

**COMMITTEE OF BLIND VENDORS
QUARTERLY MEETING
July 18, 2024**

ROLL CALL

Attendance was taken, a quorum determined, and the meeting called to order at 4:00 p.m. by Vice Chair Lynn Florence.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Lynn Florence, Vice Chair, Charles Dorsey, Jerry Grimes, Brad Holland, Buster Mayne, Chris Miller, Cramer Schneider, and Todd Stephens

MEMBERS ABSENT

Larry Hall, Chair and Katherine Gore

STAFF PRESENT

Corey Marcum, KBE Director, Jennifer Wright and Jason Wathen, Assistant Directors, Madeleine Ancona, Administrative Specialist, Aaron Christy, and Stuart Boggs, Vending Coordinators, Steve Connell, and Michael Wellman, Food Service Coordinators, Shelby Glisson, Repair Tech, and Dondra Meredith, Deputy General Counsel, Education and Workforce Development Cabinet

GUESTS

George Bouquet, Martin Caldwell, Marissa Chambers, Vendor

Trainee, Lisa Kemp, Derrick Kromenacker, Mary McLemore, Steven Miller, Glenn Smallwood, and Angela Stevens

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Todd Stephens made a motion to approve the April 25, 2024 meeting minutes which were previously distributed for review. Buster Mayne seconded the motion. The motion passed and the minutes were approved.

INTRODUCTIONS

Jason Wathen introduced the new food service coordinator, Michael Wellman. Michael has over 25 years of service in the hotel and restaurant industry. He has served as General Manager in limited and full-service hotels, as well as worked with the Bluegrass Hospitality Group, the parent company of Drakes and Malones, for over 6 years. He most recently served as a Business Filing Specialist with the Secretary of State's Office in Frankfort. Mr. Wathen said we are excited to have him onboard and look forward to the positive impacts he will bring to our program.

Corey Marcum introduced KBE's new Administrative Specialist, Madeleine Ancona. He said she comes to us after working 10 years at UPS and has already made an immediate impact by keeping everyone organized. She will be working with iBEP, vendor insurance, and various other tasks. She has a background in coffee shops and working for UPS with their cargo logistics and managing their worldwide pilots' schedules and needs. He added that we are very excited to have her on board and what she will accomplish for KBE. She is not afraid to take on any tasks.

Aaron Christy introduced the new vendor in training, Marissa Chambers. He said she had completed her Lighthouse online training and had been completing her on the job training the past couple of weeks with KBE staff and vendors. She has been doing great and is showing a strong interest in the vending side of the program. Marissa said she looks forward to meeting everyone and is excited to get involved with the team.

KBE DIRECTOR REPORT – COREY MARCUM

Ft. Knox Update

Mr. Marcum reported there was one bid this past quarter, and it was for the Ft. Knox dining facilities. This contract was awarded to four vendors, Lynn Florence, Buster Mayne, Chris Miller, and Angela Stevens. Since the grievance period is over, discussion will begin, with the vendors, regarding the transition to Ft. Knox. Mr. Marcum reminded everyone to watch for bid letters as the Ft. Knox vendors' locations will be coming open for bid.

Trainings Attended

KBE staff and vendors have attended three trainings this quarter, the National Restaurant Association Show in Chicago, the National Automated Merchandising Association Convention (NAMA) in Dallas, and the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) in Washington D.C. At NCSAB they discussed upcoming training on the newly released Technical Assistance Circular (TAC) from RSA regarding Allowable Costs for Vending Facilities and Equipment for Vendors. Mr. Marcum stated that

the biggest takeaway for him from the trade show trainings came from the National Restaurant Association Show. They showcased a new software program called MeasureUp which enables site visits to be completed in real time and sent to the vendors and staff. There are also metrics that MeasureUp can track by using Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology to find trends. KBE is currently vetting and negotiating with the software company. MeasureUp is looking at our site visit forms to see how they can integrate them into their software. Mr. Marcum emphasized how exciting it was to discover new things at the trainings.

Mr. Marcum asked Chris Miller, Buster Mayne, and Angela Stevens to share their thoughts from the trainings they attended. Mr. Mayne talked about the NAMA training and how amazing it was and all the different things they saw there. He said the most interesting things were the talking kiosks that he got to try. A robot that made coffee was unbelievable and the overall show was, in his words, "just super." Mr. Miller added, for his trip to NAMA, he had a good time and enjoyed learning about all the new products they had. He also added that the coffee robot was "pretty cool." Mr. Mayne shared that it made the best coffee he'd ever had.

