

Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
Public Meeting, Saturday, May 5, 2012
Holiday Inn; 110 South 2nd Avenue
Kearney, Nebraska

Approved Minutes

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

Julie Johnson, Chairperson of the Board of Commissioners, called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. and she welcomed everyone to the meeting. There is no Focus Topic for the meeting as the commissioners will discuss the annual evaluation of the executive director.

It was noted that public comments are always welcome regarding the agenda items. Dan Bird recorded the meeting and the recordings are available on the website. Lunch will be on your own.

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

Reading of the agenda

Commissioner Walla read the agenda items and introductions were made.

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

NCBVI Staff Present: Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, Executive Director; Bob Deaton, Deputy Director IL; Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant.

Public Present: Dan Bird, NCBVI Driver and meeting recorder; Katie Rieken, student from Lincoln; Becky Rieken, parent from Kearney.

Announcement of public comment protocol

Chairperson Johnson discussed the Public Comment Protocol which went into effect May 2011. The Protocol is available at the meetings in both braille and print.

Approve November 2011 minutes and also reference the availability of the February 2012 commission report in lieu of actual minutes.

Commissioner Oltman moved to approve the Minutes of the November, 2011 Commission Board Meeting. Commissioner Jirak seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all were in favor of the motion. It was noted that a report from February 2012 is available on the website in lieu of actual minutes due to the cancellation of the February meeting.

Executive Director's Evaluation including approval of the Executive Director's Time Certification

The Commissioners reviewed and discussed the results of the 2012 NCBVI Staff Survey. The survey is conducted to assist the Board of Commissioners to ensure employee satisfaction, Executive Director Performance and excellent consumer services.

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

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

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

The executive director believes that it is respectable to be blind.
Overall Score: 4.2

The executive director listens to concerns from staff.
Overall Score: 3.4

The executive director responds to concerns from staff.

Overall Score: 3.3

The executive director listens to concerns from consumers.

Overall Score: 4.2

The executive director responds to concerns from consumers.

Overall Score: 4.2

The executive director identifies priorities.

Overall Score: 3.4

The executive director ensures that identified priorities become completed tasks.

Overall Score: 3.4

The executive director negotiates creatively to hire quality staff.

Overall Score:

3.3

The executive director negotiates creatively to fund exemplary service delivery.

Overall Score: 3.7

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

Overall Score: 4.1

Overall Average Score for questions 1 to 10: 3.7

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

Response

*In E-Force under closure, add Goal completed. Currently it says "withdrew"...etc. *For office meetings, it would be helpful to have written information regarding the meeting that staff can refer back to, or that staff who were absent can review and be in the know. *A support staff person is needed up front in the Omaha office.

An increased sense of trust with regard to supervisors and

administration, knowing that employees will be treated with respect and fairness, and that problems brought to the administration will be properly handled, and that we know with confidence that our confidentiality with regard to the issues we bring to the Executive Director regarding our supervisor or other NCBVI employees will be respected and protected. There have been some serious issues regarding the relationship we have with our supervisor, and we have been given assurances that this will be properly handled by the Executive Director, but we are concerned that things may not be followed up on as they should, and that there then may be negative consequences for those of us that simply answered questions honestly.

I don't feel like we get paid a fair wage for all of the duties we have. I believe we should have our job descriptions re-evaluated.

I know we are a state agency; however, we need to receive at least cost of living raises.

Increase salaries.

Some of the questions on this survey are arbitrary. For example, how would someone who is not a consumer know if the Director listens to consumers? I also wish we could comment after every question. People wouldn't need to, but some questions trigger responses that we are not able to provide because we don't have space available in the survey. This is the only question where we can insert comments. A concern I have is that I do not feel that I could trust going to the Executive Director, and knowing that my issue would be addressed. When I did, the issue got back to my supervisor, and it was not productive. I realize that sometimes the issue does need to be brought up to the supervisor, but in that case, telling the supervisor accomplished nothing. If this is something that only happened once, one can forgive and forget, but it seems to happen with other staff, too. When what you experience is corroborated by others, it makes you lose that

trust. An example that happened recently to a group of us was that Pearl mentioned to our supervisor that one of her staff said she was working on outside business on the State's time. My supervisor then told us this is what she heard from Pearl, and that this was not the case. The staff happened to be working on a project that would improve their job description, and the supervisor said that if she were in our place, she would not make the supervisor mad. In other words, "If you want to get this issue taken care of, I wouldn't piss off your supervisor." Needless to say, this does not help morale, and it creates ineffective employees. I do understand that this was an issue that Pearl needed to address, but implying that one of the supervisor's staff said something was a problem for me. Of course, my supervisor, saying what she said, and making a threat like that, was also unacceptable.

Steps having been taken to improve morale, leaving employees feeling like their work is valued.

Take confidential input from field and center staff because they have the most direct contact and knowledge of clients and attempt to make policy changes to best assist the consumers assisting clients in the long run in reaching their goals. Rather than having staff be mandated to follow long time existing policies that might benefit from change due to a changing workforce, economics, employer standards and mind sets of college graduates and clients looking for employment. Often staff can become complacent when they never see change or feel their voice may be only listened to because it has to be but nothing ever changes or is tried to be done differently.

The Director needs to respond to concerns from staff quickly. Supervisors have been allowed to intimidate their staff and be dishonest about their actions. They are allowed to continue as supervisors when they are not trusted by their staff or colleagues. This atmosphere is damaging the services that we provide for clients.

