

**Nebraska Business Enterprises Program
Nebraska Blind Licensees Committee Meeting**

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
4600 Valley Rd. Suite 100
Lincoln, NE 68510

March 5, 2021

Meeting called to order by Chairperson Sandy Alvarado at 10:03 a.m.

Board Members in Attendance

Sandy Alvarado, Chairperson; Chris Nolan, Vice Chairperson; Andrea Chizek, Secretary; and Board Members Alex Curtis and Atty Svendsen

Blind Licensees and Trainees in Attendance

Jeremy Richie, Jim Jirak, Ronnie Kellogg, Jason Thompson, and Wiley Elmshouser

NCBVI Staff in Attendance

Carlos Serván, Executive Director; Carol Jenkins, Deputy Director of Services; Eric Buckwalter, NBE Staff; Dave Robinson, NBE Staff; Nancy Flearl, and Larry Olsen

Guests

Bob Welch

Logistics

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was available. The Notice of the Meeting was published in the Lincoln Journal Star, on the NCBVI Website, NFB Newsline®, and Radio Talking Book. The notice was sent to Commission Staff and Commissioners.

Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Atty Svendsen to approve the minutes from the meeting on December 4, 2020 as distributed. Alex Curtis seconded. Motion passed.

NBE Committee Chair Report (Presented by Sandy Alvarado)

Braille Overlays

Discovered Braille overlays are available for many of the snack machines we currently have. Spoke with SLA to possibly purchase these to help us with being able to do some basic things without sighted assistance such as changing prices. This can be accomplished by having step-by-step directions handy to follow and practicing while having a sighted person there while you gain confidence. I would encourage the SLA to make sure to add this to any future purchases so we wouldn't have to go back to apply them later.

Sagebrush Training

I attended the Sagebrush training that was conducted by the RSVA (Randolph Sheppard Vendors of America). I hope you also attended since the SLA offered to cover the \$50 cost for you. All you needed to commit was your time. There were some very good speakers and opportunities for us to interact with

other licensees across the country. I had an opportunity to boast about our SLA and how helpful they were during the beginning of the pandemic. Many of you may not know that our state has actually expanded during these tough times. This is mainly due to the forward planning that is always there with our SLA. It was a lot of speaking about contactless payments. The pandemic has definitely pushed the use of credit cards more than was projected a couple of years ago. Many manufacturers are incorporating touchless in such a way that the customer won't even need to touch the screen on the machine. The entire transaction could be done on their smart phones. Another training speaker talked about the importance of demonstrating how you keep yourself and your equipment clean. Examples for us with vending machines are while you are servicing your machines with customers nearby is to wash, sanitize your hands or wear gloves, keeping your masks on and wiping down the displays and buttons with wipes. Do these things where your customers are. This shows them you are serious about keeping them safe. Did you know if you wanted an iBill reader you can get one free from the Bureau of engraving and printing? Simply go to the website and print the application and send it in. They also had a great speaker from SSA. There some links on the RSVA website from past trainings available to listen to. Go to www.randolph-sheppard.org.

RSA Conversations

We, as the committee, have met once so far to make a list of questions and share our ideas on the 20 million disbursements. It isn't moving as quickly as we were hoping but it is moving faster than first expected. After we met together as your committee I met with our SLA and shared our thoughts and concerns. We are all waiting for some guidelines to come down from RSA. We are in a holding pattern until those guidelines arrive. I keep in contact with Carol on a weekly basis to see if they have anything new. I have been on many zoom informational meetings concerning this whole topic. We just won't know how to move forward until we get some guidance from RSA.

Licensee Assistance

I had an opportunity to help a licensee receive assistance from the SLA that really helped them understand what was needed from them to be a better operator. I recognized both parties were getting a bit frustrated so I was very pleased to help resolve and get a common ground for all to feel heard and respected. Training can come in many ways and sometimes you just need to look at another way to present things. I bring this up to show that if you, as the licensee, aren't comfortable to ask your counselor you can always contact me or one of your committee members to help. On that same thought the SLA can contact me to seek help with issues with a licensee. We are all in this together and we have to follow rules and regulations. Sometimes they are difficult to grasp but together we get there.

Training Opportunities Through Hadley

If you haven't taken the Hadley online courses, now would be a great time to look at them and see if there is something you may want to refresh yourself on or learn. There was an email sent out a little bit back informing all of us about The Hadley School and its offerings. I encourage you to check it out and if there is something you want to do please do so. They have a general list of some webinars that are free but they have a specific training for Randolph-Sheppard that costs money. You can take a single module or the entire training. If you are interested contact your counselor if you have an open case or Eric to express your interest.

BLAST

BLAST was live last June and those trainings can be found on the website www.blindmerchants.org. They also have the last special training on that same website. I believe there will be some more training opportunities later in the summer. Just like RSVA, there are many good things found on this website.

Interviews

As a part of our duties as a committee, we occasionally act as an interviewing panel when more than one licensee bids on a facility. We had to do this recently. Chris, Atty and myself performed this function. We gave our recommendation to the SLA and they made the final decision.

Elections

Please consider placing your name in the hat and be willing to commit to the two years.

SLA Report (Presented by Eric Buckwalter)

VENDING SITE UPDATES

Nebraska Department of Transportation

Credit card readers have been installed at all I-80 rest stop machines. The I-80 credit card reader project is now complete.