Coke Scholarships

Mr. Marcum shared that OVR had recently awarded four \$5,000 Coca-Cola scholarships which came from money tied to the state soft drink contract. He said that Jennifer Wright administers the

scholarship program and Todd Stephens was part of the panel that chose the recipients.

New Vendors and Updated Training

Mr. Marcum reported that there are two prospective vendors who have completed their Lighthouse training and are currently working through their on-the-job training. He said that in addition to the new staff introduced earlier, KBE will also be acquiring another Program Coordinator who will do outreach with schools that have students ages 14-21, to talk about our program and identify future vendor candidates. This will be partially funded by Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) funds. The position will also be working with the Rehab Counselors for the Blind (RCB) and Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) to help produce more future vendors. He said he hopes to have the new Coordinator onboard by the first of the year.

Vice Chair Florence said she has been using students from the Kentucky School for the Blind's (KSB) work program as part-time employees during the summer and even sometimes during the school year. She encouraged vendors to take on a student to mentor and show them what vendors do and educate them before they get out of school and decide on a career path. She added that Bo Mullins heads the KSB work study program. She encouraged vendors to reach out to him about the program.

Mr. Marcum talked about the new on-the-job training manual Ms. Wright is developing and asked vendors if they have

suggestions or ideas about things a new vendor needs to know, to please submit them to her.

Mr. Marcum stated that KBE has started the outreach process for Jefferson County and Fayette County Public Schools. We are also working on outreach for new locations and are currently having active conversations with new location. He said he cannot divulge these locations as there are incumbents currently there. Mr. Marcum reminded the vendors that as KBE works on obtaining new locations, he needs vendors who are willing to step up and represent the program and Committee on calls or visits to locations.

KBE continues to provide almost weekly training opportunities to vendors and licensees and encourages them to attend the trainings offered. Recently, there have been food shows provided by Performance Food Group (PFG), and today, there was an onsite visit by H.T. Hackney where several vendors attended to see what Hackney has to offer and to set up accounts.

Envision has met with KBE and loaned a pair of their assistive technology glasses for vendors to try. We have had several vendors provide feedback after trying the glasses.

iBEP Update

Mr. Marcum said there continues to be mixed results with iBEP. He stated that some vendors continue to have issues, but some of the past issues have been corrected. To date, 14 vendors have successfully paid their set-aside online for this month.

Rules and Regulations Update

Mr. Marcum reported that the draft of the revised state rules and regulations is currently with the Cabinet's legal staff, and we are awaiting a response from them. Once the revisions have been approved as to legality, we will meet with the Committee to work together on the revisions and on a policy and procedures manual, which must be completed before submitting the regulation revisions to RSA.

General Assembly Planning

Mr. Marcum announced that the annual General Assembly planning is underway, and the event will be October 17th through the 19th at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Louisville. The 17th will be a half-day training exclusively for the 2025-2026 Committee of Blind Vendors members. Topics will include Roles and Responsibilities of Elected Committee Members, Robert's Rules of Order, and Policies. On the 18th and 19th for all members, there will be various trainings, guest speakers and a supplier show. Mr. Marcum indicated that if anyone was interested, KBE has draft agendas available. He said he has already started pre-planning for the 2025 General Assembly. He stated that Louisville has become a popular venue, and he's had to battle for the last weekend in October against a farm show, and he requests that everyone be flexible with dates.

Questions and Concerns

Mr. Marcum opened the floor for questions and concerns. Todd Stephens asked when iBEP was fixed because he was still having issues making payments, as well as not having the Eastern

Kentucky Route assigned to him after repeated requests. Mr. Marcum said he would investigate the issues regarding iBEP.

Cramer Schneider asked when the Committee election would be held for 2025-2026 and asked for clarification on the process. Mr. Marcum stated that self-nominations with biographies would be requested in August and the election process would be explained later in the meeting. He clarified that Committee members were always elected before the General Assembly and the Chair and Vice Chair positions are chosen at the General Assembly quarterly business meeting in October.

CHAIR REPORT

Chair Hall was not present. Vice Chair Lynn Florence stated that the vendors need more clarification and communication with the Ft. Knox transition as well as other issues. She asked Mr. Marcum to please respond to questions and provide clarification when he receives requests. She wants to make sure that for future bids, vendors receive more communication during the process. With little to no information from KBE, vendors are unaware of what is going on and rumors are being spread. She would like KBE to provide more information and clarification to help stop the rumors.

