always if you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me. Thank you!

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Complaints or Issues

Below is the CAP Report, this report was not provided during the meeting.

Client Assistance Program (CAP) by Victoria Rasmussen

1. An individual called to say she was not found eligible. She felt her vision had gotten worse and thought she should be eligible. She shared she was seeing her eye doctor in a month. I advised her that after seeing the eye doctor, if her vision had gotten worse to contact the Commission.
2. This individual was starting the self-employment process with NCBVI and she wanted NCBVI to pay for her taxes to be done so she could gather some numbers for the business plan. She also experiences a brain injury which makes it difficult at times doing the numbers. During this time, NCBVI started the contract process with Abilities Fund for self-employment and they wanted to begin with clients who had an existing business. It was decided to refer this individual to Abilities Fund for assistance. Abilities Fund could assist her in determining what figures would be needed and also provide recommendations to help her track her business.

Served as a member of the Employment/Social Media Committee. Assisted with writing the changes for the appeal process on the IL form. Worked with Nebraska VR and NCBVI to help clarify for staff when both agencies could serve a client at the same time. Reviewed and commented on the Expectations Regarding Guide Dog Handlers Entering Center Training. Reviewed and commented on the Allowance for Meals to NCBVI Personnel.

Nebraska Business Enterprise (NBE) Update

Carlos Serván, Jan Stokebrand, and five vendors attended the BLAST conference at the end of November in Texas.

During the Committee of Blind Vendors meeting in December 2014 the new promotion policy was formally approved after RSA gave their input. The Committee also voted on buying some new devices for the vending machines to make purchase available using credit cards.

The vendor who is running the USA Joint Forces Canteen in Lincoln decided to leave the program. We announce the availability to current vendors, clients, and also to vendors around the country. As a result, one of the current vendors will add this site to his business.

The second week of November we added a new site with two machines to a new vendor. This is with the Voc. Rehab. office in Omaha.

We are still waiting for approval on a future contract with the VA Hospital in Lincoln.

We have been offered new vending permits with The TSA (airport) in Lincoln and Grand Island. This is only for a couple of machines in each building and very few employees. However, we are still waiting for them to let us know the date that we can put our vending machines at those sites.

Update on the I-80 rest area project. We started to replace the pop machines and Don is currently working on North Platte, and working his way west as weather allows.

We have started a new vendor in Nebraska City. His name is Jeremy Cash.

We are contracting with a business specialist to help our blind vendors grow their business. He started the first week of January and is looking for new sites where we can put more machines.

We also have a contract with Abilities Fund and they will assist vendors on improving their businesses.

The NBE team is traveling to the district offices to provide training and information to the counselors across the state about how NBE works.

The Camp Ashland renewal contract is due in February. NCBVI submitted the new proposal and we are in the negotiating stages. This new contract will be for three years.

Written Report from Dr. Nancy Stelter

Chairperson Hansen reported that he met with Dr. Nancy Stelter a couple of weeks ago to discuss the agency reorganization project that she has been working on. Dr. Stelter

did not provide a written report for today's meeting because there is not much of an update from the report she provided during the November 2014 meeting. The project will soon be coming to an end, but she does have a few more individual sessions to conduct. Some of the scheduling was delayed because of conflicts in schedules, but the project is coming to an end and it will be wrapping up within the next few months.

Commissioner Jirak asked if Dr. Stelter exceeded the life of her contract or if the contract has been extended. Bill Brown stated that the dates of the contract have been exceeded, but the contract will be extended until the project is completed if everyone approves. The content of the contract is not being expanded in any way. It has just been a matter of timing and scheduling. Extending the date of the contract is simply an administrative thing that can be handled.

New Business

2016 State Plan Status Report

Director Van Zandt stated that to the best of her knowledge the State Plan will be pretty much what has been done in the past with making revisions. The State Plan with the big changes from WIOA is scheduled to occur in 2016. Bob Deaton is working on the State Plan. To date the work has been mostly reading, research and thinking about how he will be doing the State Plan differently.

Bob Deaton stated that the changes to the State Plan that he anticipates are mostly generated by WIOA because the State Plan has been incorporated into more of the overall Act than before. The State Plan will have a lot more to say relative to how we administer funds and how we work with Workforce Centers rather than just the rehab portion of the Act. We are currently waiting to see what RSA will tell us about what it means to implement the changes. There will definitely need to be additional guidance given to us on this part. In the meantime, Bob stated he plans to read through the entire Act and make it simpler for him to refer to all the relevant sections that deal with the State Plan.

Director Van Zandt noted that the biggest change in the State Plan will be in the following year; the 2017 State Plan, due July 1, 2016. The draft 2016 State Plan will need to be approved by the Commission Board at the May 2015 meeting. Chairperson Hansen noted that if needed, a special Commission Board meeting can be held in June to approve the State Plan.

Review of tasks for May's Annual Review of the Executive Director

Chairperson Hansen reported that when he initially put this item on the agenda he was thinking that there would need to be a lot of data collection for the annual review of the Executive Director. However, the Commission is using a new procedure this year for the evaluation. Chairperson Hansen and Commissioner Johnson will work together to start the new evaluation process. They will also work with the Leadership Team as needed. All the materials prepared for the Board to review within the next few months.

Public Comment

Hubert Paulsen – Hubert stated that if anyone is curious about the new Voice of America service on Newline (VOA) they should check with him.

Barbara Epworth – Barbara asked what happened with the other staff at the Center. In the Director's Report, Director Van Zandt noted that there is one staff person in the Center. It was clarified that there is currently one staff person in training in the Center.

Announcements about next meeting

The May 2, 2015 Meeting will be held in North Platte at the Hampton Inn. There will be no Focus Topic as the Annual Evaluation of the Executive Director will take place.

Adjourn

The February 7, 2015 Commission Board meeting adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the May 2, 2015 Commission Board meeting, please email it to the NCBVI Commission Board at ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant
NCBVI

Mike Hansen, Chairperson
NCBVI Board of Commissioners