

Nebraska Business Enterprise Program Blind Licensee Committee Meeting Minutes

Pursuant to Executive order 20-24 signed by Governor Pete Ricketts on May 19, 2020, certain waivers to the Nebraska Open Meetings Act contained in Executive Order 20-02 are extended until June 30, 2020, the meeting will be conducted via conference call, due to the COVID-19 pandemic

June 26, 2020

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

Board Members in Attendance:

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

Blind Licensees and Trainees in Attendance:

Antonio Aguilar, Tracy Bradley, Jim Jirak, Jason Thompson, and Jeremy Richey

NCBVI Staff in Attendance:

Executive Director Carlos Servan, Deputy Director of Services Carol Jenkins, NBE Coordinator Eric Buckwalter, and NBE Staff Dave Robinson

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 the NCBVI.Everyone Email List.

Approval of Minutes:

A motion was made by Chris to approve the minutes from the meeting on April 10, 2020 as distributed. Atty seconded it. Motion passed.

NBE Committee Chairperson Report: (Presented by Sandy)

Sandy has been working with the SLA on several issues including how much to allow for re-start up funds, figuring out the set-aside percentage, and providing PPE for each licensee. Sandy talked about how much knowledge she has been getting from attending the BLAST training offered by the Blind Merchants organization and encourages everyone to take advantage if the training becomes available on the website later. Several items have been talked about. We had updates on the issue of rest area commercialization efforts in our congress, training on disinfecting our equipment and for ourselves, learning about micro markets and their new viability with our new normal, and heard from the CDC about what they recommend for proper and safe reopening of our businesses. Sandy informed everyone she is signed up for the RSVA training coming up in the Second week of July and encourages everyone to sign up for the zoom meetings. It has a minimal cost that can be used as a write off since it is considered training.

SLA report: (Presented by Carol)

Vending Sites Update

Nebraska State Building Division

The Nebraska State Building Division contract was fully executed a couple days ago. Eric Buckwalter will set up a training for relevant NCBVI staff, NBE Staff, and licensees who will be responsible for carrying out the contract.

Nebraska Department of Transportation

Carol Jenkins has worked with the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) to negotiate a flat rate of \$35 per month per rest area for interstate utilities, which will save blind vendors more money. This new negotiated rate began in May 2020.

US StratCom Cafeteria

US STRATCOM personnel went back to work at 50% capacity at the end of May. Of that 50%, only half of the 50%, are alternating halves of each week. This means only 25% of staff are on-site at all times. Due to this staffing percentage, the cafeteria is providing limited services at this time.

NBE Licensee Update

There are currently 14 licensed blind vendors operating vending facilities in addition to one trainee in the NBE program operating a vending facility. The NBE Program also has a new candidate who has applied for the NBE Program. This new candidate will be interviewed on July 1, 2020.

Vending Site Complaints

The categories of complaints that have come in to NCBVI this quarter have been as follows: vendors not keeping machines clean, having expired products, and having machines not properly stocked. This is a reminder that NCBVI has all of the contracts with the various owners of facilities, and licensees are representing themselves, other licensees, other blind consumers, and NCBVI statewide.

Additional Information

Worker's Compensation Group Policy

Carol continues to work with Nebraska State Risk Management to get the blind vendors under NCBVI's Worker's Compensation policy to once again lessen the costs for blind vendors. The Worker's Comp policy is still in the draft stage of the process where all of the details are being finalized for accuracy. Carol will distribute information as it becomes available.

COVID-19 Agency Support

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, NCBVI will not collect set-aside for the business month of June 2020. Beginning with the business month of July 2020, all regular NBE program policies, rules, and guidelines will once again take effect, which includes paying monthly set-aside, any past due set-aside owed to NCBVI, NBE group insurance costs, and such. Any other support was to be requested through your Vocational Rehabilitation

Counselor with NCBVI. However, to be eligible for any support, you must have an open case with the agency to request and/or receive any support.

NBE Vendor and NCBVI Staff Training

NCBVI is once again looking at training for blind vendors and agency staff on vending machines and such. However, NCBVI is not sure what this will look like at this time due to other NBE priorities.

Operator Agreements and Fixed Assets

Dave Robinson has been working on updating NBE fixed assets statewide. Once Dave has an accurate list of NBE fixed assets, Dave will update each licensee's operator agreement, which will include the newly approved RSA (Rehabilitation Services Administration) operator agreement, for signatures.

Looking Ahead

NCBVI has no plans to expand the NBE Program at this time. However, NCBVI will continue to work on previously agreed to projects for the NBE Program such as the new Veteran's Administration buildings in Lincoln and Omaha. NCBVI has set aside some reallocation funds to purchase new vending machines for several locations where machines need replaced. NCBVI will also be purchasing credit card readers for all new and existing vending machines where appropriate and allowable. These upgrades will be mandatory because research has shown credit card sales account for over half of all sales for vending facilities. Installation of new vending machines and credit card readers for new and existing machines have already begun and will continue as equipment arrives. In addition, NCBVI is still looking into the accessibility of Seed Cashless Plus software for inventory management for vending facilities. Two NBE blind vendors have agreed to be a part of a pilot project to work with NCBVI to test Seed Cashless Plus to see how beneficial it will be for other blind vendors.

Update on Licensees and new Trainee(s):

Presented above in the SLA report.

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

Dave reported that most P & L reports are coming in on time. Dave said once you receive your re-start funds from NCBVI to make sure you keep those receipts separate from your actual receipts that go on your P & L. Also, starting in the business month of July your set-aside, insurance, back pay, and such is due to NCBVI again.

Update on Fixed Assets and Operator Agreements:

Dave has been working on this project. He has a couple more machines to get put on his report. Once he has an accurate list of everybody's machines, he will send out an operator's agreement to each vendor to sign and return. The operator's agreement for each individual vendor will have all their locations and machines listed on it.

Update on Installation of New Vending Machines:

Bob Welsh did a statewide inspection on everyone's machines. Some vendor's locations have really old vending machines and so they will get replaced so their business will be more efficient. The installation of new vending machines has started and NCBVI will be in contact with each vendor to set up a time to get the vending machines installed at their locations.

Discuss Annual Set-Aside Percentage:

Discussion was held with the SLA, the committee members, and the licensees. The decision from the discussion was to have the new annual set-aside at 10% and no set-aside collection for the business month of June. A motion was made by Alex to have the set-aside at 10% starting July 1, 2020, and Chris seconded it. Motion passed.

Discussion of How Re-start Up is Going:

Each vendor had a chance to discuss how their re-start up was going in each of their facilities.

Discuss Training for Next Quarterly Meeting:

Discussion was held on various topics. A decision was made to have a training on the roles and duties of the SLA and the NBE Committee members, information on how to submit a bid for a new site to the SLA, and a review of NBE By-Laws and NCBVI Title 192 Chapter 3.

Set Date for Next Meeting:

Chris made a motion to have the next meeting on September 11, 2020 at 10:00 a.m. in Lincoln, NE. Alex seconded it. Motion passed.

Date: September, 11 2020

Time: 10:00 a.m.

Location: Lincoln, NE

Facility: Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired Office

Adjournment:

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

Adjournment Time: 11:54 a.m.

Training: (presented by Rob Cruise from Cruise and Associates on taxes)

Attendance for Training:

Alex Curtis, Jason Thompson, Antonio Aguilar, Sandy Alvarado, Andrea Chizek, Atty Svendsen, Tracy Bradley, and Jeremy Richey.