OLD BUSINESS

Coke Update

Mr. Marcum said that KBE knows very few details on what is happening with Coke and Canteen. What we do know is that Coke Consolidated in the east and central Kentucky area has sold

their operation to Canteen. This is Coke Consolidated that serves from Ashland to Louisville. It's not the Coke that covers Western Kentucky and the Bowling Green area, but it applies to a large portion of the state. We have been told that they have sold their machines and their full-service locations to Canteen. What that means is that Canteen is the new subcontractor for Coke Consolidated. Mr. Marcum reminded the vendors that this is a fox in the henhouse situation. It puts Canteen who would also love to have your snack business, in your locations and seeing how well you keep up your machines. He asked vendors to do their best to keep their locations filled and not provide an opportunity for Canteen. Vice Chair Florence asked whether the vendors using Coke Consolidated will still get full service. Mr. Marcum stated the vendors should still be getting full service, but it will be done by Canteen instead of Coke.

Mr. Mayne said that he only received a Coke commission check for the east side rest area but not the west side, and it was for very little. Mr. Schneider added that Ms. Wright documented the fact that Canteen said the state contract gives us a 24-hour response time based on our service tier. However, the glass front machine on the 4th floor of the Mayo building is evidence that it is not the case. There have been three or four individuals who have called in the service repair request multiple times since the beginning of July. It was broken the very same day that Canteen came in and changed out the card readers.

Mr. Stephens asked how the vendors who have full service from Coke get accountability with Canteen? Mr. Marcum responded

that Coke does not feel the vendors individually are a state agency and so they don't qualify to be under the state soft drink contract. Mr. Stephens stated that Nicky Gacos of NAMB investigated the situation and stated that it's not true and looks extremely bad for Coke. Mr. Marcum stated that this is a developing situation, and we are learning new information every day.

2024 Goal Achievement

Identify and license five new vendors.

Mr. Marcum gave an update on the 2024 goal achievement thus far. He reported that we have had three trainees complete Lighthouse training, so we are already at 50% of the goal for the year. A new KBE Program Coordinator position has been created to help exceed this goal.

Develop a relationship with Kentucky School for the Blind.

We have already made inroads and are working with them.

Increase training for vendors and have at least 15 attend national trainings.

We are on target to exceed this goal. So far, we have had six vendors attend in-person trainings and 11 are scheduled to attend BLAST in November. Mr. Marcum said he is excited to see vendors wanting to participate and that it is a huge change for the program.

Revise the rules and regulations and have the changes to RSA by the end of the year.

The draft revisions have been sent to the Cabinet's attorney to review to ensure they meet all state legal requirements before moving forward. Meeting with the Committee for their input and active participation will begin as soon as the draft is received back from legal.

Mr. Marcum added that we are at the point that we are going to meet or exceed all the goals by the end of the year. Vice Chair Florence asked for clarification on the three vendors that have completed Lighthouse. Mr. Marcum stated that Marissa Chambers, Lisa Kemp, and Steven Miller have completed Lighthouse, and that Lisa and Marissa are currently in the process of working through their on-the-job training. Steven is awaiting a location. She asked if there are any other prospects. Ms. Wright added that Bobby Rogers is starting his Lighthouse training and will be doing so at the McDowell Center in August. She indicated that another person has expressed interest but has not followed through, he was a truck driver for 40 years and has recently lost his vision and is working with the Bluegrass Council for the Blind on getting assistive technology training.

NEW BUSINESS

Ft. Knox Bid Process Comments and Concerns

Brad Holland stated that there was no information or guidelines on filing grievances. He asked for clarification on the grievance process and how to navigate it.

Dondra Meredith explained that a grievance process only exists in the Committee's bylaws which sets forth no actual process but instead sets forth the establishment of a Grievance Subcommittee and says only that the subcommittee should assist a vendor in the process.

She continued that a grievance process is not covered in state or federal law and what was determined internally is that even though a response is not legally required, the agency would provide a response when a written grievance was received. Ms. Meredith stated that if the Committee wants a grievance process, they need to let KBE know what they want it to be. The way it is currently written, it doesn't serve a legal purpose.

Mr. Holland added that he sent an email to his fellow vendors stating his disappointment that some of the subcommittees were useless and the bylaws and regulations weren't adequate. He said that the agency indicated that everyone receiving an appointment to Ft. Knox would have to be active and on site. He said that should be required of all vendors in all locations. He said he would like to establish an Ethics subcommittee to help vendors police themselves and to make sure all vendors are held accountable.