The staff feeling like they could bring a concern to Pearl without

it backlashing at us. Confidentiality has been broken and staff does not feel safe at reporting concerns or issues. This survey needs to allow employees to voice issues after each question. You should have the option of selecting NA. I know how to contact the Board and to make suggestions but don't know that it will stay confidential or that we will see any results. I know what my job duties are but over the years they keep changing where I have to accomplish more and more in a day for the same pay.

There is too much gossip.

This form is not really set up to make comments for each question. I have no idea if our executive director works hard or the Executive Director listens to concerns from consumers? I have no idea I don't see her with consumers. I rarely see her. I do know that she does not address tough staff issues. She seems to brush them under the carpet. I know concerns have been brought to her in the past and issues have not been taken care of. I was told she was not to be trusted did not believe it until I saw the problems that have and are being ignored.

To be taken seriously when a concern is brought to management's attention and not wait until the third or fourth time when the same item is brought to their attention. Need to draw the line between friendship with coworkers and supervising.

To have better communication from all offices to be on the same page.

Training. I wish a new hire employee would have more time to spend with a counselor out on the field.

When we request items/equipment and those are approved it still seems to take forever to get those items. I also think that support staff is an important part of our team and it seems the trend is toward eliminating the support staff. That leads to paying counselors to do support staff work and keeps them

away from doing the tasks we are best at doing - working with clients. The NP district is extremely short of staff. We need help - hire temporary counselors.

What is the best feature about working at NCBVI?

At its core there exists a strong philosophy about equality and expectations for the blind and visually impaired and that gives confidence to not only the NCBVI team but also more importantly to the consumers that we work with and the members of the community staff interact with on a daily basis.

commitment to the people we serve

coworkers

Every day is a challenge and we learn something new every day.

Everyone is friendly and a pleasure to work with.

It is a family atmosphere. We are helping people change their lives.

It is rewarding to see clients employed in rewarding careers of their own choosing.

Team

Team support

Teamwork! Everyone at the agency is great about helping others! I love the fact that if you have a question about a certain situation and don't know how to handle it, you know you can ask any counselor and they are always willing to help!

The camaraderie of the staff.

The high expectations placed on staff members and clients.

The opportunity to provide input. That as a staff person we are allowed to take the role of organizing programs and using our knowledge, skills and creativity. That we as an agency are always looking a how we do things and if there are better way that will result in better success in the services to blind Nebraskans.

The people, for the most part, work together as a team.

The variety of the work we do.

We are allowed to take off for family needs which allows for better employee morale.

We are truly working toward positive outcomes for blind people.

We have a good team, and we are changing what it means to be blind by providing training to consumers to help them to become independent.

Working with co-workers and with clients to achieve/reach the client's goals. To have successful closures.

Chair Johnson noted that in looking over the last year, it appears that NCBVI has had a much greater staff turnover than in any time in her memory. Chair Johnson stated that this concerns her, but perhaps it is a coincidence. Director Van Zandt stated that she will look at the staff changes to see if there are any trends. Director Van Zandt noted that there have been some significant personnel issues, which is always a challenge. Director Van Zandt noted that management cannot talk about the issue to staff. Personnel issues are a time consuming piece of everything that she has been doing. This has been a huge morale factor. The other piece is the amount of work involved in the Federal Monitoring, the grant work and other reports is very time consuming. These two items together make it difficult to keep the nice on-going meeting with staff and communicating with staff. These types of things take a toll on everyone.

Commissioner Oltman inquired as to if the discussion at State Staff meeting about independent living administrative items were going to have to change as far as number of hours being allowed to work with IL clients affect the morale of staff. Director Van Zandt noted that staff are really committed to what they are doing and they care about their clients so she is almost certain that this does affect them if most of their clients are older or independent living.

Commissioner Oltman noted that she participates in the blind networking group conference calls which are held with others nationally. While there may be problems at the Nebraska Commission, it amazes her how many bigger problems other agencies have.

The commissioners discussed the survey format. It was decided to revise the Staff Survey to include a box after each question wherein staff may add comments and a box wherein staff may mark 'unknown' to a question. Commissioners Hansen and Johnson will work on the logistics to the revision of the survey before the August 2012 Commission Board meeting.

Commissioner Hansen stated that he had a couple of questions regarding the discussion that was held last year during the discussion of the staff survey.

There were a lot of comments this year from staff about the trust of upper management and the feeling to come forward with concerns.

Commissioner Hansen referred to a discussion last year which read:

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

Commissioner Hansen inquired as to if administration had an opportunity to look into this. Director Van Zandt noted that she has not looked into this during this last year. Director Van Zandt stated that she thought she stated last year that years ago she had discussion with State Personnel about this issue. State Personnel has this evaluation procedure they call 360. There are different aspects to this process which are pro and con. State

Personnel's bottom line was that there was not a good way to do it and State Personnel had gotten away from that idea. Commissioner Hansen noted that because NCBVI is a small agency it is somewhat probable that staff would not be honest in their evaluation of their supervisor. Director Van Zandt added that staff would not be honest if they feared retaliation.