US StratCom Cafeteria and Vending

Cafeteria services continue to be offered in accordance with what is allowed within StratCom COVID-19 restrictions and policies. Vending services continue as well. There is increased traffic at both the cafeteria and vending machines as STRACTCOM brings more people back to working from the building. The cafeteria is working on hiring more people to assist with the increased presence in the building.

Nebraska State Patrol

Work continues to establish vending services at the new Nebraska State Patrol building in northeast Lincoln. It is expected that this site will be operational by May of 2021. The site will be operated by a licensee.

DHHS-Omaha

NBE's first micro market has been established at a DHHS building in Omaha.

New Sites

Recently, two new sites have opened in the Lincoln area. The VA-CBOC facility opened on 3/2/21 and the new NDEE (formally DEQ) site opened on 3/3/2021. Licensees run both sites.

NBE Licensee Update

Currently, there are 14 licensed vendors operating facilities. There are two trainees in the vending program.

Vending Site Complaints

Vending site complaints that have come into NCBVI this quarter include reports of machines not being sufficiently stocked. The SLA recognizes that low numbers of customers in buildings can make it difficult to keep machines stocked, without the risk of product expiring. The SLA is willing to work with licensees on strategies during this time. Please reach out to Eric to facilitate this. NBE Vendors are reminded that NCBVI holds all of the contracts with various facilities, and licensees are representing themselves, other licensees, other blind vendors, and NCBVI statewide.

Additional Information

Credit Card Readers

NBE staff and its contractor(s) continue to work on installing credit card readers on machines across the state; where allowed and applicable. There has been some delay in this project due to COVID-19. The SLA has recently purchased 50 additional credit card machines. It is the goal to have all credit card readers installed by early summer 2021.

Seed Cashless Plus

NBE continues to explore a possible trial of the Seed Cashless Plus vending management tool. Seed Cashless Plus allows vendors to track inventory and other aspects of their machines remotely. Credit card readers need to be installed before a trial can take place. Two vendors have been identified to run this possible trial.

Operator Agreements

NBE is working to update licensee Operator Agreements, which will include the newly approved Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) operator agreement. These will be distributed to vendors for signatures.

Looking Ahead

The SLA has received reports from both licensees and contracted sites that they are beginning to have more people back in buildings. Vendors are encouraged to check with the sites point-of-contact to inquire about employees returning to buildings, and to make adjustments to fill schedules and site visits accordingly.

At a meeting of SLA administrators at the recent Sagebrush Conference, the SLA learned that the NBE program was one of a few from across the country to expand during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please continue providing the quality goods and services to customers during this challenging time.

With the purchase and installation of new machines, NBE staff will be placing an emphasis on clean, well maintained, and properly faced machines. Training on these items will be provided on an as needed basis.

NBE Staff have created a draft of an NBE Handbook, but it is still a work in progress.

Update on 20 Million Dollar Allocation

Sandy discussed this topic in her chair report. We are waiting for RSA guidelines to move forward with this.

Discuss Allowable Deductions that Should or be Allowed

This topic was discussed by Dave Robinson. There is a list of allowable deductions emailed out every year that outline the approved deductions. There are some deductions that you can write off on taxes that are not allowed on the profit-and-loss paperwork. If you have a question about a deduction please contact Dave first to discuss before submitting your profit-and-loss paperwork for the month.

Discuss Tracking Unassigned Funds and Set Aside Funds Separately

This topic was explained by Carol Jenkins. There are two types of funds, our set aside funds and our unassigned funds. Our set aside funds are used for maintenance of our machines, sick/vacation pay, and retirement. Unassigned funds are our funds classified as funds that we receive from the companies that subcontract with the Commission. Until recently, these two funds were tracked together. Now, they are

tracked separately. In order to maintain a significant amount of funds in the set aside fund, the general liability and worker's compensation insurance should be paid from the unassigned fund.

An amended motion was made by Atty Svendsen to move the general liability and worker's compensation insurance from set aside to unassigned funds. Alex Curtis seconded it. Motion passed.

Update on New Licensees and Trainees

Presented above in the SLA report.

Update on Profit and Loss Reports (Presented by Dave Robinson)

Dave is pleased with everyone's performance. He noted if your paperwork needs to be fixed and isn't in on the 20th then it is considered not in on time. It helps Dave if you get it in a couple days before the 20th.

Discuss Training for Next Quarterly Meeting

Topics were discussed. We decided to not have a training next meeting because we are planning a retreat this summer.

Set Date for Next Meeting

Atty made a motion to have the next meeting on May 14, 2021 in Omaha , NE at 10:00 a.m. Andrea seconded it. Motion passed.

Date: May 14, 2021

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: Omaha, NE

Facility: State Office Building

Adjournment

Sandy made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Chris seconded it. Motion passed.

Adjournment time: 11:45 a.m.

Training

Training was presented on USA Technology's USA Live account portal. Atty, Jim, and Jeremy presented topics on various items that we can use to help us set up our reports for our debit/credit card readers.

Attendance for Training

Atty Svendsen, Jim Jirak, Jeremy Richie, Andrea Chizek, Jason Thompson, Ronnie Kellogg, and Wiley Elmshouser.