

Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired
Public Meeting
Saturday, July 29, 2017
Best Western Plus
3201 S. Jeffers
North Platte, NE

Draft Minutes

Call to Order. Welcome and introductions. Announcement concerning public comment periods, meeting agendas, open meeting act, proof of publication, recordings, other logistics.

Mike Hansen, Chairman of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:02 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; Mark Bulger, Designee of the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska, Omaha; Chad Bell, Alliance; Becky Rieken, Executive Secretary, Dakota City.

Commission staff present: Carlos Serván, Interim Executive Director; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant; Fritz Nuffer, VR Counselor.

Public Present: Beth Galli, Omaha driver; Virgil Scott, North Platte; Rachael Richter, North Platte.

It was noted that public comments are welcome during the scheduled Public Comment Periods regarding the agenda items or other relevant issues. Kathy Stephens recorded the meeting and the recordings are available on the website.

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 North Platte Telegraph, the State Government Calendar, NCBVI Website, NFB Newsline® and Radio Talking Book. The Notice was also sent to ACBN, NFBN, and the NCBVI List Serve.

Approval of the May 6 and June 17, 2017 public meeting minutes.

Commissioner Newman moved to approve the Minutes of the May 6, 2017 Commission Meeting. Commissioner Bell seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and Commissioners Hansen, Rieken, Bell and Newman voted in favor of the motion. Commissioner Bulger abstained.

Commissioner Bell moved to approve the Minutes of the June 17, 2017 special Commission Meeting. Commissioner Bulger seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Commissioners Report

Chair Hansen stated that this item has been deleted from the agenda and it will not be on future agendas.

Report from the Interim Executive Director – Carlos Serván

By the end of the state Fiscal Year, June 30, we served 790 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients in all statuses. Of the active VR clients, thirty four (34) were closed having achieved their employment goals. Forty nine (49) were closed without achieving employment (refusing further services, disability too severe, unable to locate, death, transfer to another agency, and other). Five (5) clients were closed before a Plan for Employment was developed. There were 382 Active VR Clients as of June 30, 2017.

In the Independent Living (IL) track, 513 clients received services in all statuses. Of Active Clients, two hundred and nineteen (219) were closed successfully achieving their goals; fifteen (15) were closed without achieving their goals (withdrew, deceased, institutionalized and other reasons). At the end of the June 2017, there were 199 Active IL Clients. All of these (199) are Senior Blind.

We are now required to get pre-approval from RSA for all expenditures over \$5,000 for anything besides case services. This will affect purchases for NCBVI staff, but it will not affect services to clients. In 1995, all state agencies received a waiver but it has expired. The new regulations require the pre-approval process as no waiver is currently in place.

Chair Hansen asked if there will be a new waiver put into place so the pre-approval is no longer needed. Interim Director Serván noted that we were told that we will not hear anything until there is an RSA Commissioner in place.

Commissioner Newman asked what kind of purchases this entails. Interim Director Serván stated that this includes purchases that are not client related, but purchases for staff such as computers and JAWS licenses. Serván noted that this is a federal mandate and all federal agencies have been asked to do this.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

There are three groups to keep in mind: the Partners, the Council, and the local Boards. The Partners are appointed by the Governor and they are state wide. They meet quarterly and I will start attending these meetings. At this level all the Memorandum of Understandings (MOUs) have been signed; however, in December we should have determined the amount each partner will contribute. The Partners are developing a Portal, which is a network system that will connect

agencies so we will be able to share intake information. They are putting a Request for Proposal (RFP) out and we have been involved in the process since its implementation to ensure the system is accessible.

The Council is a state “Get Things Done” group and I am attending this meeting with Bob Deaton. The purpose is to be proactive and create a system that will work for Nebraska, rather than waiting for others to tell us what to do. We are also participating in the local WIOA group (Lincoln, Omaha, and greater Nebraska). The local WIOA group is working on a Career Assessment application for business and job seekers and to our knowledge, is not accessible. Connie Daly filed a complaint with the Commissioner of Labor, John Albin, and explained the concern. As a result, Terri Slone, the State Equal Opportunity Officer, contacted Connie to help with this situation. Also, the One-Stop Operator, City of Lincoln Urban Development, Jan Norlander-Jensen, met with Connie Daly on July 3. We learned from Leadership Lincoln, that they are the entity developing this app. Connie Daly had communication with Leadership Lincoln and they are assuring the app will not be implemented until it is accessible. This is critical because they are planning to use this app also in the Omaha and Greater Nebraska Boards. On July 27 they had a demonstration of the new app and it is now mostly accessible.

