

Nebraska Blind Licensees Committee Meeting  
Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired  
Nebraska State Office Building  
1313 Farnam Street, Omaha, NE 68102

December 10, 2016

Meeting Called To Order by Chair Sandy Alvarado at 10:23 AM.

Board Members in Attendance:

Chair: Sandy Alvarado

Secretary: Ross Pollpeter

Vice Chair: Antonio Aguilar

Blind Licensees in attendance:

Jeremy Cash (phone), Dave Johnson (phone), Jason Thompson (phone)

NCBVI Staff in attendance:

Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director

Carlos Servan, Deputy Director

Don Ward, NBE Program Coordinator

Nancy Flearl, Omaha District Supervisor

Tim Jefferson, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Kim Schnitzer, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Elaine Kavulac, Orientation Counselor

Mark Bulger, NCBVI Commissioner

Robert Newman, NCBVI Commissioner

Guests:

Andrea Chizek, Alex Curtis, Jim Jirak, Nathan Keyes, Ermyl Leazenby, Terry Smith of National Federation of the Blind Entrepreneur Initiative (NFBEI)

Open Meeting Act:

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was available. The Notice of the Meeting was published in the Omaha World Herald, NCBVI Website, and NFB Newslines®. The Notice was also sent to the NCBVI List Serve.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion was made by Antonio Aguilar to approve the minutes from the last meeting on September 24, 2016 as distributed. Ross Pollpeter seconded. Motion passed.

State Licensing Agency (SLA) REPORT:

Report from Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director: (Secretary's note: Below is the report given by Dr. Van Zandt. When comments or questions were made a ( ) will enclose the additional comments/questions.

NBE Report to the Committee December 10, 2016

All rest areas are reopened. Grand Island was closed for several months for repairs and is now open. As we reported last time, we were awarded the DOR building café, and opened it in July and we are doing fine. We were also awarded the vending contract in August with 17 machines. Both of them are completed and will be operated by Victor Ireland.

We have transferred his previous two locations to Jason Thompson. It includes 1526 K and the Joint Forces vending at the National Guard in Lincoln. Jason has added those to his post offices and the Nebraska Historical Society Museum's two locations in Lincoln. He will have these locations plus the two transferred from Victor. Tracey Bradley is doing well at the Norfolk post office, she is our newest vendor.

We are working on two or three new licensees. We have started training perspective licensees: Alex Curtis in Omaha and Andrea Chizek in Lincoln.

Remodeling at the Craft State Office Building in North Platte is complete. We placed our machines back there for Dan Knuter, with no rent. As reported last meeting, we were contacted by the Nebraska Dept. of Corrections in regard to operating their vending machines across the state. Don has toured the Lincoln locations and will look at more in Omaha. We are looking at their other locations and will be adding these locations to the program in the near future. Several will go to Jason in Lincoln and the others will go to a new vendor in Lincoln. The first could open as soon as this month.

We are opening the State Office Building in Omaha, vending operation to start in January for Alex Curtis, who is in training. We are also looking at running the café next year, after remodeling. NBE will also get vending sites at the Lincoln State Office Building and State Capitol in July 2018. The State Building Division is going to give us these sites without going through an RFP process. It was noted that NBE does not have to pay rent for any of the State contracts that we have now. Carlos encouraged the Commissioners and consumers to write a thank you letter for this opportunity to the Building Division and the Governor's office. (Dr. Van Zandt read such a letter written by Mr. Bulger, NCBVI Commissioner. A copy of the letter may be found attached at the end of these minutes.)

On the weekend of September 24/25 we had several vending machines vandalized along I-80. At first report this included two in Kearney and three in York. Then we found out there were also two more at Grand Island and two at Gretna. This adds up to a total of 11 machines that were vandalized. There is an estimated over \$1,000 dollar loss from these operators, in addition to parts. The vandalism was reported immediately to the State Patrol in Kearney and another report

was filed with the York County Sheriff. Don has made one trip to Gretna, two trips to York, one to Grand Island, and one to Kearney to repair the machines and he has found a way to avoid the break-ins from happening in the future.

Leonard LeBental, who had been hired to fill the Business Manager II position, is no longer with the program. The state is now under a hiring freeze; we have requested permission to reopen the position from the Governor.

NBE has purchased a significant amount of new vending machines recently. This includes 15 for Dept. of Roads, 6 to replace older machines, 2 for Historical Society and 4 for Dept. of Corrections.

Thank You.

If any blind licensee would like to write a letter to Governor Pete Ricketts, send all correspondence to:

Governor Pete Ricketts

PO Box 94848

Lincoln, NE 68509-4848

REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR, Sandy Alvarado:

-I continue to attend team meetings with the Nebraska Business Enterprises (NBE) team to be informed and give input on behalf of all licensees.

-I worked on revising the operator agreement with Carlos to update language and clarify a couple of responsibilities.

-I encourage all licensees to consider attending a national training to get information on new trends and network with vendors across the nation. There are two (2) trainings offered typically offered. Sagebrush, offered by the Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America (RSVA) a division of the American Council for the Blind (ACB), which is held in Las Vegas, NV every February around Valentine's Day. In 2017 the dates are February 13-17. Business Leadership and Superior Training (BLAST), which is put on by the Blind Merchants division of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB), in 2017 will be in Nashville, TN September 12-15. I have attended both and learned something from both opportunities.