Ms. Meredith responded that according to federal and state laws, the Committee has no legal power over the agency. The purpose of Committee is to advise the agency and be the voice of all vendors, and not a body who polices themselves. Federal regulation encourages active participation in decisions in important agency decisions.

Vice Chair Florence brought up the lack of active participation in the Ft. Knox bid decision and questioned why a business plan, resume and other credentials were required to bid but not considered when awarding the bid. She said those things shouldn't have been required if they weren't going to be considered and it all came down to seniority as a deciding factor.

Ms. Meredith responded that there was active participation in the selection process. The Committee had the three-member Upward Mobility Committee who met and recommended the selected candidates to the agency. She said the law was followed in reviewing the candidates. She stated the nine criteria that are required to be reviewed and considered by the Upward Mobility Committee and the agency. Those factors are set forth in the state regulations. They are customer relations, cooperation with property management, cooperation with agency staff, complaints and commendations, timely and accurate submissions of monthly financial reports and set-aside payments, financial management, recordkeeping, audit reports, and non-negotiable payments to KBE or suppliers. The agency is required to review criteria for every vendor submitting a bid. The law states that, "if the bidder's business practices are reasonably satisfactory as they relate to the specific vending requirements in the judgement of the Director, the bidder with the highest KBE seniority shall be offered the appointment to the vending facility vacancy." All nine factors were considered but the current law required KBE to award the positions to the highest seniority bidders, in this case.

Mr. Holland reminded Mr. Marcum that the Committee members voted to remove seniority as a deciding factor in the regulations several years ago, and it went to RSA to be approved but was sent back and the vendors have heard very little about the regulation changes since. He said he also questions the ethics and leadership of his fellow Committee members, except the Vice Chair who stood up and said it was wrong. Mr. Schneider added that the real issue is that this did not work out the way he thought best for the program, but he also knows that it went how it had to go due to the way the rules are currently written. He stated that the issue lies in the fact that the rules have taken so long to get changed. He said they were voted on at least six years ago. The Vice Chair said that the Committee had never been told until a year ago that they were not approved by RSA and they were still operating under the old regulations.

Both Vice Chair Florence and Mr. Stephens brought up the concern that the Committee did not have active participation in developing the Ft. Knox bid. He said active participation isn't the Director sending what he develops to legal staff before it is ever presented to the Committee.

Ms. Meredith and Mr. Marcum both responded that the Committee had active participation through the Upward Mobility voting process as well as during the special called meeting of May 2nd to discuss the bid that would be sent out. She said the Committee was specifically asked for its input and the topic was discussed at length. All the suggested revisions were made before that meeting was over and the bid was sent out.

Ms. Meredith stated that KBE legally followed the process as the Committee cannot enact anything without a meeting, which was called. Ms. Meredith stated that "We as the agency fulfilled our legal obligations, before the bid was published. Nobody raised any concerns about the resume requirement at the meeting. The law that we followed has not been changed in the last two years." Ms. Meredith continued that seniority was not the sole reason, it was the tiebreaker. She said that they would have to agree to disagree about the Committee's active participation in the process because the agency and Committee held a meeting specifically to discuss the bid, input was taken, and the law was followed in awarding the bid. She told the Committee that it was the business owners' responsibility to know the laws they operate under and if a vendor was dissatisfied with any decision made by the agency, the vendor or the Committee could always seek their own outside counsel.

Mr. Stephens said he had researched the grievance procedures of various states and thinks the Florida BEP bylaws regarding grievance procedures are very good and he will be sending it to the Bylaw's Committee and Ms. Meredith for revision. Ms. Meredith added that if the Committee does vote for a more formal grievance process, the agency can look at getting the process added to the regulations by request of the Committee.

Vote to Accept the Amended Committee Bylaws

The Vice Chair said she trusted that everyone had taken the time to review and understand the changes they were voting to adopt on the amended bylaws. Mr. Stephens summarized the bylaw

changes. One important change is that Committee membership is being reduced to a minimum of seven and a maximum of nine members, from the current 11 members. A definition of “good standing” was also added and there were a couple of sections which now requires a member to be in “good standing” to bid on a facility or run for a position on the Committee. Mr. Stephens made a motion to accept the changes to the bylaws as previously distributed for the required 30 days prior to the vote. Mr. Mayne seconded the motion. A vote was taken, and the motion passed. Ms. Wright announced that the bylaws would not take effect until the required 30 days after the vote, which will be August 16th.

