

Nevada Committee of Blind Vendors Meeting

Minutes

3016 West Charleson Blvd. Suite 215

Thursday, April 16th, 2025

Roll Call and Confirmation of Quorum: Ivan Delgado, NCBV Chair

Ivan Delgado, Chair

Joe Urbanek, Vice Chair

Burnetta Schlechter, Secretary

Harold Petrofsky, Southern Representative

Nels Brown, Northern Representative

Verification of Posting: Kaye – Lani Tiafau, AA II

Kaye-Lani Tiafau confirmed that the agenda was posted in the correct manner.

First Public Comment Section: Ivan Delgado, NCBV Chair

Ivan Delgado congratulated Shehan for taking the role as the new chief. Ivan also welcomed the new BEN Officer II to the program, Louis DeMaioribus.

For Possible Action, Vote to Accept Agenda: Ivan Delgado, NCBV Chair

Ivan Delgado asked for a motion to accept the agenda.

Bernetta motioned to accept the agenda.

Nels Brown seconded it.

Motion Passed.

Welcome and Introduction of Guests: Ivan Delgado, NCBV Chair

South: Harold Petrofsky, Sweet Daughtery, Jason Bustillo, Marcos Hurtado, Mikie Yamada, Drazen Elez, Joe Urbanek, Burnetta Schlecter, Kaye-Lani Tiafau, Lynn Urbanek, Leslie, Bustillo, Donna Bates, Kendra Daughtery, Lou DeMaiorbus, Jason Birmingham, Shehan Peries

North: Nels Brown, Janette Parish, Richard Eberly

Telephone: Regina Mitchell, Eugenio Chavez, Richard Taylor, Dion Williams, Ken Pierson, Mechelle Merrill

For Possible Action: Ivan Delgado, NCBV Chair

Approval of the minutes for the NCBV meeting, January 16th, 2025

Ivan Delgado asked for a motion to approve minutes.

Joe Urbanek motioned to approve the minutes.

Harold Petrofsky seconded the motion.

Motion Passed.

Old Business

BEN project and status update (discussion): Shehan Peries BEN Chief

Site Bids: Upcoming site bid announcements for the next 3-6 months include the following: BEN 29 – Sunset Rd. Postal Office will be open for bid in June 2025. In October 2025, two additional sites will go up for bid: BEN 3-Hoover Dam Café and **BEN 60-The Red Rock Beverage Market.**

Program Updates: We currently have 15 licensed operators and one interim operator, with no changes since our last meeting. This brings the total to 16 operators.

Financial Updates: For the fiscal year beginning in July, total revenues reached \$6,055,000, which is 1.44% increase compared to the previous fiscal year. Medium monthly profits stand at \$5,032, representing a 4.63% increase year over year.

Total expenses for the fiscal year amounted to \$1,118,000, with the breakdown as follows:

\$24,000 – New equipment purchases

\$188,00 – Equipment Maintenance

\$6,000 – Equipment replacements

\$592,000 – Management services

\$82,000 – Retirement contributions

\$48,000 – Health and medical expense reimbursement

\$10,000 – Initial stock purchases

\$168,000 – Commissions

The program generates revenue from two sources: set-aside and unassigned vending revenue. For the fiscal year, set-aside revenues total \$783,000, while unassigned vending revenue amounts to \$385,000. This brings the total revenue to \$1,169,000, increasing the reserve balance to \$3,988,000.

Joe Urbanek commented on how commissions are processed—flowing from the agency to the vendor. Marcos Hurtado then asked how much of the budget is allocated to the seven BEN staff positions. Shehan Peries responded that their salaries fall under a \$591,000 line item for management services. Marcos acknowledged this figure and followed up by asking how much of that funding goes toward opening new locations. Shehan explained that while he didn't have a specific number, most management-related salary expenses are tied to site development and licensing new operators.

Marcos expressed concern over the staffing ratio, noting there are 16 operators and seven administrative positions, meaning nearly one administrator for every two operators. He argued this ratio is inefficient and warrants further discussion. He also highlighted the level of financial scrutiny operators face—monthly and annual reviews, and, for some like himself who generate over \$150,000 in sales, external audits. Marcos questioned why the BEN staff aren't held to similar standards and called on the chairman to investigate and ensure accountability through staff audits.

In response, Shehan clarified there aren't seven staff supporting the 16 operators, but only three Business Enterprise Officers (BEOs), two in the south and one in the north. He added that operator site audits are mandated under NAC regulations, while there is no legal requirement for the BEN program itself to undergo audits.

Drazen Elez, Administrator of the Rehabilitation Division and former BEN program member, supported Shehan's explanation. He reiterated that operators earning over \$150,000 annually are audited every other year as required by law. He clarified that the sites operators manage are not privately purchased but allocated by the state or federal government under laws that were approved by both staff and operators, as well as the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

Drazen also noted that while the BEN program itself hasn't undergone a specific external audit, the Rehabilitation Division has been audited multiple times—three federal audits and two state audits in the last eight years, with internal audits conducted in both 2022 and 2023. He emphasized that state audits differ from private sector audits, and decisions regarding external audits are made at the state or federal level, typically when there's concern about the use of funds or management practices.

He further explained that the BEN program's finances are subject to multiple levels of oversight, including leadership, financial managers, and the fiscal staff of the Rehabilitation Division. All spending is reviewed to ensure it complies with state and federal guidelines.

