

**COMMITTEE OF BLIND VENDORS**  
**QUARTERLY MEETING**  
**April 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:** Mac Carnes, Sean Dorsey, Lisa Kemp, Glenn Smallwood, Angela Stevens, and April Thrasher and Melissa Andrade from G&J Pepsi

**Approval of Minutes:** Todd Stephens made a motion to approve the January 25, 2024 meeting minutes which were previously distributed for review. Todd Freeman seconded the motion. The motion passed and the minutes were approved.

**KBE Director Report - Corey Marcum**

Mr. Marcum reported that no licensed vendors bid on the Transportation Cabinet cafeteria and vending location. It was awarded to new vendor trainee Lisa Kemp, as an emergency

appointment. Charles Dorsey was awarded the Dant Clayton and Stober Micro Market locations in Louisville.

Mr. Marcum updated members on the issues with iBEP and KY Interactive, the state's ePay system. He said he met with Jessie King from Agate Software to discuss what needed to be done to correct the problems in the system. He was told the two systems are no longer communicating. They hope to have the problem resolved soon.

He went over the federal RSA-15 data that was submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) at the end of the year. He said that KBE budget information was sent out to all vendors prior to the meeting for their review. Mr. Marcum said that KBE had overspent by 5% at this point in the year but there is extra money through OVR, so there is no problem.

The paperwork to hire the Food Service Coordinator position has been submitted to the Cabinet's Human Resources office and the Administrative Assistant candidates will be interviewed next week and the hope is to fill both positions by June 1.

The upgrade at the Hall of Justice is complete. The storage area was nearly doubled on the second floor due to the removal of a pedway.

The IRS Gateway Files building will be closing in June, and KBE will be pulling out our equipment.

The agency, and our teaming partner Southern Foods, investigated the Department of Corrections inmate dining. It would have required taking on 12 different locations at one time, which wasn't feasible for Southern at this time.

Cages for the outdoor machines at all rest areas have been received and will be installed in the upcoming weeks. This is to prevent vandalism to the machines.

Mr. Marcum discussed Beneficial Ownership Filing and how it affects blind vendors, who will need to complete the online form by the end of this year.

Mr. Marcum reported that the information for the election for the positions on the Committee would be sent out in August and there would be an additional day, on the Thursday prior to the General Assembly, for training for the newly elected 2025-2026 Committee members. This training will be conducted by Terry Smith of National Association of Blind Merchants. There will also be a training on Robert's Rules of Order. This year the supplier show will be held on the Friday morning of General Assembly to allow more purveyors to attend.

He said there has been a court case filed in Texas against the Army & Air Force Exchange Service (AAFES) and in anticipation of the ruling, he has already started preliminary talks with both Fort Knox and Fort Campbell about adding vending there.

Mr. Marcum reported on trainings and conferences. He said that he attended the Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America (RSVA) Sagebrush conference in Las Vegas with KBE Coordinators Aaron Christy and Stuart Boggs, along with vendors Beverly Dickerson and Charles Dorsey. He and Jason Wathen attended the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) national conference in DC. They attended Blast Innovation in Orlando with Lynn Florence and Angela Stevens and he and Mr. Wathen will also be attending the National Automated Merchandising Association (NAMA) conference in Dallas with Buster Mayne and Chris Miller, as well as the National Restaurant Association show in

Chicago with Food Service Coordinator Steve Connell and vendor Angela Stevens. He said he was excited to report that the Cabinet has approved the request for all 10 vendors who requested to go to BLAST in Nashville in the fall. He said he was very excited to see all the vendor interest in gaining more training on a national level.

He said that Norton Healthcare and the Bowling Green Envision Battery Plant are no longer returning his texts or emails.

He said that he would like suggestions on how to deal with vendor apathy. He said vendors aren't bidding on what goes out and it concerns him that as we're looking at new opportunities, will there be vendors to fill those spots when we can't fill what we already have.

Mr. Marcum gave his goals for 2024. They are:

- 1) Identify and license five new blind vendors.
- 2) Develop strong relationships with KY School for the Blind and teachers of the visually impaired in the public schools.
- 3) Increase the number of training opportunities for vendors and have at least 15 attend national trainings.
- 4) Have the revised rules and regulations change package to RSA to review by the end of the year.

