

Nebraska Business Enterprises Program
Nebraska Blind Licensees Committee Meeting

State Office Building
1313 Farnam Street
Omaha, NE 68102

May 14, 2021

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

Board Members in Attendance

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

Blind Licensees and Trainees in Attendance

Ronnie Kellogg, Antonio Aguilar, Wiley Elmshouser, Jim Jirak, and Jeremy Richey

NCBVI Staff in Attendance

Carol Jenkins, Deputy Director of Services; and Eric Buckwalter, NBE Coordinator

Guests

Dr. Fred Schroeder

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.

USA Live/Cantaloupe via Zoom

Bunny Proof and Trevor Hollad from Cantaloupe presented on Master Accounts and Seed Cashless Plus, and the benefits of these tools to both the SLA and the Operators.

Atty made a motion to use a Master Account for our program, Alex seconded it. Motion passed.

Approval of Minutes

Motion was made by Atty Svendsen to approve the minutes from the meeting on March 5, 2021 as distributed. Alex Curtis seconded. Motion passed.

Committee Chair Report (Presented by Chairperson Sandy Alvarado)

FRRP

The committee has held a couple of meetings via zoom with our SLA about these funds. We, the committee, had a discussion about what we would like to see as guidelines for our licensees to follow when requesting funds. We shared these thoughts with our SLA during our first meeting. The SLA asked questions to the RSA on a couple of the ideas. This has been very frustrating for all of us. As new guidelines came down, Carol or Eric spoke with me about them and I in turn contacted the rest of the committee. We the committee held discussion about these guidelines and simply voiced our frustrations

on how it felt like we don't have answers. Fortunately, our SLA has some thoughts that will be shared later in this meeting.

Legislative Public Hearing

I attended via zoom a public meeting held by our legislator on the state's use of inaccessible technologies to be used by all state employees. The state of Nebraska is moving forward with a type of video communications that is not accessible with screen reading technology. Fortunately, the hearing was held via zoom so I could address the panel. I addressed the group as the chair of our group and therefore expressed how this past year we had to hold 3 out of 4 quarterly meetings via zoom. I expressed that if we had not had access to this platform we would not have been able to hold our meetings as required by federal laws. I even pointed out how I would not have been able to speak to them if they had not used zoom. I addressed security as the medical community regularly use zoom for telemedicine. My words fell on deaf ears.

Training and Informational Calls

Dave and Eric have forwarded and shared many opportunities for all of us to participate in learning new skills and to get information on many hot topics. There has been a couple of check in calls with RSVA and BLAST live calls. These calls via zoom happen each month and I have started to get more involved with them as they give updates on what's going on around the country with all Randolph-Sheppard licensees. They also keep us connected.

I have been asked by RSVA to participate on a panel during their training to take place virtually this summer. The topic is Women in the Randolph-Sheppard program. I am looking forward to this opportunity.

There is going to be a mini BLAST to take place in person at the end of September. It will be held in Atlantic City. When I get confirmation when registration will take place I will pass it along to Eric and the rest of you. It may have been announced already and I just haven't found the details at the time of my report.

Eric shared an email with all of us a couple of weeks ago about a training coming up next Tuesday, May 18. The title of the training is called "The State of Snacking". You need to register to either attend at the time or you can register to view the webinar later. Go read Eric's email for all the details.

Hadley is another option to get some additional training for all of us. If you haven't already taken the entire course or if you want to take an individual module it can keep you thinking about ways to improve. Speak with Eric or your VR Counselor.

Retreat

We will have more information later in the meeting. We are hopeful this can give us all a great way to get back together in person and have some great presenters.

As always, remember your committee is here for all of you. If you have any thoughts, concerns or need some assistance please contact any committee member. I want to extend my thanks to all of you who chose to place your name on the ballot for this election. it is a very important position and I take it very seriously. Your committee is here to keep the program working. Our SLA is very supportive of all of us.