Chair Hansen asked Serván if he would not be attending the meetings of the State Board because NCBVI does not have a seat on that Board. Chair Hansen asked why NCBVI does not have a seat on that Board. Interim Director Serván stated that in the past he complained about that, but for this Board it is up to the Governor to appoint the Board members and he appointed someone from the General VR agency. The argument he heard is that the larger the Board the more money they spend. Government is now trying to send the message that they don't want to spend money. Chair Hansen stated that since these are public meetings NCBVI should send someone to their meetings so we know what is going on. Interim Director Serván stated that he does plan to attend their meetings. It was noted that this Board meets quarterly.

Commissioner Bulger asked if NCBVI has representation on the Lincoln and Omaha Local Boards. Interim Director Serván stated that at this time we only have representation on the Partners. However, for the Lincoln Local Board he did send a recommendation for Connie Daly to serve on that Board. Interim Director Serván stated that he is striving to get NCBVI representation on all the Boards. WIOA, at the state level with the Partners, is developing an intake system to share information with different state agencies and NCBVI has been very involved with this process in order to ensure that the system is accessible.

Field Services:

All field counselors are working on different Transition Programs and especially on WAGES. We sent some students to Camp Abilities the week of July 17. Field counselors continue to work with public schools to improve our relationship. A

Memorandum of Understanding was signed with the Department of Education regarding the collaboration of NCBVI and the public schools, especially in the area of Pre-ETS. In addition, Field staff continues to network with medical professionals and are seeing those relationships develop into referrals for our agency.

Human Resources and Staff Development:

A 3-day workshop in May was conducted by Mississippi State University on effective networking with employers. The MSU trainers were impressed with the level of support we already provide to our counselors and clients. This training was an introduction of the importance of networking with employers to several of our new staff and some refreshing training for senior staff. We had a couple of staff members attend the Deaf Blind Awareness proclamation signing ceremony on June 7. John Schmitt attended the National Project Search conference.

Several Lincoln District counselors attended Taste of Coaching, where they learned more about the types of coaching available. Laura Lavaley left her position as the North Platte VR tech due to her family relocating. Adrienne Moody is covering the duties for the Kearney and North Platte office at this time. Josie was able to return to work in late June and we are very excited to have her back with us. Wes Majerus, our technology manager, left the agency on June 23. At this point, we finished screening the applications for this position and should be interviewing the candidates the first week of August. The Deputy Director for Staff Development initiated annual professional development plan reviews. Julie Buren and Jeff Altman are the NCBVI staff who won Governor's Award for Excellence and Leadership.

AWARE:

We went live with AWARE on July 3 and the system is up and running. Many of the staff has worked hard to make the implementation of the system as seamless as possible. Julie Buren, Carol Jenkins, and Connie Daly were very involved in the adaptation, development and training of the system. In addition to Julie, Carol, and Connie, Nancy Flearl and Erin Brandyberry provided training to the different districts. Bill Brown is training staff on the business portion of AWARE. We are having some difficulties with staff that use screen readers and have Windows 10 on their computers. Those with Windows 7 are doing well. AWARE is working close with us and continuing to work with Freedom Scientific and their developers to implement a solution. We have been told it will not happen prior to the JAWS October 2017 major update. Julie attended an AWARE training for the WIOA/911 reporting on July 24-27, 2017.

Nebraska Center for the Blind:

The landlord finished building an additional bathroom at the Center. Asbestos was found on the hallway pipes after the new restroom was built. Therefore, the renovation is being delayed for several weeks. The Center supervisor decided to wait for new clients to start their training until the building finishes this renovation which should be the end of July or first week of August. Center participants

continue to get their training and participate in several challenging activities to promote and build confidence. The issue of Center apartments is still open. We do not have any serious bidders in mind at this time, but Ann Tanner at State Building Division is working on it.

Transition:

We have 16 participants at WAGES and three additional work based learning opportunities through a partnership with NCECBVI. The partnership with NCECBVI is for students who have secondary disabilities that make it difficult for them to complete the traditional WAGES program. We provided Job Readiness trainers for these students.

We formed a Transition Committee whose focus is to improve relations with other partners and teachers, bring better consistency to our service delivery statewide and to create resources for our current and future staff to help raise the capacity of all staff in the area of transition. Nancy Flearl and Shane Buresh attended the Capacity Building forum in Kansas City, which was nationwide in scope. In the past, we were not invited to participate in this forum as they looked only at VR General as the agency in charge of Nebraska. Thanks to the initiative and efforts from Shane Buresh, our Transition Coordinator, we received an invitation and will be participating in future planning and events. This group was designed to bring the core partners in transition from each state together at one table to create a plan for how to move transition forward in each given state.

Other Activities:

The revised draft of the NCBVI Rules and Regulations have been completed. We will follow state's outlined steps to finalize the draft in the next few months. The draft will be open to the public for a given timeframe for input before going to the Secretary of State's Office.