Commissioner Hansen inquired as to the status of the Center staff counselors' positions being reclassified from Orientation Counselor to Program Specialist. Specifically, Commissioner Hansen asked if the Center Staff have completed the PDQ (Position Description Questionnaire) in order to have their positions reviewed by State Personnel. Director Van Zandt reported that she does know that Center staff has begun the process, but the PDQ has not yet been completed. Pearl is to communicate with the Center counselors and Center director to ensure that they are given adequate time to complete their PDQs. Position classifications are ultimately decided by State Personnel.

Commissioner Hansen inquired as to if Director Van Zandt has had the opportunity to travel to the NCBVI offices to visit with staff. Director Van Zandt reported that she truly does want to make this happen. At the time she had her trip scheduled she broke her foot and was unable to make it happen. It has also been an incredible busy year. Director Van Zandt noted that she will make this a priority for the upcoming year.

The development of a Program Manager of Technology position was discussed. Director Van Zandt noted that the position was created and Wes Majerus was hired for the position and began his employment on April 30, 2012. Director Van Zandt also noted that NCBVI is in the process of hiring a North Platte District Supervisor.

The Board of Commissioners discussed the comments from staff relating to what they like about working for NCBVI. Chairperson Johnson noted that many comments related to supportive team environment.

It was suggested that a reminder to complete the Staff Survey be sent to all staff before the deadline. It was decided that the Chair or Vice Chair will send the reminder to Director Van Zandt and she will forward it to all staff.

It was decided that in the future the Staff Survey results will be sent to the Executive Director before the meeting in order that she can best respond to the staff comments.

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

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

The commissioners inquired about the raise percentage for staff this year. Director Van Zandt noted that contract covered employees will get a 2% raise effective July 1, 2012. Director Van Zandt stated that normally the Governor then tells directors that they can give Rules covered employees the same raise.

Commissioner Hansen moved to give the Executive Director a 2% raise effective July 1, 2012. Commissioner Walla seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all voted in favor of the motion.

It was noted that Chairperson Johnson needs to communicate to the Governor via State Personnel that the NCBVI Executive Director was retained.

Executive Director Time Sheet Certification Submission

Commissioner Oltman moved to continue with the current method being used for the Director to submit her Personnel Activity Report to the Board. The Director submits her Personnel Activity Report via email to the entire Board for their review and information. It is an automatic approval unless a question or concern is raised by a Commission Board member.

Commissioner Jirak seconded the motion.

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

10:15 am -Approval of staff travel guidelines

Director Van Zandt noted that information came out during a meeting that State law requires all travel of staff of state agencies to be pre-approved. This includes travel in state and out state. Currently for out of state travel all staff must complete a form that says where they are going, why they are

going there, the cost, how it will be funded, etc. and this must be pre-approved by their immediate supervisor and by the executive director. This is done by all staff for out of state travel.

Supervisors manage in state travel by getting itineraries from staff and reviewing them on an on-going basis. However, staff is not required to check in with their supervisor every morning to get an okay for in state travel as this would not be manageable. Discussion was held with Administrative Services to determine how the agency could comply with the law regarding in state travel. Administrative Services recommended that each year the Board of Commissioners would have a motion to pre-approve travel that is related to the purpose of the staff person's position. Business Manager Bill Brown put together a proposed motion for the Board to approve.

Commissioner Hansen moved:

The Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired approves all employee in-state business travel and/or out of state business travel within 60 miles of the border of Nebraska in any adjoining state, which relates directly to the provision of services to a client, i.e. employer visit, medical appointment, service referral, employment interview, etc. All other out of state business travel is approved if granted approval by the Executive Director of the agency. This motion is in effect until the next meeting of the Board of Commissioners after April 1, 2013.

Commissioner Jirak seconded.

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

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Break

Report from the Chair

Chair Johnson reported that she attended the ACB-N Convention in Fremont. Chair Johnson noted that she met some new people at the convention and reconnected with some people that she has known for a long time. Chair Johnson presented at the convention on Healthy

Relationships and she felt it was well received. Chair Johnson requested reimbursement for her hotel room expense.

Vice Chair Jirak moved that with the understanding that Chair Johnson write a report about her attendance at the ACB-N convention, her hotel expenses be reimbursed. Commissioner Walla seconded the motion. All commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Chair Johnson reported that she had her Legislative Confirmation Hearing for her second term as a NCBVI commissioner. After the hearing she spent the rest of the day at the NCBVI Lincoln office visiting with staff and had a discussion with clients about employment.

Commissioner Oltman reported that she met a senior citizen who she took to a local NFB Chapter meeting. After attending the meeting, the senior citizen decided to use Talking Book so Commissioner Oltman assisted in setting her up with Talking Book.

Commissioner Oltman noted that she continues to attend the Blind Networking Conference calls. These calls are held every other month. The March 2012 call was very interesting because Chris and Doug Boone were present along with individuals from several other states. Chris and Doug talked about the situation at the Michigan Commission. At the time, the Governor of Michigan had put down an Executive Order to shut down the Commission for the Blind. The Michigan staff heard of this through the news. The Executive Director of the Michigan Commission for the Blind was fired by phone when he was on vacation. Chris Boone reported that there are problems at the Michigan Commission, but it is worth saving. The Commission simply needs some readjustment. It was noted that the Governor of Michigan rescinded the Executive Order. Other states also spoke about issues at their agencies. Commissioner Oltman noted that any Commission can have problems, but it always seems that Nebraska always helps other agencies become better.

