

COMMITTEE OF BLIND VENDORS
QUARTERLY MEETING
July 27, 2023

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, Todd Freeman, Katherine Gore, Jerry Grimes, Brad Holland, Chris Miller, Cramer Schneider, and Todd Stephens

Members Absent: Charles Dorsey and Buster Mayne

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

Guests: Derrick Kromenacker and Angela Stevens.

Approval of Minutes: Todd Stephens made a motion to approve the April 27th meeting minutes which were previously distributed for review. Jerry Grimes seconded the motion. The motion passed and the minutes were approved.

KBE Director Report - Corey Marcum

Mr. Marcum reported that one facility was brought up for bid during the past quarter. Cramer Schneider won the bid for the CHR Café and vending route.

KBE was given oversight of the 2023 Coke Scholarship of \$20,000. Eight very deserving OVR consumers, who are blind and enrolled

in higher education, vied for the four \$5,000 scholarships which were awarded the first of this month.

KBE hired a new Food Service Coordinator, Steve Connell, who will work with vendors on menu planning, food costing and other ways to increase revenue.

Congratulations to Cramer Schneider who was awarded a NABM Emerging Leadership scholarship. The agency will support his endeavors when he goes for training in Murfreesboro, Tennessee in September. He was only one of 12 selected by NABM, out of many applicants.

Congratulations are also due for our newest licensed vendor, Derrick Kromenacker who passed his online Randolph-Sheppard training.

Several of the staff, as well as vendors, have gone to various trainings this quarter. National Automated Merchandising Association (NAMA), NABM BLAST in Iowa, the National Restaurant Association Show, Performance Food Shows and RSA federal fiscal training at the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB). We had good vendor turn out for our in-house training on Greenlite/Cantaloupe, eight vendors attended. Several vendors went with staff to tour the Taylor Farms operation in Tennessee. NABM Blast on the Boardwalk will be held in Atlantic City in September with two blind vendors already committed to go. KBE recently hosted a training for product placement, with G & J Marketing.

KBE staff met with McDowell Center staff to work on implementing evaluations to be performed on all new blind vendor trainee candidates prior to being accepted into the program. We also met with Rehab Counselors for the Blind to talk about our KBE program

and then took them on a tour of a vending operation, a micro market, and a food service operation. They also met with a blind vendor. We want them to know what we do so they recommend candidates for our program who will succeed.

We also manned a table at the McDowell Open House to talk about the Randolph-Sheppard program.

KBE's Ford pickup truck has been recalled and will not be returned due to safety concerns.

We opened a new location at Green River Correctional Complex, a micro market was installed at the Kentucky State Penitentiary at Eddyville, and the Mayo Sundry Shop transitioned into an unmanned micro market operation with two kiosks.

Mr. Marcum reported that KBE did not get the UK Laundry Bid. It was decided not to bid on UofL vending due to the high number of machines, and low revenue.

He said he has ordered, and will be receiving, three semi-truck loads of equipment, for installation beginning in October.

Chair Hall asked if these trainings were good for the program. Mr. Marcum assured him they were very beneficial to both staff and the vendors who attend.

Chair Hall asked if there were any questions.

Mr. Stephens asked if vendors are getting benefits from the training. Ms. Florence responded that she attended the National Restaurant Show and found it very beneficial. She said she needed help with a kiosk issue and found out what she needed to know there. She was also able to speak with a company about accessibility issues with the kiosks.

Chair Hall said he went to the Taylor Farm factory tour and the products were very fresh and the machinery was state of the art. He said he enjoyed going through the factory and seeing how well it was run.

Chair Report – Larry Hall

Chair Hall reported that repair with National is tied in with the lease agreement and some locations are not getting the service they deserve. He said he realized that the state procurement process takes a long time and asked if there was a way KBE could buy extra equipment to have on hand for when something breaks down.

Mr. Marcum said that last year he placed an order for extra equipment to have on hand, but as we are a year out from that, most of the extra equipment has been utilized. He reported that he prepared another order, which includes equipment and spare parts, to have on hand. It is going through procurement process now. Our warehouse can only hold so much, so it's a logistical issue if we over purchase.

Chair Hall said he wanted to discuss closing food operations earlier. He said that business has been bad on Fridays for the last several months. He suggested closing early on Fridays. Mr. Marcum said he's already been in discussion with the Finance Cabinet about closing every day at 2:00 p.m. but they haven't given approval yet.

Old Business

Mr. Stephens asked Ms. Wright to talk about the Coke Scholarship. She said that Mr. Stephens was on the team and was very instrumental in the process. She discussed the details of the program and requirements to apply. She said there were eight applicants and four very deserving winners.

Mr. Marcum reported that he had a Zoom meeting with Agate, Kentucky Interactive, Ms. Wright, and Janice Jackson. He said there are vendors who are still having problems in the iBEP program, but Agate is aware and is working on it. He told vendors if they want their information to be saved in the TPE payment system, they must set up a wallet within the program. He also indicated that some vendors are having issues because they are not selecting the “No” checkbox in TPE when it asks if the transaction is international.

The Chair asked if there was any additional Old Business. There was none.

New Business

Chair Hall said he thinks the agency needs to exercise more due diligence when evaluating future and existing facilities because food service operations are struggling. He said we need to find out how to tie in with some large companies like Toyota, Amazon, and UPS because our state and federal employees will not be returning to work full-time in their buildings. Telecommuting is here to stay.