We have developed a few more contracts, among them templates for providers of supported employment services for persons: with intellectual/developmental disabilities, who acquired a brain injury, autism, and behavioral health conditions. We also customized employment services for persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities. Our contract with Abilities Fund ended as the owner had to focus on family emergencies. At this point we do not have another special entity to contract with. I am attending the ADA Task Force meetings where several state agencies are represented. We are working on having a Board which will help with supporting the efforts of this office. Applications will be accepted on their website.

Nebraska Business Enterprise (NBE)

The new operator who took over the Department of Roads' catering and vending in February doing is doing well. Our two newest operators got their license few weeks ago. One is in Omaha and the other is in Lincoln.

We will be adding more Nebraska Department of Corrections vending locations in Lincoln and Omaha as we get new operators to run them. We are training a couple of candidates, one in Omaha and one in Lincoln to see if they will become vendors.

We are looking for several more clients to begin training due to the vending opportunities we are getting in Lincoln and Omaha.

Carrie DeFreece is working full time at the Camp Ashland to fulfill our contract with the National Guard. A new blind operator started to work at Camp Ashland in the middle of July.

We were contacted by Offutt Airbase to arrange a meeting. We met in May with a potential teaming partner. We told Offutt staff that we would operate the 26 breakrooms with a total of 52 vending machines. We are still working with the teaming partner to see if they can come up with the 1.5 million to 2 million dollars to operate the cafeteria. There will be 3,500 employees in the new building. We will do everything within our power to make it work as the deadline is September 2017.

The Veterans Administration also contacted us to operate vending in Omaha and Lincoln. We sent certified letters in April and did not get answers back. I called to follow-up and was told we needed to negotiate with the Canteen operators. The Canteen operators are the ones who give money to the employee's funds and they say that they want to operate the vending at these locations. According to the Randolph-Sheppard law NBE has priority; but the VA says that we need to negotiate with the canteen. Therefore, I contacted Susan Gashel, a national expert on Randolph-Sheppard and an advocate for blind vendors. Susan recommended we send a letter to the VA stating we would like to visit the facility. We sent such a letter on June 8 and determined if no response was received within 30 days, we would file for arbitration. Susan offered to represent the Department of Education and NCBVI if RSA would pay her fees. We did not get a response from the VA so we are filing for arbitration.

Finally, we have two small opportunities coming with the U. S. Department of Agriculture in North Platte and with I. N. S. in Grand Island.

The commissioners requested that for the Executive Director's Report, each districts report be reported on separately. They also requested that the individual staff reports be included in the minutes. Kathy will email to the commissioners the reports that the supervisors/staff submitted for this quarter.

Commissioner Bulger stated that he appreciates all the effort that has been done to expand the NBE program. He reported that he wrote a letter to the Department of Corrections and he did receive a response reaffirming their

commitment to help expand the NBE program. Interim Director Serván noted that Pearl Van Zandt shared a copy of these letters with him and he has made copies of the letters to share with the Department of Roads and Department of Administrative Services.

Individual Supervisor/Staff Reports

Omaha District Highlights July 2017 Board of Commissioner's Meeting

NCBVI Programs:

Staff have been busy with working and planning summer programs, WAGES, PI, REBOOT, etc.

Training:

All VR counselors and Kelly really benefited from the MSU training aside from caseload activities they are working with their project search sites as the school year ended and have been out developing OJE/OJT. As a result have been working on dividing all the various networking events in the community. We have also been contacting all the area chamber of commerce offices and visiting the businesses listed with their Chamber. Shane and I attended NTACTION Capacity Building Conference in Kansas City.

All staff have received training in AWARE for our go live date of 7/3.

Transition/Schools

We continue to do our outreach with schools when available through the summer. Some vision teachers are still working, many attending the Deaf Blind Institute the week of July 17.

We have been doing group teaching sessions with our transition students that are not attending WAGES.

Kelly has been working with the transition committee and coordinating PI. She is excited about working with this team and feels that it will help to provide statewide consistency with transition services.

We have several students' attending Camp Abilities the week of July 17th.

In May, Kelly, Kathy, Larry Elaine and Kim worked with area Vision Teachers and O & M Teachers on the GPS App's they use to teach cane travel. They networked to be consistent in the teaching between NCBVI and each school district.

Kathy Brown Hollins and I will attend the NFB Convention and work with WAGES students.

Case Management System

Kathy has been working very hard with the team that has been testing AWARE and is stepping in to help be a resource for training and support staff as they start to implement AWARE.

Tim Terrell has been working extra hours to help enter data for AWARE and Monique and Tim working to get all those authorizations done to facilitate all the services occurring this summer.

Deaf Blind Services

Cheryl has been working with me on the SSP Program. We will have a meeting on July 20th at 9:30 with HKNC, and the League of Human Dignity. She has been doing presentations at independent living centers.