Chairperson Jirak reported that in February 2012 he had his Legislative Confirmation Hearing. In March 2012 he attended the Open House at Outlook Nebraska with the ribbon cutting ceremony on the new machine they have. Chairperson Jirak noted that the event was well attended as they had about 250 present. In April 2012 was the ACB-N Convention in

Fremont. Also, he and Mark Bulger visited the Center for their yearly talk to the clients about the ACB.

Commissioner Hansen reported that he also had his Legislative Confirmation Hearing. Commissioner Hansen also reported that he has been spending a lot of time during the last month and a half, along with Commissioner Oltman's assistance, revising some internal documentation and reference material for the Commission Board. It was noted that this will be talked about in greater detail later in the meeting.

Chairperson Johnson added that in the last few weeks she has been looking at State Personnel Rules and Labor Regulations, etc. She noted that this has helped her get a clearer picture of the different classifications of staff and what Rules they fall under.

Chairperson Johnson asked if any commissioner had any requests for upcoming travel events and/or training. Commissioner Walla noted that he would like to attend the ACB National Convention as he has never been to one. Commissioner Walla noted that this is pending upon his travel to Canada. It was noted that NCBVI will pay up to \$700 for attendance at National Conventions this year.

Vice Chair Jirak moved to approve Commissioner Walla's request to attend the ACB National Convention. Chair Johnson seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all voted in favor of the motion, except Commissioner Walla who abstained. The motion carried.

Report from the Executive Director

Director Van Zandt verbally gave highlights of her report and she thanked the Commissioners for their time. The entire report of the Executive Director is pasted below.

The State Auditor completed the Single State Audit, focusing on compliance with the federal grants and regulations. A finding related to allocation of leave hours and subsequent costs based on the ratio of work hours submitted by federal grant. We now have a system in place to properly allocate leave hours to appropriate grants.

The Federal Monitoring Review also took a lot of time. There were findings in all three focus areas.

1. Organizational Structure:

We need to be represented on all 3 local Workforce Boards.

Currently, we are on Lincoln and Greater Nebraska; we are working to become a part of the Omaha Tri-County Board.

2. Transition:

a. We need to have policy and procedures to assure that an Individualized Plan for Employment is written in a timely manner before the student graduates or ages out of the education system.

b. The interagency agreement we have with Nebraska Department of Education must address outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who are in need of transition services.

3. Fiscal Operations:

a. We must submit timely indirect cost rate proposals and/or cost allocation plans for review and approval. Then we must assure that only the approved rates or plans are used in charging the federal grants. We are working with the Indirect Cost Group of U.S. Department of Education to develop and gain approval for such plans.

b. We must ensure equitable distribution of indirect costs among the grants and use as match only that amount allocable to each grant. Indirect costs allocable to the IL and OIB programs may not be used to match federal funds for VR.

c. Program income (primarily Social Security reimbursement) must be fully expended before additional funds may be drawn down in any grant.

d. Procurement must all be handled using State of Nebraska Administrative Services Materiel Division policies and procedures.

e. Finally, we must have all employees who work on only one grant source, complete semi-annual certifications to verify that they have, in the six month period, only worked on one specific program.

The final report was issued April 24, we submitted all "Written Assurances" as required within 10 days. Now a Corrective Action Plan must be completed for each area. There are specific requirements, criteria and timelines that we will follow.

We completed the hiring process for the Technology Program Manager. Wesley Majerus accepted the position and came on board April 30th.

I attended many events and meetings. One of note was the Open House and Ribbon Cutting at Outlook Nebraska, Inc. in Omaha. We worked with local consumers to bring Michael Hingson in as a speaker for NCBVI and numerous other venues.

We met with Pros and Cons at the Department of Corrections, to learn more about what they do and for them to learn what we need and how they can improve their services.

We worked on compiling data for the In-Service Training Grant Report. It was submitted online as required, April 30, 2012.

There was also an audit called the Social Security (SS) Administration Onsite Review, relating to how we process requests for S.S. Reimbursement, how we assure strict confidentiality procedures in dealing with people's SS numbers, etc. Our work on this is through the Dept. of Health and Human Services (HHS). There are a few procedures which will need to be changed, but they are tied to HHS. For our part, everything that Dottie Wilmott does is of the highest caliber.

The Annual NCBVI State Staff meeting was held. We had good speakers including our own staff telling about topics or trainings they had experienced this year, an attorney dealing with confidentiality, sessions on effective workplace relationships and dealing with change, discussions about transition outcomes, technology, etc., and Michael Hingson telling his story about blindness, teamwork, sales, technology and surviving the attack on the World Trade Center in New York.

I attended the ACB of Nebraska State Convention and held a Public Forum. Others of our staff and clients also attended and spoke at the convention. I also did the Joint Agency Meeting, JAM, public forum in Sidney Nebraska.

I did attend the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind meeting in Bethesda Maryland. I spent time with Sherrie Bruegman in the North Platte office; also have spent time attending meetings in the Center and with individual staff members.

Nebraska Center for the Blind

Staffing: Lin Cain, Apartment Resource Counselor resigned March 30, 2012. Alex Castillo had been hired as part time OC in the Center; he applied and was moved into the full time Apartment position. The part time position has been advertised and is in the process of being filled.

