

Nebraska Blind Licensees Committee Meeting
Nebraska Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired
4600 Valley Road
Lincoln, NE
December 5, 2015

Meeting Called To Order by Chair Sandy Alvarado at 10:04 AM.

Board Members in Attendance:

Chair: Sandy Alvarado

Vice-Chair: Victor Ireland

Secretary: Ross Pollpeter

Antonio Aguilar

Blind Licensees in attendance: Dave Johnson via telephone, Chris Nolan,
Jason Thompson via telephone, and one prospective Blind Licensee

NCBVI Staff in attendance:

Executive Director, Dr. Pearl Van Zandt

Deputy Director, Carlos Servan

Jan Stokebrand

Don Ward

Commissioner, Robert Newman

Open Meeting Act:

A copy of the Nebraska Open Meeting Act was available. The Notice of the Meeting was published in the Lincoln Journal Star, NCBVI Website, and NFB Newsline®. The Notice was also sent to the NCBVI List Serve.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Motion was made by Victor Ireland to approve the minutes from the last meeting on September 18, 2015 as distributed. Seconded by Antonio Aguilar. Motion passed.

EXECUTIVE REPORT:

Report from Dr. Pearl Van Zandt, NCBVI Executive Director: (Secretary's note: Below is the report given by Dr. Pearl Van Zandt. When comments or questions were made a () will enclose the additional comments/questions.

NBE Report to the Committee December 5, 2015

Update on DOR ADA rest area project. DOR is updating all rest areas in the next year to make sidewalks and doorways ADA compliant. The progress is slow and DOR is behind schedule at this point. They have completed Gretna and York and are currently working on the Milford Rest areas.

Howard Simons retired and Dave Johnson took over the two Grand Island Rest areas. Marty Borges has taken over the two vending sites inside Grand Island city limits.

As a continuation of our meeting with Susan Gashel, and the Nebraska Attorney General's office, Carlos and I (Dr. Van Zandt) have met with DAS to talk about the Randolph–Sheppard program, and ways to improve our laws, here in Nebraska. One main topic being discussed, includes ways to remove or reduce rent currently being paid on state property.

The Immigration Building in Lincoln is remodeling their breakrooms. We have moved our machines into storage while they work. Expected completion is February. (Victor Ireland reported the remodeling of one breakroom is complete, and it looks great.)

We have closed the Social Security office located in Omaha due to low sales.

We are working with the Governor's office about the possibility of strengthening the current state law, to reflect the federal law intent. We provided them with background of the issue, some statistical data, a short summary of what we are requesting, and a proposed statute. Once we determine if the Governor would support this proposed law, we can start approaching the legislators.

(Sandy Alvarado encouraged the Blind Licensees to advocate with NCBVI to the Governor's office. Felix Davison would be the contact person in the Governor's office. Carlos Servan will email Mr. Davison's contact information to the Chairperson.)

In closing, Greg Stroh, in Sidney, has turned in his notice to retire at the end of the year. We are looking for a replacement.

(Victor Ireland asked for clarification regarding gross sales on recently vacated vending site(s).)

REPORT FROM THE COMMITTEE CHAIR, Sandy Alvarado:

I continue to meet in person with the NBE team as often as I can in order to be informed and to keep communications open.

During one meeting, we addressed the low balance of our set aside account on the NBE Balance Sheet. I asked a few questions to get a better understanding of what all our set aside money is used for. I am planning on meeting with Bill Brown to ask more specific questions and ask him to speak with us at our next meeting so we can get a better grasp of how the money is spent.

(Dave Johnson asked for clarification regarding distribution of Set Aside funds. Discussion was held. Jan Stokebrand suggested a budget for NBE. For example, the blind licensees are encouraged to participate in the retirement plan, with the commission matching their retirement funds up to \$900 per year. Currently, eleven blind licensees participate; however, we need to budget for the chance that all 16 licensees may participate. Further research and discussions to be conducted.)

I have asked Victor Ireland and Ross Pollpeter to help me visit with other state committees to find out how they are paying less set aside and see if we can follow their example. I hope to have a report at our next meeting.