SLA Report (Presented by Eric Buckwalter)

Vending Site Updates

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. A date of June 1st has been identified as a potential date to install machines. A licensee will operate the site.

DHHS – Geneva

A new site will open at the DHHS building in Geneva. The machine will be installed soon and will be operated by a licensee.

DHHS – Columbus

NBE has been approached about a possible new site at the new DHHS building in Columbus. This site is still under construction. A visit to assess the site is expected later in the month.

GSA – Lincoln/Omaha

NBE staff is communicating with GSA about three potential locations opening in 2022. Two are in Omaha and one is in Lincoln.

New Sites

NBE is exploring turning three of four existing vending locations into micro market locations.

NBE Licensee Update

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

Vending Site Complaints

There have not been any vending site complaints in the past quarter. NBE Operators 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. It is the goal to have all credit card readers installed by the end of the summer. There has been some delay in this project due to COVID-19.

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. To date, there is only one outstanding Operator Agreement.

Looking Ahead

The SLA has received reports from both licensees and contracted sites that they are beginning to have more people back in buildings. This is good news for everyone! 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.

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 are working on creating a draft of the NBE Handbook.

The SLA may have the opportunity to hire a third full-time person to work with the program. Please email Eric with any suggestions of what you would like to see more of from your SLA.

With the announcement from the CDC that masks are no longer required for fully vaccinated individuals, Operators are reminded that state and local regulations supersede this announcement, as do the requirements for individual agencies, businesses, and locations. Please continue to wear a mask at your sites if the site requires mask wearing.

FRRP 20 Million Relief Fund Options

Carol explained these funds and how the SLA and the committee members came up with a proposal to send in to the RSA. Discussion was held on this topic. Carol proposed the following policy;

Vendors who were licensed in 2020 and remain licensed at the time that NCBVI disburses FRRP funds, shall be compensated for the difference between the net profit after set aside (line 18 of Profit and Loss Statement) per month in calendar year 2020, by subtracting the net profit after set aside per month in calendar year 2019 minus any compensation that they certify that they have received for the purpose of off-setting a loss of net profit. Remaining FRRP funds shall be disbursed equally among the fourteen (14) licensed vendors to compensate for other losses outside the control of the vendor which are not identifiable on the Profit and Loss Statements, subject to the vendor's signed affidavit that they experienced a loss equal or in excess of their share, and that they have not been otherwise compensated for the loss.

Andrea made a motion to accept this proposal for the FRRP funds to be submitted to the RSA, Atty seconded it. Motion passed.

Update On New Licensees and Trainees

There are no new licensees or trainees at this time.

NBE Retreat/Conference

The retreat will be held in August or September. We are still working on the details for this event. Stay tuned for more information on this event.

Update on Profit and Loss Reports (Presented by Eric Buckwalter)

There was no new updates to report.

Set Aside

Discussion was held on decreasing the set aside to 8%. This new rate will go into effect on July 1st. The first P&L with the 8% rate will be the July P&L, due August 20th.

Atty made a motion to have the set aside to 8%, Alex seconded it. Motion passed.

Training for Next Quarterly Meeting

Our retreat will be our training for our next quarterly meeting.

Committee Elections

There were 6 candidates nominated for this years election. The 5 candidates that were elected were: Sandy Alvarado, Andrea Chizek, Atty Svendsen, Alex Curtis, and Ronnie Kellogg.

Sandy Alvarado was appointed Chairperson

Andrea Chizek was appointed Vice Chairperson.

Atty Svendsen was appointed to the Secretary position.

Alex Curtis and Ronnie Kellogg were appointed as Board Members.

Set Date for Next Quarterly Meeting

We will be having our retreat alongside with our meeting. The date and location will be announced soon.

Andrea made a motion to have our next quarterly meeting at our retreat, Atty seconded it. Motion passed.

Adjournment

Andrea made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Alex seconded it. Motion passed.

Adjournment Time: 11:52 a.m.