Total Full-time Clients Served between 1996 through April, 2012: 200

Competitive Employment: 113

Homemakers: 23

Students: 45

Results:

Of the clients that finished training and schooling;

87.8 percent are employed (competitive employment and homemaker)

73 percent of the clients who finished training and schooling are competitively employed

15 percent are homemakers

22 percent are students from the total number

9.6 percent are not working

Center Activities

Make up and grooming

Working with clay and wheel

Easter eggs coloring

ACB convention

Susan's art exhibit

Election commission for accessible voting machines

Field Services

For the first seven months of Federal Fiscal Year 2012 (October 1, 2011 through April 30, 2012), we served 421 Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients in all statuses. 18 were closed having achieved their employment goals. 23 were closed without achieving employment (refusing further services, unable to locate, failure to cooperate, transfers to other agency, and other).

In the Independent Living (IL) track, from October 1, 2010 through April 30, 2012, we served 611 clients in all statuses. 122 were closed successfully.

32 were closed without achieving their goals (withdrew, moved, deceased, institutionalized, and other reasons).

Case reviews were held in Scottsbluff, North Platte, and Kearney in March.

The "Living the Full Life" spring conference is coming up at the Holiday Inn in Kearney on May 15-17 Project Independence is scheduled to take place at Camp Calvin Crest near Fremont on August 29-September 2.

Dan Hill retired effective May 31; his position has been reclassified to a supervisor. The job posting went out on April 25 and the dead-line to apply is May 11.

The OC position in Scottsbluff will be changed to a Voc Rehab position soon.

The field staff started to get some more training on Motivational Interviewing skills. Lincoln already started; Omaha is already making arrangements; and once we have all of our staff members in the NP district, we will arrange MI training in that area.

The technology manager was hired and his first day of work was April 30. WAGES will start on June 9. There are 9 applicants and some of them will be taking training at the center.

Nebraska Business Enterprises (NBE):

A. A vendor retired from one of the sites at the Omaha Post Office. We assigned that site to Randy, the vendor who has a site in the same building.

B. LB1006 did pass as an amendment to LB859.

C. The vendor who ran the rest areas in York retired and a new person is in training. This new person is doing well and should become a licensed vendor in a month.

Lincoln District Activity Report – Connie Daly

Conchita Hernandez has joined the Lincoln District. We are finally fully staffed after two years. Yay! We had clients get a job as a receptionist, a phone interviewer, a child care worker and an apartment resource counselor. We had four clients hired as dorm counselors for the WAGES program this summer. We have two that were hired for summer programs in other states.

We had 2 sessions of Motivational Interview training this month with Dr. Kate Speck. We will have an additional 5 hours of coaching sessions to build our skills. Larry Roos attended the Brain Injury conference in Kearney. Conchita Hernandez has been receiving Project ALL training with the city of Lincoln. It is leadership training. Amy Buresh is part of the Project Search team working in York at the local hospital. Conchita Hernandez will be part of the Project Search team in Lincoln at the Embassy Suites.

We are starting our 3rd session of GATE. We have had 5 participants.

Omaha District Update – Nancy Flearl

District Staff have been working on the employment conference, college work shop project independence and spring conference, the plans are progressing nicely. Likewise have been busy with group teachings for seniors, TABS and preparing meetings for Deaf Blind Young Adults (DBYA) and Hand and Hand (activities are scheduled for the coming months).

We have been working on bringing additional MI training to the field. The Omaha District will have Kate Speck, PhD from UNL on May 30th and June 27th and coaching sessions with individual offices.

Connie and I are working together on making the transition of Norfolk from the Omaha to the Lincoln District.

We were to have a group teaching this month (April) in Norfolk and it has been rescheduling to the week of May 21st. The Norfolk office has struggled with a really badly broken sidewalk and it was recently replaced. We wanted to make sure that it was a safe environment for training. During the storm on Saturday, April 14th Norfolk office experienced a great deal of water as they face North and the intense winds driving the rain in against the doors. We are making sure there are no mold issues from this as well as previous events like this.

Chad attended the Education Quest Training and promoted our services with school districts across the state. It was of concern to have school personnel saying that they have never heard of us. Hopefully we will have a presence and workshop on our services each year.

Referrals are down both in IL and VR. We have started doing personal outreach to doctor offices/office managers. We continue to do minority outreach across the district.

The building continues to take safety measures in the event of an emergency, weather, active shooter. We recently had drills to practice our procedures.

We continued to do extensive job development. Have 3 transition students that have moved into employment status just this month. One working in claims/financial services. One as sales representative, one customer service.

We have a client that is starting part-time to move full time as administrative secretary.

One in full time in food services. One full time customer service/fraud prevention. Job retention of a counselor, cashier, lawyer. One as a temp worker for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that we too hope will move into a permanent position.

With this topic of employment. We have 3 summer employment programs locally for individuals ranging from 14-26. We have a several students that have applied to for these programs to gain work experience. The younger age range will concentrate on career exploration and work experience. Then ages 16 and older on employment at \$7.25 or more.

We have implemented an Omaha Office Facebook Page. It is to help correspond with clients that have been hard to contact. We have reached two transition students that had started temp employment that were not returning phone/emails.

I attended Project Search which is working in partnership with Papillion LaVista High School and Embassy Suites in LaVista. We have not blind or visually impaired students in their last year of high school to participate this year. They are looking to start another project search partnership with First National Bank and Omaha Public Schools in the future. I am monitoring this so we can be aware of when it will be implemented.