Elaine coordinated the Deaf Blind Awareness Proclamation held on June 7th.

Employment

We have had people placed as Computer Programmer, a couple of individuals as Customer Service Reps. Switchboard Operator, Courier, Home Health Aide and Library Aide.

Elaine has been providing some job supports to a student employed through the Project Search Program at Children's Hospital. This is the second year for this program and each year we have had a student participate and be hired.

Larry has been working with several employers on job jeopardy situations.

Lincoln District Activity Report

We have been spending a lot of time testing AWARE and providing training. Many of the staff have been positive about this change. Counselors are continuing to get information so that we can enter information into AWARE. The support staff can then enter in plans.

We had a couple of group activities for the children on our caseload. They took the bus downtown and toured the capitol with a blind tour guide who is a part of WAGES. They had lunch at Antonio's Taste of Lincoln. Antonio is a blind vendor so they were able to talk with a blind vendor.

We had a two day group home teaching for adults in which four people attended.

John Schmitt attended the National Project Search conference. Several of my team attended Taste of Coaching, where we learned more about the types of coaching available. The rehabilitation counselors attended training by MSU in Networking.

We continue to refer clients to Easter Seals. We are working with clients who had been working with Abilities Fund to find other resources to continue the process to self-employment.

I have been working with the Workforce Investment Board to ensure that their programs are accessible. I filed a complaint with the Nebraska Workforce Development about equal opportunities for blind consumers. An investigation was opened with the state and two have been opened with the city. I am pasting my complaint into this report.

June 27, 2017

Commissioner John Albin
Department of Labor
550 South 16th Street
Lincoln, NE 68509-4600

Dear Mr. Albin,

I hope that everything is going well. I don't know if you remember me, but I gave you a tour of our Training Center in Lincoln.

I am writing to you because I have grave concerns about how blind people are being served by the Greater Lincoln Workforce Development Board, One Stop Operator and the Lincoln Business Taskforce.

The Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired is the State of Nebraska's vocational rehabilitation agency for the blind. As you know, we do not have a seat on the board even though we are core partners. We do not have the same visibility to our business partners as other core partners do.

Bryan Seck, who has been working with the One Stop as a business liaison, was working to develop a phone app that would have a current listing of agencies that could assist job seekers and individuals with low income to find resources that may be available to them. When I talked with Mr. Seck about the accessibility of the app to blind individuals, his response was, "it will not be accessible to the blind initially." I informed him that this was not acceptable. He said that the developer was anxious to get it done and that he didn't want to approach him about this issue. He asked if I had any resources that I could share. I sent him some resources on how to make apps accessible to the blind. I was not able to put him in touch with a coder as I promised because they just sent me these resources. The one stop partner worked with Bryan to find a developer in Lincoln who could build this app and ensure that it is accessible.

At the Partner Forum on June 26th, I learned that Bryan Seck has been scheduling tours with local businesses for case managers and partners. I let him know that I had not received those invitations. He assured me that we were on the list. I sent him an email and asked if he would send me one so that I could see if they were being blocked. I received an email from him and I replied that I didn't know why I had not been receiving them. I had a colleague forward the invitation to me and NCBVI personnel are not on the list. He later sent an update to everyone about a tour and we still are not included on the list. I have those emails.

Bryan Seck also announced at the meeting that the One Stop is going to get career assessment software that is not accessible to the blind. It was purchased in Omaha and it has been tested and is not accessible. I let the partners know that it was not accessible and Mr. Seck told me that everything would be okay. I don't know how Mr. Seck would know that. I am pasting in some information about this issue and resources for ensuring accessibility.

Subject: American Job Centers and Digital Access: A Guide to Accessible Information and Communication Technology

There is a provision within the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) stating that all comprehensive American Job Centers (AJCs) and affiliated sites must be physically and programmatically accessible to individuals with disabilities, including information and communication technology (ICT) designed, procured, maintained, and used by AJCs, as outlined in WIOA's Section 188. For many AJCs, addressing accessible technology issues may be new territory. With that in mind, the Partnership on Employment & Accessible Technology (PEAT) and the LEAD Center worked together to create "American Job Centers and Digital Access: A Guide to Accessible Information and Communication Technology." This guide is designed to promote the importance of ICT accessibility issues and point out helpful "how to" resources to help AJCs ensure that their ICT is accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities. It also includes an Appendix featuring a glossary of commonly used definitions and acronyms.

Use "American Job Centers and Digital Access: A Guide to Accessible Information and Communication Technology"

The blind are being disenfranchised by the workforce development system. I would appreciate your attention to this matter.