Upcoming Committee Election

Vice Chair Florence went to the next agenda item and requested more information from Mr. Marcum on the upcoming August Committee election process. He stated that the same process would be followed as the last time. An email would be sent out asking for self-nominations and biographies. Once those are received, Ms. Ancona will send out a link through Survey Monkey for the vendors to vote. Mr. Stephens reminded vendors that to self-nominate they must be in good standing with the agency as stated in the new bylaws. Nominations for Chair and Vice Chair will be held at the General Assembly business meeting.

Rest Area Update

Mr. Marcum reported that KBE is still in conversation with DOT but KBE isn't the Highway Department's greatest priority in keeping us informed. The East KY rest area is getting closer to

completion but the Oldham County rest area, may not open till Spring 2025 or later. Mr. Stephens said it's a matter of finding the right person to speak with. Mr. Marcum agreed and said it's about building relationships with building management.

2024 General Assembly Details

Mr. Marcum gave an update on the General Assembly planning. It will be a Thursday afternoon through Saturday event and the draft agenda is being developed. Thursday afternoon will be training exclusively for the 2025-2026 Committee members. It will cover roles and responsibilities of the Committee, Robert's Rules of Order, and policies. That evening there will be a specialty training event for all vendors who have micro markets, provided by 365 Retail Markets.

Friday morning there will be a supplier show and then an afternoon of training on the new lock system, vending machine repair, Nicky Gacos from NABM will speak on the State of the Nation, and we're trying to get a CPA to discuss fiscal matters. Vice Chair Florence has requested to have someone speak on the differences of taking expenses off set asides vs. income taxes. Several vendors use CPAs to submit their set asides and file their taxes. Ms. Wright suggested having one of them speak to the vendors on the topic. She said since the CPA's do the vendor's taxes and set asides, they are already familiar with the program and the topic. Aaron Christy added that Beverly Dickerson has a CPA who lives in Louisville and is familiar with iBEP. Vice Chair Florence said she would reach out to Ms. Dickerson to get the

CPA's contact information and see if they would be willing to speak at the meeting.

On Saturday, there will be a speaker from Birmingham who will speak on the generational workforce and helping employers focus on how to handle the next generation of workers and customers. There will be a working lunch with updates from Terry Smith of NABM, Frankie Skyvara from 365 Retail Markets, Scott Eggen and Ardis Bayzn from RSVA, Conner Liles from Southern Foodservice, Jarrod Sharp from HT Hackney, and Jim Chico from U-Select-It. Door prizes will be awarded, and Vice Chair Florence reminded vendors that if they want great door prizes, they need to reach out to her with donations because the agency cannot provide that.

Announcement

Mr. Marcum said he wanted to announce some good news. He congratulated Cramer Schneider on his engagement and the purchase of a new home, and Derrick Kromenacker and his wife Mackenzie on the birth of their new baby daughter, Stella Grace.

Upward Mobility Improvements

Mr. Stephens said he would like to develop the Upward Mobility Committee to do more than what they are doing now. He would like to see them conducting interview for bidders on more important locations.

Online Trainings

Mr. Mayne added that the recent online trainings that were sent by Ms. Wright have been very eye opening and informative. Vice

Chair Florence stated that the We R Randolph Sheppard podcasts have also been very informative, and she told the Committee that if they haven't done so, they need to view the two trainings sent out on Military Dining Contracts. They will open your eyes to what our program is and what it can be.

Insurance Paperwork and Vendor Files

Ms. Ancona said she had sent out emails regarding ensuring all vendor files are up to date and electronically copied. In going through that process, she has found some vendors had missing or expired proof of liability insurance. She requested that if a vendor gets an email asking for the proper documentation, they get it to her as soon as possible. She understands that some vendors may have already sent the information but in the transition from the previous Assistant, some insurance paperwork is not on file. Going forward, she would like to send out reminder emails when insurance is expiring, either 30 or 60 days out. She will also be working on a way to update vendors' basic information during the General Assembly in October, and she asked vendors to be on the lookout for further information.

Public Comments

Lisa Kemp added that she went through the Lighthouse training and it went into detail on the grievance process, all the way up to the Secretary of Education. Mr. Stephens confirmed that it was included in the Randolph-Sheppard training.

ADJOURNMENT

Mr. Stephens made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Mr. Miller. The meeting was adjourned at 5:51 pm.