Mr. Marcum requested that the next quarterly meeting be moved up a week to July 18<sup>th</sup> as he has a meeting at Ft. Knox on the 25th at the same time as our meeting was scheduled.

Mr. Marcum said he wanted to end his report on a personal note. He said that he had been invited, over the past year, to present at

four national events about what is happening in Kentucky and how we are moving things forward in a positive way. He said that it reflects well on all of us and the cooperative relationship we have. Kentucky is being recognized as a trailblazer in Randolph-Sheppard and doing things right. He said it was something we should all be proud of.

Mr. Marcum asked for questions. Todd Stephens said that he is not a fan of the iBEP program and wanted to know, when Mr. Marcum says it will be fixed “soon”, when is “soon”? He said that a route he won the bid for six months ago had still not been put into the iBEP system. He suggested that the agency find another vendor who can provide the services we need.

Brad Holland said he was concerned that Norton’s Healthcare and the battery plant have stopped returning calls and Southern said they can’t do the correctional facilities at this time. He asked Mr. Marcum if Southern will be ready in five years when the contract comes back up. Mr. Marcum said they will work to be ready.

Cramer Schneider commented that he saw it as a red flag that the Transportation Cabinet cafeteria and vending went out for bid and there was no interest, yet vendors keep wanting the agency to go after new opportunities when they won’t bid on the lucrative ones we already have.

### **Special Report - G&J Pepsi - April Thrasher & Melissa Andrade**

April Thrasher and Melissa Andrade of G&J Pepsi went over the performance numbers of their products by brand and vendor accounts. G&J services accounts from Frankfort to Ashland.

Ms. Andrade explained that telemetry on the Pepsi machines communicate with the drivers to let them know when the machines need to be refilled.

Ms. Thrasher talked about new products and a new exclusive organic beverage called tractor drinks.

She reported that despite more employees working from home and less in the buildings, we have surpassed pre-covid sales numbers.

She told vendors she would make the report they presented available for Corey to send out after the meeting.

They passed out products for the vendors to try.

### **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. He said he was going to have to look at his snack stand in the Capitol Annex a month after the session was over to see if it was going to be viable to keep it open.

### **Old Business**

All items were covered in the Director's report.

### **New Business**

Beneficial Ownership Filings - discussed during Mr. Marcum's report.

### **2024 Conference Reports**

RSVA Sagebrush - Beverly Dickerson and Charles Dorsey were scheduled to report but were absent at the time for their report.

BLAST Innovation - Vice Chair Lynn Florence and Angela Stevens were scheduled to report. Angela Stevens was absent during the report, but the Vice Chair reported that the conference was very interesting and featured a lot of new technology and robotics. She

said one of the speakers gave great examples of thinking outside the box to restructure ways of doing things and work the business.

## **Public Comments**

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

Todd Freeman asked for the floor to discuss a matter. He said that there had been a new location that was located right on his route that was given to another vendor without going out for bid.

He made a motion that from this day forward, regardless of the size of the location, any new opportunity brought to KBE shall be put out for bid. Brad Holland seconded the motion.

The Chair called for discussion.

Mr. Marcum said the agency doesn't bid out a location that won't solely support a vendor and the vendor it was given to had been approached by building to provide vending or a micro market there and that is why it was given to him.

Mr. Freeman said it could have been added to his route. He didn't have the freedom to decide if he would like to take it.

Chris Miller said we've always given the opportunity to the vendor who went after and found a location.

Todd Stephens said he wasn't sure it was a good idea to bid out every location, including add ons. The Upward Mobility Committee would have to meet for every little opportunity, even if it was just one snack machine. He said he understands that a controversy can be created but if a vendor makes the effort to find new locations, he should be rewarded with it, especially if it's just a small add on to a route.

Mr. Holland said he told the agency from the beginning that it was okay with him if they wanted to put it out for bid. He told Mr. Freeman he would give up the location if he wanted it. Mr. Freeman said he did not want Mr. Holland to give it up. It was the principle of not being given the freedom to choose.

The Chair called for a vote. The motion failed to pass.

Mr. Holland added that wanted to tell vendors that HT Hackney was great for those who have micro markets. They have lots of very good products. He said that his sales went from \$1200 a week to \$2500. He said that it pays to watch your business.

### **Adjournment**

Todd Stephens made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Buster Mayne. The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 pm.