

**COMMITTEE OF BLIND VENDORS
QUARTERLY MEETING
January 25, 2024**

Roll Call: Attendance was taken, a quorum determined, and the meeting called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Chair Larry Hall.

Members Present: Larry Hall, Chair, Lynn Florence, Vice Chair, Charles Dorsey, Todd Freeman, Katherine Gore, Jerry Grimes, Brad Holland, Buster Mayne, Chris Miller, Cramer Schneider, and Todd Stephens

Staff Present: Corey Marcum, KBE Director, Jennifer Wright and Jason Wathen, Assistant Directors, Aaron Christy, and Stuart Boggs, Vending Coordinators, Steve Connell, Food Service Coordinator, Shelby Glisson, Repair Tech, and Dondra Meredith, Deputy General Counsel, Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

Guests: Sean Dorsey, Reni Jackson, Derrick Kromenacker, Glenn Smallwood, Angela Stevens, and Lisa Kemp

Approval of Minutes: Todd Stephens made a motion to approve the October 28, 2023, meeting minutes which were previously distributed for review. Buster Mayne seconded the motion. The motion passed and the minutes were approved.

KBE Director Report - Corey Marcum

Mr. Marcum reported Kelli Nowlin had been approved to start on February 1 as the new Food Services Coordinator. She will fill the position Jason Wathen vacated when he was promoted to Assistant Director in October. He said that Janice Jackson retired as KBE

Administrative Assistant in December and her position was being posted to fill, as soon as possible.

KBE has been awarded the new five-year contract for Fort Knox troop dining. He said it had been a hard-fought battle and we are glad to get it back. He indicated it would be discussed more, later in the meeting.

He said KBE had rolled out non-branded drink machines to vendors. This will allow them more flexibility in what can go in an individual machine, while allowing KBE better control over maintenance and repair issues. There will be no dependence on Coke and Pepsi.

KBE is currently working with Louisville Metro Government to update the electricity and storage space at the Hall of Justice. A new storage room will be created with electricity. Additional electricity will be added to the work area. The current storage area will get a security door.

Mr. Marcum reported that we completed a very successful General Assembly and supplier show in October and plans are already underway for 2024. It will be held on October 18th and 19th at the Hyatt Regency in downtown Louisville.

KBE is updating the Transportation Cabinet Cafeteria with digital menu boards. Phase one of the electric upgrade has been completed. The next step is the installation of the new menu boards.

KBE and vendors continue to meet with suppliers about new products.

The Oldham County rest areas on Interstate 71, north of Louisville,

was vandalized on both sides. The rest area was closed for repair at the time, so fortunately, this caused no impact to the vendor. No reopening date has been set yet. Mr. Marcum indicated that rest area break-ins are common during the holiday season. In response to this recent incident vending machine cages have been ordered for the rest areas that do not already have them. These are metal boxes that add another layer of protection to the machine. There is no ETA yet for installation of these cages.

KBE and Southern Foods are currently exploring an RFP from the Kentucky Department of Corrections for food service. The current RFP due date is February 23, 2024.

Conversations have begun with Norton Healthcare for vending at the new Louisville Westend Hospital which could possibly lead to other Norton locations in the future.

Staff and vendors are registered for trainings in February for RSVA Sagebrush in Las Vegas and BLAST Innovation in Orlando.

Mr. Marcum asked for questions.

Todd Stephens commented that we are a program for the blind and digital menu boards are great for sighted individuals but asked what we are doing for those customers who are visually impaired. Cramer Schneider said he knew of no blind individuals who worked in the building, but the entire menu is online, and they could access it from their phone or computer and use a speech reader, if necessary.

Brad Holland asked Mr. Marcum the status for the new battery plant. Mr. Marcum said that he hadn't heard anything but will be following up with John Murn at BLAST in February.

Chair Report – Larry Hall

Chair Hall asked what the options are to make food service more profitable. He said there's no continuity from day-to-day of how many people will be in the building.

Jason Wathen commented that he's got some ideas to better facilitate the changes such as downshifting menus and more cost effective options like grab and go items and salads, and the use of unmanned kiosks. Mr. Marcum said technology will give the option to streamline some operations.

Mr. Marcum asked Dondra Meredith to talk a little about the Chevron court case. She explained the basics of the case.

She asked for questions. There were none.

Old Business

There was none.

New Business

Financial Reports - Mr. Marcum said financial reports were emailed to all vendors prior to the meeting. They are compiled on a state, not federal, fiscal year. He asked for questions and there were none.

Discontinuation of Coke Full Service – Mr. Marcum said the Finance Cabinet removed the requirement to service blind vendors from the state soft drink contract. He said that he sent out the information to vendors, in an email, the day he found out. Vice Chair Florence asked if it meant the pricing to vendors would change. He said he hadn't been able to find out and doesn't know what it means for the future. Ms. Meredith offered to look at the contract to see if there is any recourse.

Mr. Marcum said the impression he got from the Finance Cabinet is that Coke is still servicing state agencies through the Department of Parks and third parties, and we may have been piggybacking on that.

Todd Stephens said if it was stated in the contract, and we were the only ones removed, it seems like discrimination. Ms. Meredith said if there was a legitimate business reason, it wouldn't be considered discrimination.

Mr. Marcum said his biggest concern is pricing to vendors. Vendors may have to investigate a pricing structure from USG, RSA, or other national buying group. One thing that may help is this year the agency bought 50 non-branded drink machines so vendors can stock whatever they want.

Todd Stephens made a motion that Ms. Meredith investigate the removal of blind vendors from the soft drink contract. Mr. Holland seconded, and the motion passed.