There is a statewide Project Search meeting on May 24th. This will highlight the projects that have been started in Nebraska and an update on where each program is at this point.

Business Office

Bill Brown, Business Manager

Bill has been exceedingly busy with the federal monitoring, audits, and other business.

Kathy Stephens – Administrative Assistant

Attended WORKDAY Basics training on February 14. WORKDAY, a new H/R software package will be launching soon. WORKDAY will be a supplement to EDGE, in that it has some H/R functionality that did not come with EDGE. Payroll will continue to be processed in EDGE. Open enrollment, set to commence this Spring, will be done through WORKDAY. We have been informed that WORKDAY will be accessible. Attended Employee Work Center Advanced Training.

The Michael Hingson Project has been completed.

13 iPhones were issued to field counselors and supervisors.

Worked with Jan Brandt to surplus old computers, etc. from Kearney Office. Surplus is currently full so the computers are being stored in Lincoln until we get word that we can bring them to State Surplus.

Attended State Staff Meeting.

Attended an Independent Agency Director's meeting with Pearl. The topic was the Open Meetings Act.

Completed the 2012 Food Bank Drive.

Dave Robinson – Personnel Officer

1. Lin Cain resigned from the agency on March 30, 2012
2. Alex Castillo applied for and assumed the duties of the Apartment Resource Counselor position vacated by Lin Cain.

3. The part-time Counselor position in the Center that Alex Castillo was in has been advertised and interviews are currently being conducted.
4. Wesley Majerus started in the newly created Program Manager-Technology position on April 30, 2012
5. State Personnel approved our request to re-classify Dan Hill's position from Voc. Rehab. Counselor to that of Voc. Rehab. Supervisor and re-locate it in North Platte. Currently, the position is being advertised and will close on May 11, 2012.
6. I attended Workday basic and Workday Advanced H/R training.
7. Open enrollment is due to commence approximately the third week of May. Employees will use Workday to complete open enrollment and because of the change, will have an extra week to complete it.
8. Attended Payroll User Group meetings in preparation for the migration of H/R information to Workday and got a preview of how Workday should work.
9. Workday is scheduled to be released to H/R personnel only on May 9th, to give us time to get acquainted with and work with it, before open enrollment starts. Workday will be available for all state employees, when Open Enrollment begins.

Director Van Zandt reported that NCBVI is working on programming in eForce that will link the fiscal operations of case management with our actual budget process. Chair Johnson asked if there will be a way to pull reports out of eForce. Director Van Zandt noted that Dottie Wilmott has indicated that eForce is not a reporting system, but there are things that can be done to export the data to access and then use queries.

Bob Deaton stated that in regard to cost allocation, RSA is telling NCBVI that we have to do less with certain populations. If 8 percent of the budget is for older blind services and staff is spending 16 percent of their time serving older blind, RSA is saying we cannot do this anymore. More time is to be spent on basic support. Bob Deaton noted that this is a real challenge and it does affect his morale. RSA's position is that it is all about employment. Director Van Zandt noted that the reality is that the President

and Congress sets up the national budget. Included in this are grants for Vocational Rehabilitation (Basic Support) that is to be used to put people to work, regardless of their age. This is 80 plus percent of our budget. There is a much smaller budget that is for older blind and independent living (part B – under age 55). NCBVI and VR agencies around the country cannot meet all the needs with the grants we have. States are also being told that we must spend all Social Security (program income) dollars before we can draw down money from the federal grant.

Old Business Budget Update

Director Van Zandt noted that the budget was talked about earlier in the meeting and she has nothing further to add.

NFB Newsline® Update

Nebraska NFB-Newsline®

May 1, 2012

Jamie K. Forbis, Outreach Coordinator

Personnel changes have been under way at the National Office in Baltimore, so no new features have been released as of late. The list of publications continues to grow, however, and earlier this year the Braille Monitor which is the National Federation of the Blind's monthly publication was added to the extensive line up of publications on NFB-Newsline®. April also saw the addition of two international newspapers and a quarterly magazine. The two newspapers are the Moscow Times out of Russia and Kathimerini based in Greece. The Kathimerini is a daily newspaper published in Athens. The Moscow Times is a leading English language newspaper published in Moscow since 1992. Both these papers can be found under the international newspapers listings. The magazine is Future Reflections, published quarterly by the American Action Fund for Blind Children and Adults in partnership with the National Organization of Parents of Blind Children. Future Reflections can be found in magazines under the blindness specific category.

In local news; the Kearney Hub which is the daily newspaper published in Kearney has been under construction on NFB-Newsline®. Baltimore has been working on the problem and even though the newspaper is back up

on the system, problems are still occurring with the article selections and content. It is my understanding that the problems will be fixed soon. Problems have also been detected with the Grand Island Independent and are being monitored at this time. Subscribers have been very helpful in alerting me when problems with the system occur and I am extremely grateful. I always appreciate feedback whether it is positive or negative.

From time to time I am asked to present on and/or demonstrate NFB-Newsline®. In March I had the opportunity to demonstrate the extensive features of the Job Listings feature on NFB-Newsline® to some students in attendance of the WinnerFest program sponsored by the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired. The students were given the task of finding three different job openings with in a specific field. The full time or part status, rate of pay and location for each opening had to be obtained. Once the particular position was located using Newsline the students selected the option to have the article emailed to them so no pertinent information was lost in translation. The students were quite impressed.