Respectfully,
Connie Daly
Lincoln District Supervisor

North Platte District Highlights

The North Platte district had two 3-day stays at the center this quarter. We had one of those clients start center training. We also had two clients graduate center training. We have two clients participating in WAGES.

We had one client start an OJE with Computer Concepts in Grand Island. We have another client who is in the process of becoming a NBE vender to manage the Ashland site.

Six staff attended the training from Mississippi State University where we learned about developing and maintaining relationships with businesses.

NCBVI formed a transition committee this quarter and Diann represents the North Platte district on that committee.

Diann, Adrienne, Deanna, Jan, and I attended the NFB convention.

I attended my third NRLI (National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute) session in Washington D.C. and learned valuable information while I was there.

We continue to network with schools and medical professionals and are seeing those relationships develop into referrals for our agency.

Angie presented at a fall prevention group, a brain injury and stroke support group, as well as doing two low vision expos in nursing homes.

Deanna did an interview on the radio in Kearney about OIB services. She has also participated in the Kearney and Lincoln aging and disabled resource advisory boards. She continues to participate in the brain injury advisory council and assisting with a sustainability study. Deanna has presented at a fall prevention group along with a Hastings eye doctor.

Adrienne played a large role in the data entry part of AWARE along with assisting with training other staff members on AWARE. All staff were trained in AWARE this quarter.

Laura Lavaley left her position as the North Platte VR tech due to her family relocating. Adrienne is covering the duties for the Kearney and North Platte office at this time. Josie was able to return to work in late June and we are very excited to have her back with us.

Kathy Stephens – Highlights for 7-29-2017 Commission Meeting

I completed registrations and reservations for some clients and staff attending National Conventions, training at the Helen Keller National Center, AWARE training and NRLI training.

I am working on finishing up the year-end inventory report. This will need to be submitted to Administrative Services by August 31, 2017.

I spent some time preparing and planning for Dr. Pearl Van Zandt's retirement reception.

The revised draft of NCBVI Rule has been completed. I will be going through the process of putting the draft in legal format so they will be ready for a public hearing.

The 2018 State Staff meeting has been scheduled. It will be April 3 and April 4 at the Fairfield Inn in Grand Island.

Nebraska Center for the Blind

Below, is the Center's Quarterly Report from May 7, 2017 to July 29, 2017. You will notice the Center Student numbers are low, and I have done this intentionally. The Center is going to the NFB Convention with Pre-ETS students, and then the water pipe is being replaced in the hallway of the Center. The following week, the ceiling tiles and lights are being put back in. Starting July 31st through early September, I have new Center Students scheduled to start training every Monday. If you have any questions, please let me know. Thanks!

Center's Quarterly Report

Dates: 5/7/2017-7/29/2017

Currently: 3 Clients (as of July 29th)
6 Three Day Stays
4 Students had Commencement Meals

Tours: UNL Disability Services Director, 2 staff from SCC's Disability Services Office, 1 consumer from Oregon, and 6 local consumers.

Activities: Grilling, Etiquette Seminar, Mary Kay Seminar on Skin Care, Apartment Volunteer Activity for the Delta Gamma Readers, Buffet Activity at Valentino's, City of Lincoln Scavenger Hunt, Horseback Riding, Southpointe Mall Travel Day, and the NFB National Convention.

Some Center Staff Attended: The NFB National Convention and worked Winnerfest, PI, and WAGES. Jeff Altman was one of two employees to win the Governor's Award for Excellence and Leadership.

Center Supervisor: Continues to speak to all NCBVI districts on Center changes and updates, continues to participate in monthly Center Director's conference calls, and trained agency staff on AWARE for Go Live. The Center Supervisor is also working with Ohio and Illinois Blind Agencies to help them get a training center started.

Additional Notes: The Center had a volunteer from Southeast Community College. She was doing a paper for her diversity class on blindness. We also had a student earn her citizenship while at training as well as a student earn his CVRCB certification during training. We also had 4 Center Students begin to participate in the Pearson Mentoring Program.

By the end of July, the Center should be totally remodeled and updated.

Warm Regards,
Carol Jenkins
Supervisor-Nebraska Center for the Blind

Quarterly highlights for Bob Deaton.

Revisions to Rule, Chapters 1-4, completed; draft currently being prepared reflecting "tracked changes" to existing rule.

Annual professional development plan reviews initiated.

Contract templates developed for providers of supported employment services to persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities, acquired brain injury/autism, and behavioral health conditions; and customized employment services for persons with intellectual/developmental disabilities.

3-day workshop conducted by Mississippi State University on effective networking with employers.