2023 Goal Achievement – Mr. Marcum went over the 2023 KBE Goals and their Status.

Goal	Status
To have markets installed, or in the planning stages, at the former AT&T Building in Louisville.	Project pushed by Metro government to 2024 or later.
To have micro markets completed at APH, DEA & RCC	Completed
Obtain vending at Cincinnati/NKY Airport.	No RFP issued to date
To have micro markets installed at Toyotetsa	No response from supplier on this

America plant in Somerset.	project
To have micro market designs approved by customer for Envision AESC plant in Bowling Green, to be installed in 2024 or 2025.	No plans to date, customer will not release information.
To increase our current vendor population by 15%	Completed
To see greater participation by blind vendors in state and national upward mobility trainings	Completed
To return to in person general assembly meetings.	Completed
To obtain vending at Bluegrass Army Depot and Ft. Campbell.	Did not want Army Depot once explored, waiting on case with AAFES about Ft. Campbell.
To get a foot in the door for vending with local industry such as Toyota, Ford & GE	Completed - Midway Toyota supplier

Mr. Stephens said Mr. Marcum had not given the Committee the 2024 KBE goals and asked that they to be distributed to all vendors. He made a motion that Mr. Marcum distribute the 2024 KBE goals and give a report at each Committee meeting about that quarter's progress toward the goals. The motion was seconded by Mr. Holland. A vote was taken, and the motion passed.

Chris Miller asked why KBE doesn't take back the rest areas from third party vending. Mr. Marcum said they fund most of KBE's

equipment. Unassigned vending pays for almost everything. Setasides are only about \$60,000 a year. The contract must stay large enough to be lucrative to a third party. You can't pick and choose the ones vendors want and leave the rest. He said rest areas are expensive to run. The agency pays the Transportation Cabinet over \$100,000 a year for utilities and trash removal.

Mr. Holland asked if we have adequate vendors to take those over, even if we wanted to. He said we're going to have to get creative and aggressive in making other opportunities. He said until we can come up with a better solution to match the revenue source, he was in favor of leaving it as is, with a third party vendor.

Mr. Holland commented that the regulations which are in place now, haven't evolved and need to be rewritten. Mr. Marcum said that is something that will be worked on this year. Once written, they must be submitted to RSA for approval and then back to us for submission to the state legislature in 2026.

Mr. Stephens asked, why it would take so long? Mr. Marcum explained all the issues the agency had in the past trying to get RSA approval. He said that Alaska just got their regulations approved by RSA and he is going to use theirs as a template to model Kentucky's regulations and it should be an easier path for approval.

Ms. Meredith explained the difference between regulations, statutes, and bylaws. She said that there are state and federal laws that govern our program. Statutes are laws that are made by elected lawmakers. Regulations are laws that are made by the agency and must be approved by legislation. Bylaws govern only the operations of the elected Committee. The agency isn't subject to the bylaws. She said the regulations take a long time to go

through the process and we'll be lucky to have them approved in two years.

Repair Costs – Mr. Marcum reported that the KBE maintenance budget is \$275,000 this year. So far, this fiscal year, only \$80,000 has been spent, so we are under budget. That's all been spent on kitchen equipment repair. We pay nothing for repair of out lease machines.

Mr. Holland asked if some of the kinks have been worked out with the new equipment. Mr. Marcum said National Vending has been working on adding providers in Western Kentucky.

Chair Hall announced that the next quarterly meeting would be held on April 25th. He asked if there was any other new business.

Ms. Florence commented that the agency needs to be more aggressive when a vendor finds an opportunity for a new location. They have an obligation to investigate it in a timely manner.

Mr. Stephens asked what can be done with iBEP to make it more reliable. Mr. Marcum said some of the problems are “self-inflicted” by the agency. He said we are asking the system to do things it wasn't designed to do. Mr. Stephens said if we can't get it to do what it needs to do, we need to find a better solution. He said his East Kentucky Route still isn't showing as assigned to him in iBEP, after all this time. Mr. Marcum said he was working with Agate and hopes to have things cleared up by the end of the month. Mr. Stephens asked if there were any other options. Mr. Marcum said there really isn't anything else out there.

Mr. Holland asked if KBE had thought about going after military laundromats. Mr. Marcum said it would have to be put out as an RFP solicitation from the military and published nationally. He said that laundromats have not been deemed as vending by RSA so we

wouldn't have the priority. We would have to go through the bid process like we did for the UK laundry.

Chair Hall asked if there was an update on the Fort Knox contract. Ms. Meredith said the regulations cover the program and vacancy announcements and the ensuing appointment process, and we must comply with those laws. The Cabinet's legal staff is reviewing the process to make sure everything meets the laws and regulations, at a minimum, before discussion and active participation begins.

She said that Mr. Marcum hasn't been keeping anything from the vendors and it isn't his fault it has taken so long. She said it's still with legal and they want to make sure everything is right and compliant because this is a big deal. She apologized that it wasn't ready for today's meeting but anticipates it will be ready in the very near future.

Ms. Meredith said that everyone will have the information to review in plenty of time before a special meeting is called to discuss it and get the active participation of the Committee. She cautioned Committee members that they are governed by stricter laws than non-members and cannot discuss anything among themselves that could come up for a vote. Non-Committee members are free to discuss anything they want, but not with Committee members.

Mr. Marcum said he wanted to clarify the misconception that the agency receives money from the Fort Knox contract while waiting for vendor assignment. He said any profit made by the teaming partner will be set aside and paid to the assigned vendor or vendors, once they are determined.

Public Comments

Chair Hall asked if there were any Public Comments. There were none.

Adjournment

Todd Stephens made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Buster Mayne. The meeting was adjourned at 6:00 pm.