Ross Pollpeter was asked to put on a presentation at the National Federation of the Blind of Nebraska's annual convention this year. He asked me (Sandy Alvarado) to assist him with that presentation. I felt it went very well. We had NCBVI clients and counselors ask many questions and we gave answers to all their questions.

I (Sandy Alvarado) am continuing to have great success with PayRange and keep learning everything I can to help anyone else who will choose to use them as well.

Timely and accurate profit/loss submissions /Jan Stokebrand's Report:

Eight Blind Licensees were late submitting their Profit/Loss reports for the month of October 2015. This greatly affected the NBE Balance Sheet, along with the holiday. As a result, deposits of funds were delayed until December 2015. One Blind Licensee is delinquent with their Department of Roads payments, which NCBVI must pay regardless. Another licensee is delinquent with set aside payments for a number of months. This also lowers the dollar amount on the NBE Balance Sheet.

(Don Ward stated that with the late reports and set aside payments, NCBVI cannot accurately submit year-end fiscal reports to the federal funding agency, which could affect funding for program. Discussion was held regarding the federal fiscal report.)

(Sandy Alvarado reminded Blind Licensees that reports and Set Aside payments must be received by the 20th of the month.)

UPDATE ON VENDORS:

Jan Stokebrand stated a positive for the group, as only two Blind Licensees were late with September 2015 Profit and Loss reports. This was critical as September is the last month in the fiscal year, and this was great for compiling reports on time.

Greg Stroh has retired from the program. The site was announced to current licensees and no one applied. As a result, a new Blind Licensee is in training to take over the vending site in Sidney, NE.

The North Platte state government building has been closed due to foundation problems, but that has been corrected. Remodeling has begun. The Immigration Building in Lincoln is at the halfway point with remodeling.

Jason Thompson will be transferring to Lincoln from North Platte and hopes to have a vending business in Lincoln.

Training at quarterly committee meetings and not at retreat

Sandy Alvarado suggested offering training after quarterly meetings instead of at the Blind Licensee Retreat to help increase attendance at quarterly meetings. Examples of training were sessions with PayRange or Ability One Funds representatives.

Future meetings could be conducted at the Ability One facility. The Building a Better Business Workshops are held three times a year. Discussion was held.

Consensus of the Blind Licensees Committee is to conduct training sessions after quarterly meetings.

Add a Facebook page for the licensee's

Sandy Alvarado introduced the idea of creating a Facebook page for the Nebraska Business Enterprise. Discussion was held. Consensus was the Facebook page would be great for marketing and communication, but a dedicated administrator would be needed.

Report on Cashless Payment Options:

Sandy Alvarado, Victor Ireland, and Ross Pollpeter have had additional PayRange devices installed. Don Ward has ordered more.

Victor Ireland stated he has four devices, but he needs to be trained on how to use the PayRange application, online system, and how to market.

Sandy Alvarado has completed her PayRange certification and has received 12 PayRange devices. She encouraged other Blind Licensees to seek certification.

New Business:

Don Ward received a letter from the Office of Personnel Management in Washington, D.C. regarding a security breach in the background check system. This affects all Blind Licensees and NCBVI staff who have obtained GSA security badges. All involved will receive the same letter and must follow instructions.

Several members asked to research how Set Aside is collected and used in other states. Also members are looking into fundraising ideas for Blind Licensees having a financial hardship.

Carlos Servan and Don Ward are working to establish a platform so NCBVI can obtain contracts in seven state government buildings.

SET DATE FOR NEXT MEETING:

After a brief discussion of what days and times work best for most members, Antonio Aguilar made a motion to hold our next Blind Licensee Committee meeting on Saturday, March 5, 2016 starting at 10:00 am. It will be held in Omaha at the NCBVI office, with the room to be announced later. Motion was seconded by Victor Ireland. Motion passed.

ADJOURN:

Victor Ireland made a motion for the meeting to be adjourned, it was seconded by Antonio Aguilar. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 12:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted by:
Ross Pollpeter, BLC Secretary