Quarterly Report on Transition Activities

I cannot believe it, but as I write this quarterly report WAGES is already more than halfway in the books and we are about to depart for the consumer convention in less than two days. This year we have had the largest group of WAGES participants that I can remember ever being in the program at one time. We began with 19 students and 16 participants will complete the entire program. While I know that it was disappointing to many we could not conduct the skills training portion of things in the same manner this summer, WAGES has been highly successful and there has been much growth in many of the participants. WAGES was kicked off again this summer with a curriculum offering by the International School of Protocol which focused on workplace skills and how to be socially savvy in that environment. The students conducted many hands on activities and even capped off the program with a graduation ceremony where they presented awards to one another in a banquet type setting. It was amazing to watch and I wish you all could have been there as well. One exciting development this summer, which is tangentially related to WAGES is that we were also able to provide three additional work based learning

opportunities, through a partnership with NCECBVI, to students who have secondary disabilities that make it difficult for them to complete the traditional program. The three individuals are both clients of ours and students at NCECBVI. We jointly developed job sites and worked together to find and train support personnel such as job readiness trainers and we of course our paying the salaries of the supporting staff and the OJE opportunities for the individuals. It should be noted that the jobs are in their own hometowns and the hours are more suited to their abilities. Early reports are that this program is a huge success for both partnership and more importantly for the students themselves. Project Independence will also happen two weeks after WAGES is over. We have 13 youth between 8 and 13 who will attend this year. Our theme is **“I Put the PI in Pioneer: Exploring My Future Frontier”**. This theme was selected to help celebrate Nebraska’s 150th birthday and to highlight the parallel between the journey that life will take them on and how they need to be ready and the preparation for the journey our earliest settlers had to make in order to make our state a success. Beyond the customary sleep shade training; we will once again be conducting the home chore challenge, doing audio archery and fishing, building our own 1867 era toys, planting take home plants, going on a hayrack ride cookout running our own birthday party planning service and giving Nebraska a birthday party, taking a field trip into Lincoln to learn about Nebraska’s history, and much more.

I do regret to report that one scheduled program that was canceled due to lack of interest on the part of potential attendees was the proposed reboot 2.0, which was to be a beginning JAWS training in mid-August. After six weeks of registration period, there were only three clients who signed up. The transition and tech committees have already begun to brainstorm and will regroup with some sort of offering next year that meets the needs of the clients we serve. Speaking of the newly formed Transition Committee, we have begun meeting this quarter and have had two meetings thus far. At the beginning we have met in person in central Nebraska and have begun to define ourselves and to focus on how to improve relations with other partners and teachers, how to bring better consistency to our service delivery statewide and how to create resources for our current and future staff to help raise the capacity of all staff in the area of transition.

Regarding capacity building, Nancy Flearl and I participated in a Capacity Building forum in Kansas City, which was Nation Wide in scope but was designed to bring the core partners in transition for each state together at one table to create a plan for how to move transition forward in each given state. This is significant to report to you because, while this group has been meeting for more than 10 years now, we had never been invited VR was thought to be the partner of record. I learned of this meeting two weeks before it occurred and pushed for our attendance, which I think was a big step forward with folks at the department of education in terms of seeing us as a stakeholder needing to be at the discussion table. Raising our visibility is one of the priorities in the upcoming months and years and each step forward is not small on this pathway. I hope

that it will pay dividends in forming MOUs, partners and joint programming in the future.

I will conclude my quarterly highlights now, wish all of you a great rest of summer, and look forward to the fall when things should transition back to a slower but steady pace for all the staff and youth involved in our transition efforts.

Respectfully submitted

Shane Buresh, Transition Coordinator

Bill Brown, Business Manager III

AWARE - I have been working on this as one of the 2 Project Managers. We have been testing, training, and implementing AWARE and the financial documents. We have been working on the business processes of Authorizing for services and on processing payments from invoices. We have changed a few areas and strengthened the process. We have not tested the process much as there are many different individuals who have roles in those processes.

We have been ordering computers, upgrading the network, and generally working with Wes to best prepare for AWARE. We have one primary issue with JAWS and AWARE that we are pursuing. We have been told that Freedom Scientific will be addressing the issue but we have been told it will not happen prior to their October 2017 major update but it should be soon afterward. As I understand it, they issue smaller updates about every six weeks.

The issue of Center Apartments is still open. We do not have any serious bidders in mind at this time, but Ann Tanner at State Building division is working on it.

Spent some time putting together the accounting infrastructure to keep our NBE Contract viable after Todd Shumaker's departure. We had to set up a way to get the workers paid, the food paid which was not as State Purchasing preferred but they understood and signed off on our solution, made sure that monies appropriated by the state were available to pay the bills since we were in the last month of the fiscal year when this all happened. Everyone was very helpful in this unusual process. I am working with State Accounting to insure that no more money than absolutely necessary is unavailable for federal match.

Brought the agency into compliance with end of the State Fiscal year procedures. Fiscal year was closed.