-I encourage all licensees to consider running for the Blind Licensee Committee. We had an opening when Victor stepped down because of health reasons in September. We have had no volunteers to take his place. It is important to have a committee to have a voice with our SLA.

Updated Blind Licensee Agreement (pending approval from RSA)

Deputy Director Servan and NBE Chair Alvarado have worked to update the NBE Operating Agreement. The most significant change is they've added the option to accept credit card payments. Ross Pollpeter made a motion to approve the NBE Operating Agreement as modified pending approval from the RSA. Antonio Aguilar seconded. Motion passed.

### Update on Profit and Loss Reports

Don Ward states most blind licensees are improving with their Profit and Loss Reports. Mr. Ward has worked with several blind licensees who struggled to meet deadline of the fiscal year. Mr. Ward encouraged NBE members to contact the NBE staff for any assistance.

### Update on Licensees, introduce new trainee(s)

Tracey Bradley is the newest blind licensee and is doing well at her Norfolk location. Nathan Keyes is training to become a blind licensee. Alex Curtis is scheduled to take over management of vending services at the Nebraska State Office Building in Omaha, NE in January 2017. Andrea Chizek is taking management over vending services in the Department of Corrections locations in Lincoln, NE in January 2017.

### Discuss Training for next quarterly committee meeting

Antonio Aguilar suggested training on how to maintain newer, more modern vending machines. Ross Pollpeter suggested training on PayRange including installation, management, and promotions. Alex Curtis suggested training on completing Profit and Loss reports. NBE Committee will leave decision to the discretion of the NBE Chair.

### New business

Todd Shumaker has had two absences during his term as a NBE Committee member. He has forfeited his position on the NBE Committee. We will need to hold an election to fill the vacancy. We also have had no blind licensees put their name forth to fill the vacancy after Victor Ireland resigned his position. If interested in possibly joining the committee, contact Jan Stokebrand.

Don Ward states that communication between SLA and some blind licensees is failing. SLA is sending emails to blind licensees with no response. He requests a response even if it does not pertain to you. He also requests that you respond to any communication from Jan Stokebrand. NBE Chair Alvarado states that is in the NBE Operating Agreement that the blind licensee stay in communication with SLA. All blind licensees will have to sign a new NBE Operating Agreement once approved by RSA.

Deputy Director Servan states that managers in state and federal facilities do have a right to complain and request new blind licensees. He encourages us to seek training in customer service, to be competitive, to work hard, and to make a good impression.

Antonio Aguilar asked how we may obtain new equipment and storage cabinets. NBE staff suggested blind licensees make request with Mr. Ward.

NBE Chair Alvarado had changed formats of quarterly meetings to include trainings. However this has not improved attendance at quarterly meetings. In the past, NBE has held weekend

retreats. Antonio Aguilar had enjoyed the social aspect of a weekend retreat and attendance had been better. We will consider the option of a weekend retreat in 2017.

Set date for next meeting

Discussion was held. Ross Pollpeter made a motion to conduct the next meeting on Saturday, March 11, 2017, at 10:00 AM in York, NE at a location to be determined. Antonio Aguilar seconded. Motion passed.

Terry Smith of the NFB Entrepreneur Initiative will conduct a training regarding Active Participation following the meeting.

ADJOURN:

Ross Pollpeter made a motion for the meeting to be adjourned. Antonio Aguilar seconded. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 11:27 AM.

Respectfully submitted by:

Ross Pollpeter, BLC Secretary

Letter to Governor Ricketts from NCBVI Commissioner Mark Bulger

Governor Pete Ricketts  
Office of the Governor  
P.O. Box 94848  
Lincoln, NE 68509-4848

Dear Governor Ricketts:

I am blind and writing to express appreciation to you and the State Buildings Division for providing great opportunity for more blind people to work in Nebraska as vendors in State facilities.

I am pleased that the Nebraska Business Enterprise (NBE) will operate vending sites at the Lincoln State Office Building and State Capitol. I appreciate that the State Building Division will provide these sites without going through an RFP process. Additionally, I am happy that the NBE will not have to pay rent for any of the State contracts that they have now.

The Randolph-Sheppard Act was enacted onto federal law in 1936. The program provides persons who are blind with remunerative employment and self-support through the operation of vending facilities on federal and other property. The NBE program grew out of this federal legislation. About half of the states have passed similar state law that extended the Randolph Sheppard law to include blind vending priority in all of their state properties.

I have blind friends that work as licensed vendors in the NBE program. I have observed that being a vendor has increases their standard of living and enhanced their self confidence. They are grateful for the employment opportunity and take their vending business very seriously.

The NBE offers a necessary service to the people working and visiting the federal and state buildings they service. Their customers experience the best possible work time snacks and refreshments at a reasonable cost. It helps that the blind vendors receive great training, and ongoing technical support and oversight from the NBE.

Opening up more Nebraska State facilities to the NBE will help more blind people to help themselves. That is good for all Nebraskans. Thank you for your leadership and service.

Sincerely,

Mark Bulger