I was also invited to speak at an event sponsored by the Omaha Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska in March. However, the event was postponed until the fall. I will plan to attend the event at that time to provide information on NFB-Newsline® to business leaders in the Omaha community.

The stats for the last quarter have only fluctuated slightly and are as follows. In February 5 users were added to NFB-Newsline®. Subscribers accessed NFB-Newsline® 1,055 times using a total of 14,505 minutes. The average call lasted 13.75 minutes and 38.61% of those calls were made through the local number. In March 12 new subscribers were added to the system. Subscribers called NFB-Newsline® 1,169 times for a total of 17,350 minutes. The average call lasted 14.84 minutes and 41.03% of the calls were made through the local number. Only 2 subscribers were added in April, but 1,161 calls were made to NFB-Newsline® with the total number of minutes used at 15,798. The average call lasted 13.00 minutes and 42.69% of those calls were made through the local number.

By the next report in August I will have been in attendance at the Living the Full Life conference in Kearney and the NFB National Convention in Dallas,

so I'm sure I'll have a lot of updates and experiences to share. Until then don't hesitate to contact me with any questions and happy reading!

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Complaints or Issues

Director Van Zandt noted that there are no CAP cases to report on. There is only one case in process, not yet closed but basically resolved. It dealt with a request for equipment that related to IL goals rather than to the VR case. CAP has worked with the client and counselors. The report will be forthcoming when finalized.

11:40 am - NBE Update

A vendor retired from one of the sites at the Omaha Post Office. We gave that site to another vendor who has a site in the same building.

LB1006 did pass as an amendment to LB858. This legislation affords a priority to blind persons with regard to the operation of vending facilities on state property according to the Randolph-Sheppard Act. The Bill clarifies that bids for vending facilities shall be based on a comparison of product prices in such facilities to ensure optimum competitiveness of the blind.

The vendor who ran the rest areas in York retired and a new person is in training. This new person is doing a good job and should become a license vendor in a month. The commissioners inquired as to what the process is for training a vendor. Director Van Zandt directed the commissioners to **TITLE 192 NAC NEBRASKA COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED**, Chapter 3, which states,

011.01. Training Provided to Blind Persons: The State Licensing Agency shall provide training to all blind persons with the capacity and desire to operate a vending facility program, including on-the-job training in all aspects of vending facility operation. Such training may be a part of the general rehabilitation program and all training must be part of the Individualized Plan for Employment of the candidate and must be developed on an individual basis. The prospective trainee will be evaluated for blindness and math skills necessary to accomplish the objectives of Section 003.02 during a three-day evaluation period at the Commission's Orientation Center for the Blind. Training will be provided in areas identified as needing further instruction. Examples of further instruction include, but are not limited to the following:

mobility, braille, computer, life skills, shop, bookkeeping, math, and vending repair. The training for each individual shall include a probationary period not to exceed 90 days after the individual is placed in a vending facility, during which time there must be written evaluations of progress on at least a monthly basis. At the end of this probationary period, subject to satisfactory results of the periodic evaluations, the State Licensing Agency shall issue a license to operate the vending facility, in accordance with applicable rules and an operator's agreement.

011.02. Assistance of Vendors: The State Licensing Agency shall provide further training to the extent feasible to any vendor who contacts the State Licensing Agency with an individual problem concerning the operation of his or her vending facility.

011.03. Additional Education and Training: The State Licensing Agency shall provide such additional education or training which the State Licensing Agency staff is able to provide or to provide the opportunity to the vendor to seek the desired education or training from other sources.

It was noted that vendors also complete a three day assessment in the Center.

Public Comment - There was no public comment.

Lunch - A lunch break was taken at 12:05 p.m. The meeting resumed at 1:15 p.m.

New Business

Discuss and Act on 2013 State Plan

Director Van Zandt reported that the 2013 State Plan is in the process of being revised. She and Bob Deaton have been going through it and Bob has been helpful with edits. Director Van Zandt noted that she was unable to provide the commissioners with a draft yet, but she will be getting this to them very soon. Director Van Zandt noted that the Commission Board does not meet again until after the State Plan must be submitted.

The Commission Board discussed how they wanted to handle the process of approving the State Plan. It was decided that Director Van Zandt should email the State Plan to the commissioners as it becomes available. The Commission Board will then hold a special meeting via conference call to discuss and approve the State Plan.

Discuss and Act on Per Diem Compensation Guidelines for Commissioners

The commissioners discussed Per Diem compensation guidelines for the commissioners. After discussion, the following guidelines were voted upon.

Per Diem Guidelines

Per Diem will be available for the following:

- *quarterly board meetings
- *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

Per diem will not be available for:

- *Conferences, conventions or events sponsored in whole or in part by a consumer group such as ACB or NFB
- * Attendance at events of a personal interest such as VIPS, Lions Clubs, support groups, presentations at schools or clubs

Within 60-days of the reimbursable event, each commissioner wishing to receive per diem for the above guidelines must send an email to the executive director, the administrative assistant to the executive director, the business manager and the NCBVI board of commissioners with the name of the person requesting the per diem and the date and time the reimbursable event took place.

The requesting Commissioner must also meet all State of Nebraska guidelines regarding documentation of time spent involved in official duties. Should a commissioner not choose to receive per diem, no email need be

sent with the exception of travel to and from board meetings and actual board meeting attendance.