Put together a budget plan for State Fiscal year 2018 and put it into the E1 accounting system as required, July 30, 2017.

Identify Reallocation funds to request. Put together the request for Interim Director to submit during the first week of August.

Bill Brown, Business Manager

Unfinished Business

Budget and Biennium Update

The Budget Spending Plan has been completed and was submitted on July 27, 2017. Our State appropriation was raised about 5%. This would have been more had we not received a .5% reduction in operations costs during the last week of the session. The federal grant for 2017 increased by .1%.

NCBVI should be eligible to apply for approximately \$725,000 in Reallotment funds.

NCBVI is having difficulty with changes that Social Security has made in their transfer of funds process. They are using the same federal contract systems that we use for our Department of Defense contract and the information they receive is not stable and has changed our registration information. We are working at this time to get this corrected for both our Department of Defense contract and the SSA reimbursement funds. We have been working on this almost daily for about two months.

We are currently using OIB funds from the 2017 grant. We ran out of carryover funds earlier in July.

We are currently using carryover 2016 grant funds for Vocational Rehabilitation. We will run out of carryover approximately September 1. We will then start using 2017 funding.

Pre-Ets have been spent for the 2016 grant. All of the Pre-Ets for the 2017 current grant have been spent. We will need to spend 15% of any Reallotment funds on Pre-Ets. That would be approximately \$110,000 if we receive our full Reallotment request.

We are looking at ways to slow our spending. But as always, providing superior services is our goal.

Public Comment

Virgil Scott – Virgil stated that this is the first NCBVI Commission Board meeting that he has attended. He stated that he doesn't understand the connection between the Department of Roads and vending machines.

Chair Hansen reported that one of the programs that NCBVI operates is the Nebraska Business Enterprise. NCBVI is the licenser for blind vendors in the State of Nebraska that operates under a federal law called the Randolph Sheppard Act. This federal law says that any federally operated building that has vending machines in it shall be operated by blind vendors. There is a whole

program set into place to make sure that these independent business operators are operating their business properly and they work together as a team to set-aside a certain amount of their profits each month. This money goes into helping them to have funds to repair and replace equipment. They also work together to create retirement plans and so on. Over the last several years NCBVI has seen a dramatic increase in the number of locations in which we are operating vending machines and cafeterias around the state of Nebraska.

Commissioner Bulger added that NCBVI is guaranteed federal preference, but Nebraska does not have the mini-Randolph Sheppard which gives the same preference to state buildings. Nebraska does not have a law that outlines preference for blind vendors in state buildings. However, the NBE program is working to get vending machines into state buildings such as the Department of Roads and Department of Corrections. The NBE program is about getting vending jobs for the blind.

Chair Hansen added that while it is good to get additional vending locations we must have the blind vendors to operate those locations.

Break

A break was taken at 10:15 a.m.

The meeting resumed at 10:30 a.m.

Newsline® Update

Nebraska NFB-Newsline®
July 26, 2017
Jamie K. Richey, Outreach Coordinator

Another quarter has flown by and subscribers have been busy in Nebraska. Unfortunately, I can only report on May and June's stats since this report will be submitted before the end of July.

May saw the addition of 11 new subscribers to Newsline in Nebraska. Subscribers spent 16,779 minutes reading Newsline content via the phone in May and 46.84% of those calls were made through the local number. Subscribers also accessed Newsline through the web, the mobile app and the Victor Reader Stream 4,706 times and 3,287 emails were sent. Nebraska publications were read the most and were accessed 4,112 times in May, closely followed by national newspapers and breaking news.

In June 12 subscribers joined bringing the total as of the 30th of June to 1,982. A few less minutes were spent on the phone for Newsline subscriber at 15,806, however more calls were made through the local number at 55.54%. Content was accessed through other devices 4,215 times and 3,017 emails were sent. Nebraska publications are still in the lead with publications accessed 3,834 times

during June, but local weather and weather alerts were accessed more than national publications this month.

No new publications were added this quarter, but a new access method was introduced at the NFB National convention. Subscribers will soon be able to access Newslines through the Amazon Echo! More information on this exciting announcement will be released soon.

This concludes my short report for this quarter. As always if you have any questions please don't hesitate to contact me. Stay cool and enjoy the remainder of summer!

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Complaints or Issues

There were no new cases to the Client Assistance Program relating to the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (NCBVI) during this time.

Shari Bahensky attended the NCBVI Supervisor Meetings, as well as the Technology Team meetings when her schedule allows.

Her plan is to meet and share information/resources regarding the Client Assistance Program and Hotline for Disability Services with the North Platte area office.

