

**COMMITTEE OF BLIND VENDORS
QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES
January 28, 2021**

The meeting was held via Zoom

Attendance was taken. A quorum was present.

Members Present:

Mac Carnes, Lynn Florence, Vice Chair, Todd Freeman, Jerry Grimes, Larry Hall, Chair, Buster Mayne, Chris Miller, Justin Purvis, Cramer Schneider, Todd Stephens, and Ronnie Wheatley.

Staff Present:

Corey Marcum, KBE Director, Jennifer Wright, KBE Assistant Director, Janice Jackson, Recording Secretary, Jason Wathen, Food Service Coordinator, Stuart Boggs, Vending Coordinator, Cora McNabb, Executive Director & Dondra Meredith, Deputy General Counsel, Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

Vendors Present:

George Bouquet, Charles Dorsey, Katherine Gore, Eddie Myers, and Angela Stevens

Guest Presenters: Ashley Hubler, Tara Orta, Mike Potvin, Matthew Shuttuck and Lou Zinola

The meeting was called to order at 2 p.m. by Chair Larry Hall.

Vendor Training – U-Select-It/Greenlite

Staff from U-Select-It presented on various aspects of the vending machines that are used by KBE vendors, as well as the benefits of the Greenlite sales and inventory tracking software, in the newer machines. They took questions from the vendors. Mike Potvin suggested that they come to the October 2021 General Assembly

meeting to do further, in-person, training on Greenlite so the vendors will be comfortable using all its features.

Lou Zinola asked vendors to copy him on all service request emails that they make through National Vending. Tara Orta reminded the vendors to either use the repair request form they had been sent previously, or have all the same information ready, if they call in the request. This will cut down on the time it takes to get a repair done.

Installation of Chair – At the October election meeting, there were two candidates who self-nominated for the Chair position. A mail-in ballot was to be sent out to the committee members to vote for the Chair position. Immediately following the meeting however, Justin Purvis contacted Corey Marcum and asked that his name be withdrawn from consideration. This left Larry Hall as the sole nominee, but he had not been voted on for approval, so it was necessary to do that at this meeting. A motion was made by Todd Freeman, and seconded by Justin Purvis, to accept Larry Hall as Chair of the Blind Vendor Committee for 2021-22. The motion passed with no opposition.

Approval of Minutes – Chair Hall called for a motion to approve the minutes from the October 29, 2020 meeting. Todd Stephens made the motion to accept the minutes as written. The motion was seconded by Todd Freeman. The motion was voted on and approved.

The Chair asked committee member Ronnie Wheatley to have a word of prayer.

Kentucky Business Enterprise (KBE) Report – Corey Marcum

Corey Marcum reported that KBE had not received anything official from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) concerning the \$20 million in COVID relief money for blind vendors that

Congress had passed. He explained that Congress had based the appropriation on a formula of how many vendors there were in the US. But despite the rumors going around, the amount each vendor would receive will not be \$11,000 as some believe. Kentucky has not been informed yet of the total amount they will receive but expect to hear soon.

He reported that 2020 gross sales, products purchased, payroll, and set asides were all way down from the 2019 figures. Set asides dropped from \$116,000 in 2019 to \$98,000 in 2020. Unassigned vending dropped by \$38,000. The good news, he said, is that there have been no vendors lost to COVID-19.

Mr. Marcum told the group that RSA had just issued guidance on Active Participation for the Committees of Blind Vendors and the committee will be discussing that in the future.

Mr. Marcum told the vendors that taking advantage of training opportunities while things are slow, is so important. He asked vendors to take advantage of online training opportunities sent out by KBE. He praised the eight vendors who had signed up for Randolph-Sheppard Sagebrush Virtual Conference, as well as those who tuned in for National Automatic Merchandise Association (NAMA), National Association of Blind Merchants (NABM) and other online trainings. These trainings are to benefit the vendor and help build their business. He said he hopes there will be more opportunities for in-person training in the future.