The administrative assistant to the executive director will automatically process the per diem for travel to and from board meetings and actual board meeting attendance. Per diem will not be paid unless specifically requested, with the exception of quarterly board meetings and associated travel.

Vice Chair Jirak moved to approve the above stated Per Diem Guidelines. Commissioner Walla seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all voted yes, except Commissioner Oltman, who voted no.

1:40 pm -Discuss Progress on Updating New Commissioner Packet

Commissioner Hansen reported that he and Commissioner Oltman have been working on updating and revising the NCBVI Commissioner packet. Commissioner Hansen did email to the commissioners a working draft in a zip file.

Commissioner Hansen stated that he took the original Commissioner Packet document and began updating certain areas. Some items still to be included are:

Copies of the following documents to include in supplemental Documents

- Assistive Technology Act of 2004
- Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended,
- Randolph-Sheppard Act, as amended; 20 U.S.C. 107b-1;
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- The federal Workforce Investment Act of 1998

Include policies and procedures enacted by the NCBVI Board

- Per Diem
- Travel Reimbursement by the commissioners
- Communication with staff
- Conference attendance

Information on Responsibilities of the different elected positions on the Board

Information on Staff Suggestion box

Commissioner Hansen welcomed suggestions from the Commission Board and he also asked Chair Johnson and Director Van Zandt to write a brief welcome statement to include in the packet.

Director Van Zandt recommended putting the finalized Commissioner Packet on a thumb drive to hand out as needed. Everyone liked the idea.

Public Comment

There was no public comment.

Executive Session Discussion on Personnel Matters

Commissioner Walla moved to go into Executive Session at 2:26 p.m. to discuss personnel matters and for the prevention of needless injury to the reputation of an individual. Commissioner Jirak seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Commissioner Walla moved to come out of Executive Session at 3:22 p.m. Commissioner Jirak seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

Announcement of Next Meeting and Discussion of Potential Focus Topic Materials for August and November

August 4 in Scottsbluff – Focus Topic: NCBVI Personnel Procedures for hiring and promotions. (Interview team, questions, ratings, etc.)

November 3 in Lincoln – Focus Topic: RSA reporting

2:35 pm -Final Announcements

Commissioner Hansen reported that there was a comment from staff sent to the commissioners via the Staff Suggestion Box. The suggestion read: It seems that marketing our services is lacking not only within the residential communities of Nebraska but also in the business and professional communities. I find it odd that people are not at least familiar with our agency. My suggestion is that we start to hold some events and or partner with other disability based agencies and hold 2 events one where we invite individuals from the residential communities to come out and talk

about blindness and low-vision and the other to invite professional and business representatives to come out and talk about blindness and low-vision. The focus of these events could be discussing our services and what we have to offer to the community.

I also suggest that we become more visible in the social media communities; Pinterest LinkedIn Reddit Stumbleupon etc. We have started this but perhaps there needs to be someone dedicated to event planning and maintaining and updating social media avenues and websites perhaps a community liaison.

Director Van Zandt noted that this issue was discussed briefly at the April State Staff Meeting. Director Van Zandt asked Bob Deaton to also put the item on the agenda for the May 8 supervisors meeting.

The next NCBVI Commission Board meeting will be Saturday, August 4, 2012, in Scottsbluff, Nebraska.

Adjourn

Commissioner Jirak moved to adjourn the May 5, 2012 Commission Board meeting at 3:35 p.m. Commissioner Walla seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and all commissioners voted in favor of the motion.

If you have an item that you would like to have placed on the agenda of the August 4, 2012 Commission Board meeting, please email it to the NCBVI Commission Board at ncbvi.commission-board@nebraska.gov.

Respectfully submitted,
Kathy Stephens, Administrative Assistant
NCBVI

Julie Johnson, Chairperson
NCBVI Board of Commissioners

Summary of Attendance at the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska
State Convention
April 20-22, 2012

By: Julie Johnson

Thank you to everyone for allowing me the opportunity to attend the American Council of the Blind of Nebraska convention in Fremont. I had a nice time, learned a lot and had a chance to meet and speak with many people. The experience was very valuable to me.

On Friday I met the National Representative Chris Grey. I was able to gain a greater understanding of ACB initiatives and concerns in his state of Missouri and nationally.

Saturday morning was the beginning of formal convention events. I spoke first concerning developing healthy, supportive relationships, empowering blind people to reach their goals and dreams. The theme of the convention was, "Dealing with Crabs". Dr. Van Zandt spoke briefly about NCBVI and then answered questions from individuals. There were several other speakers on Saturday and Sunday who spoke on a variety of topics including, Braille, utilizing assistance, learning alternative skills and letting go of negativity. After lunch, Dr. Tessa Wright from the University of Nebraska at Lincoln spoke about the blindness/visual impairment teacher preparation program. Chris Gray spoke concerning the movement for change in unifying Braille in all English speaking countries. The rest of the afternoon was the ACBN business meeting.

Saturday evening was the banquet. The banquet address was given by Chris Gray, the ACB national representative. He shared much about his work in assistive technology as well as views on possible changes in the Braille code being adopted for standard use.

The auction fundraiser was that evening. There were lots and lots of donations. Everyone had a good time supporting ACBN.

Sunday morning was the conclusion of the business meeting. Fundraising plans and the next year's convention arrangements were discussed. The convention adjourned before lunch.