Anonymous Staff Suggestion Box Comments

Chair Hansen reported that the commissioners received a suggestion in the anonymous staff suggestion box. The suggestion read:

NCBVI needs to find a way to limit the number of e-mails sent out to everyone; for example, it is very distracting to receive job openings in Lincoln when you don't work in the Lincoln office. Additionally, it would be helpful if requests for purchase orders were only sent from supervisors and counselors from the same office. For example, if the Lincoln office is requesting that a purchase order be completed by another office, send it to the counselors of that office for approval and for them to forward to the VR Tech(s) as appropriate.

It was noted that the emails about job opportunities have been sent out to all NCBVI staff because a client may be seeking a job in Lincoln, Omaha or other Nebraska community. These emails are intended to share with clients when appropriate.

For the purchase authorizations, it was noted that some VR Technicians have been supporting the work of multiple offices so this may be part of why staff members may be receiving some additional emails that do not pertain to them.

Commissioner Newman reported that the commissioners do pass these suggestions on to the director and/or leadership team to get additional information. Therefore, if there are additional issues the person should bring the issue to their supervisor. The commissioners are not the only individuals that are going to act or not act on a suggestion.

Nebraska Business Enterprise (NBE) Update

This item was covered in the interim director report and will be included in the executive director report for future meetings. The Nebraska Business Enterprise (NBE) Update will no longer be a separate agenda item.

New Business

Discuss and Act on the Per Diem Guidelines regarding Prep for Public Meetings

The commissioners discussed the current per diem guidelines. The current guideline read:

The NCBVI Board of Commissioners has established the following guidelines to be followed when seeking payment of Per Diem.

Per Diem will be available for the following:

- Quarterly board meetings
- Legislative confirmation hearings, when the confirmation is confirmed
- Events where we are asked by the board in advance to represent the commission, including, but not limited to giving and/or receiving awards
- State staff meetings
- Conference calls that pertain to board representation, including, but not limited to calls with new staff, RSA, or training
- Travel days to and from meetings when it occurs on a separate day and involves an overnight stay
- Other formal in person meetings of NCBVI
- Board meeting preparation not to exceed 2-days per quarter

The current guidelines do not address the issue of when there are two or more Board meetings in one quarter. Therefore, with the current guidelines the commissioners can only receive per diem for one meeting and two days of prep time per quarter.

Commissioner Rieken moved to revise the guidelines to change Quarterly Board meetings to Public Board meetings. Commissioner Bell seconded the motion. Commissioners Rieken, Bell, Newman and Hansen voted in favor of the motion. Commissioner Bulger voted no.

The guidelines will read:

The NCBVI Board of Commissioners has established the following guidelines to be followed when seeking payment of Per Diem.

Per Diem will be available for the following:

- Public board meetings
- Legislative confirmation hearings, when the confirmation is confirmed
- Events where we are asked by the board in advance to represent the commission, including, but not limited to giving and/or receiving awards
- State staff meetings
- Conference calls that pertain to board representation, including, but not limited to calls with new staff, RSA, or training
- Travel days to and from meetings when it occurs on a separate day and involves an overnight stay
- Other formal in person meetings of NCBVI
- Public meeting preparation not to exceed 2-days per Public Board meeting

Public Comment – There was no public comment.

Typical Final Announcements

The next meeting will be November 4, 2017 in Omaha. The Focus Topic will be a Presentation from Nebraska Center for the Education of Children who are Blind or Visually Impaired (NCECBVI).

Executive Session for Review of Executive Director Applications

Commissioner Bell moved to go into executive session at 10:53 a.m. to review the executive director applications.

Commissioner Bulger seconded the motion.

All commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Bell moved to come out of executive session at 12:11 p.m.

Commissioner Newman seconded the motion.

All commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Chair Hansen reported that during the executive session the commissioners compared their scoring results and after some discussion they decided to ask three of the applicants to come in for an interview.

The three applicants the commissioners will invite for interviews are:

Donald Alveshere (Boise, ID): Mr. Alveshere has worked at the agency for the blind in Washington State and Idaho, He is currently the Aware project manager at Alliance Software.

Christine Boone (Pickrell, NE): Mrs. Boone has worked at the agency for the blind in Pennsylvania, Michigan, the Oklahoma school for the blind, and currently as a private consultant.

Carlos Serván (Lincoln, NE): Mr. Serván has worked at the agency for the blind in New Mexico and currently works for NCBVI.

Commissioner Bulger moved to invite Mr. Alveshere, Mrs. Boone and Mr. Serván to interview for the NCBVI Executive Director position.

Commissioner Rieken seconded the motion.

All commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Newman moved that the commissioners will intend to conduct the interviews on Monday, August 14, 2017 and deliberate that night before they adjourn for the evening. They plan to conduct the interviews at the NCBVI offices in Lincoln as well as give each of the candidates a tour if they desire.

Commissioner Bell seconded the motion.

All commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 12:15 p.m.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the November 4, 2017 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