Mr. Marcum said there were several ongoing projects KBE was working on. In Louisville, the Hall of Justice refresh will start on February 2 with new air conditioning. The L&N Building is still waiting for equipment to come in, and the Mazzoli Building micromarket contract was awarded on Monday so that is at least 60 days out. In Frankfort, the Transportation Cabinet Cafeteria has

some worn out equipment to be replaced. A new deep fryer is being shipped today and should be delivered around February 18th. There will be an update to the Café 300.

Mr. Marcum reported that on January 21st, RSA and AbilityOne signed a Memorandum of Agreement. AbilityOne is an advocacy group who works with people with all types of severe disabilities. They sometimes look for the same opportunities that Randolph-Sheppard vendors have priority for.

Mr. Marcum said there were a few issues for vendors to be aware of that could affect their business.

There may be a push for a plan to fund infrastructure, going forward, that could lead to rest area privatization.

Working from home will continue into the foreseeable future. Vendors need to plan for that. Even after the pandemic winds down, it is unlikely that buildings will ever go back to being fully staffed, as many will leave their employees working from home.

A mileage tax is being explored at the end of the year which would drive up transportation costs, which would in turn drive up the price of goods.

A \$15.00 minimum wage for federal employees is being proposed. If passed, that could mean vendors would be paying more for labor, and product prices could go up. But, he said, that could also mean that customers may have more money to spend.

Mr. Marcum asked for questions.

Todd Stephens asked if the minimum wage increase would be immediate or phased in. Dondra Meredith said that while giving the federal employees an increase in the minimum wage may be done by just an Executive Order, a national minimum wage increase would have to be passed by Congress.

Justin Purvis said that the buildings whose employees are working from home still have a contractual agreement with KBE to keep machines in the building. He asked if there was any way to renegotiate this if the pandemic continues.

Mr. Marcum said the number of assets at a location could be reduced or less product could be placed in the machines.

Mr. Purvis asked what if there are single unit outliers that are underperforming.

Mr. Marcum said it would need to be explored to see if having a machine in that location was still feasible.

A motion was made by Todd Stephens to accept Mr. Marcum's report. There was a second by Justin Purvis.

Chair Report – Larry Hall

Chair Hall said that he had spoken with people from the Governor's Office, the Speaker's Office, and folks from the Legislative Research Commission, and no one has any answers to the vendors' dilemma.

He indicated that vendors would get through this but were going to have to get creative to make sure everyone has enough coming in to survive.

He suggested, that during this time of COVID, there could possibly be more opportunities for work. He said it may be a good idea to explore cleaning contracts with private contractors and at state offices. He said if enough vendors were interested that he would explore it. Todd Stephens said he thought it would be a good opportunity.

The Chair asked for any other ideas.

Katherine Gore asked if any of the vendor relief money might be available for a food truck. She said there may be some inexpensive used ones out there to build a fleet.

Chair Hall said that RSA hasn't released any guidance yet, but it may be something to check into once guidance is received. He said KBE and the Committee would hash out the details and get on the same page once the guidelines are laid out.

He said he would like to see a vendor who has many years of service be sent off with \$5,000 to \$10,000 when they retire. He said he was going to appoint a committee to investigate the feasibility of this. He said that there are several vendors currently in the program who have 50 years of service. This may give them the ability and incentive to retire, which would open up opportunities for new vendors to come into the program. Buster Mayne said he thought that was a great idea.

Justin Purvis remarked that it had been previously discussed about having a 401K for vendors. Chair Hall said there would be paperwork involved to set that up and it would need to be discussed with an attorney. He said he would like to discuss all ideas because the more vendors who are involved, the better the program will be.

A motion was made by Justin Purvis to accept the Chair's report, with a second by Chris Miller.

There was no old business.

New Business – the next meeting will be held on April 22, 2021.

A motion to adjourn was made by Todd Stephens and seconded by Jerry Grimes.