Mr. Marcum said that he fought micro markets at first, but he is now a convert. He said he is open to trying micro markets almost anywhere. They may be an answer to some of these issues. For example, some food service operations that have two cashiers could go to a self-checkout kiosk for one of those employees. They can be used for hybrid operations and are the wave of the future. He said the national trainings and trade shows have been so beneficial in learning what is available and about the new automation that is coming out all the time. We learn so much more about the manpower saving technology options. That’s where the next group of cost savings is going to come from, technology, automation and streamlining operations. Finding out about these things is only going

to come from attending these national trainings where they are highlighted. Most of the technology is in its infancy so it may take a while for it to be cost effective and manageable to install in our existing locations. It's only going to work for now in brand new facilities because of the space and wiring requirements. We must be key players in what is happening nationally and internationally and that's why attending things in our industry is vital.

Chair Hall said that with labor costs constantly going up, technology will be one of the ways to help a vendor survive.

Katherine Gore suggested that Mr. Marcum present at every meeting on what he's learned at these trainings and shows. Mr. Marcum said that there will not be a show or training that occurs each quarter and there are other staff and vendors who attend these trainings, as well, who are welcome to present. He said he is committed to making the opportunity available to vendors who want to attend and participate at the national level.

Mr. Stephens said he would love to hear reports from the perspective of vendors who attend the shows.

Brad Holland asked if Mr. Marcum had seen anything at the shows that was more accessible than the kiosks we have now. Mr. Marcum said that it is being worked on, but accessibility hasn't caught up with the technology. At the National Restaurant Association show, we introduced a Parlevel representative to a representative from Despera who works with the software accessibility issues and we hope that something will come out of that. Voiceover is so important.

There was a discussion on the Aira, Be My Eyes, and Koin apps and how they work.

Mr. Stephens asked if there was anyone the agency could partner with in state government to find out about unique opportunities for expansion because so many existing entities are already involved

with partners. The universities are affiliated with their athletic conferences, Toyota is tied to Canteen and so are their down chain suppliers. Chair Hall said that once we hear about an opportunity, we must be persistent in finding out information and continuing to reach out and work with them on getting in the door. We must be much more aggressive on going after new opportunities. Chair Hall said maybe we should discuss it at the General Assembly to come up with a subcommittee or work group to work on this.

Ms. Gore asked about going into school systems. Mr. Marcum explained that unlike other entities, we can't give the commissions and incentives that other companies can, such as scoreboards, athletic uniforms, etc. and that's why it's almost impossible to compete in those areas.

Chair Hall moved on to the next agenda item and said that there is no set method for vendor changeover. He said a better procedure is needed.

Mr. Marcum said it's an informal process. The agency brings in a company to do the inventory. It's up to the incoming vendor to decide whether they want the outgoing vendor's product and to have all expired merchandise excluded before the count is made. The money changes hands between the incoming and outgoing vendors.

Chair Hall said we need to sit down and come up with a process that is more concrete and asked Mr. Stephens to work on that.

Mr. Holland asked if going forward we need to get into areas other than food. Mr. Marcum said that polishing what we do and becoming the best at what we do is the way forward. As more food companies want out of the business, that will be our way in. Streamlining what we do and becoming more efficient is so important. We need to work toward doing things that others don't do to set ourselves apart. We

will keep looking at other opportunities outside of vending. We are open to entertaining all options.

Ms. Florence said do your job and show people we are capable and the best at it because you don't know who's watching and may be looking for someone for their opportunity.

Mr. Holland asked if a packet could be prepared with Randolph-Sheppard program information in it, and with the coordinators contact information, so he can hand it out to possible locations. Ms. Florence said that a packet would be nice but as vendors, you should be able to explain your program. Ms. Wright said that the information is already available to the coordinators on the KBE share drive and to reach out to your coordinator and he can send it to you.

Mr. Marcum announced that the next Committee meeting will be held at the General Assembly, which takes place Oct 27th and 28th at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Louisville. It will be the first in-person General Assembly in four years. Friday will include training from USI, Parlevel, iBEP and Greenlite, as well as a micro market tour. Saturday will be a suppliers show then the luncheon at noon with Melba Taylor and an afternoon of speakers and finishing up with the quarterly meeting.

Chair Hall said that he wants the meeting to be light and not to get into anything controversial or with a lot of discussion. He said it needs to be a happy occasion finally being back together.

Mr. Stephens asked Ms. Florence if she was chairing the hospitality/social subcommittee for the General Assembly. He said that he would be glad to help her. Mr. Holland said there needs to be door prizes and he volunteered to donate money as did Mr. Stephens. Mr. Holland challenged other vendors to invest in their own program, attend, and be social.

Mr. Marcum said he will need to know how many vendors will require hotel rooms for the General Assembly, and how many will be there for lunch on Saturday. He will send out an email to the vendor body and send Ms. Florence a list of speakers and suppliers who will attend. Breakout rooms will be used for the presentations and trainings. The agenda will be sent out as soon as it's finalized.

Ms. Florence asked if anyone knew about all the price increases from Coke. Mr. Marcum said these are planned, yearly increases built into the Coke contract and are effective in July, every year. There is no state contract with Pepsi so there is no way to control the price increases with them.

Chair Hall encouraged all vendors to attend the General Assembly.

He asked if there were any Public Comments. There were none.

Todd Stephens made a motion to adjourn, which was seconded by Jerry Grimes. The meeting was adjourned at 5:40 pm.