When asked by Sweet Daughtery about his role, Drazen introduced himself as the Administrator overseeing the Rehabilitation Division, which includes three core programs: Bureau of Disability Education, Social Security Disability Claims, and Vocational Rehabilitation.

Joe Urbanek noted that, according to the RS15 reports, Nevada is one of the few states that has maintained a consistent number of locations before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. He pointed out that most other states experienced significant declines. Joe also highlighted that Drazen Elez has prior experience as a director in the BEP program, giving him a solid understanding of its operations.

Marcos Hurtado responded by acknowledging Drazen's explanation of the Rehabilitation Division's responsibilities but reiterated his concerns about financial transparency. He emphasized that the BEN program is self-funded, and as stakeholders, operators have a right to access a financial audit. Marcos recalled that when Drazen served as BEN Chief, financial reports were regularly shared. He called for the reinstatement of detailed quarterly reports to clearly outline how funds are being spent.

Marcos expressed strong concern that the program has not undergone an external audit and that this issue was not included in the meeting agenda. He insisted that, since the program is funded by the operators, they are entitled to an external audit to ensure proper financial oversight and accountability.

Shehan Peries confirmed that moving forward, financial reports will be shared on a quarterly basis, and questions regarding audits have been addressed. Sweet Daughtery then asked if this section of the meeting was open for discussion. Shehan confirmed it was.

Sweet explained that the BEN program holds significant personal value to him, having been part of it since 2011 and licensed in 2021. He mentioned that, although he didn't initially want to bring up race, he felt it was important to address the lack of unity within the group. Sweet expressed disappointment over the tension among members, emphasizing that everyone in the program should be looking out for one another, especially since they all share a common goal.

Sweet further shared his sadness at only learning about the BEN program after another employee's departure. He expressed understanding of Marcos' concerns and acknowledged that there were things he disagreed with. He referenced his previous letter about Chris Mazza's departure, clarifying that he did not support Mazza's actions, but he did respect the one-on-one

respect Mazza had shown him and appreciated that Chris didn't speak negatively behind his back.

Shehan then turned to **District Attorney Greg** for clarification, asking if Sweet's comments were appropriate for this portion of the agenda. Greg advised that it would be better to save them for the second public comment period. Joe Urbanek added for the record that the second public comment period is typically limited to 3 minutes, unless the chair allows more time.

New Business

Discussion

Trainee Update (discussion): Shehan Peries BEN Chief

Shehan Peries reported that six clients are currently awaiting entry into BEN training: three are in the final stage before receiving their CBA, one is early in the referral process (6–9 months out), and two additional BSBVI clients have shown interest. He reminded everyone about the upcoming NABM training on May 6, tied to the NAMA show in Las Vegas, encouraging all operators to attend, as costs will be reimbursed. Shehan also announced the upcoming implementation of a new case management system within the year, which will centralize functions like P&L submissions and approval forms, with operator training to follow. The system will cost \$223,000 and is designed to simplify administrative tasks for blind operators. While some operators, like Burnetta and Beth, supported the system as long overdue, others, like Marcos Hurtado and Sweet Daughtery, expressed concerns about cost, accessibility, and whether the technology would truly meet operators' needs. There were also requests for additional training in tools like Excel, Word, inventory management, marketing, and P&L-related skills. Concerns were raised about the limited accessibility of current devices (e.g., Square screens), and suggestions were made to explore better technology, particularly for micro markets where theft is an issue. Marcos emphasized that all operators should be involved in the decision to invest in the new system. Beth Perring recommended involving Janette to ensure legal compliance with financial processes, and Greg **Cloward** from the attorney's office encouraged structured discussion and public comment throughout the agenda.

Donna Bates shared that she attended both the NACS and Sagebrush conventions, where she made valuable connections and considered the experiences as professional development. She is also scheduled to attend the NAMA convention in May. She recalled Ivan mentioning Meta glasses at a previous NCBV meeting, a topic that came up again at the Sagebrush convention. Inspired by this, she decided to try the glasses herself after a mishap with getting on the wrong bus. Donna emphasized that attending such conventions helps everyone grow professionally by exposing them to new tools and ideas. Shehan agreed, noting these events are great for networking and staying updated on national developments related to the Randolph Sheppard Act. He added that all training-related expenses are fully reimbursed and encouraged participation in the upcoming NAMA convention. Donna concluded by sharing a story about a woman at the Sagebrush convention who used Meta glasses to video call her sister and navigate an airport and mentioned her own recent experience using the glasses to view clothing sizes.

Joe Urbanek raised the issue that the current \$100 limit for minor equipment on the P&L (Profit and Loss) statement is outdated and **unrealistic. For example**, a boat lock costs more than that. He proposed raising the limit to \$1,000 to align with federal guidelines (though this doesn't directly apply to them due to their funding source), so that purchases under \$1,000 wouldn't need prior approval. Shehan clarified that the proposed change would let staff purchase equipment costing more than \$100 without needing prior approval, provided the purchase isn't made through the BEN program. Drazen added that while this would streamline the process, it doesn't guarantee full reimbursement—amounts may vary depending on how the item is listed in the P&L.

However, Greg **Cloward** from the Attorney General's office pointed out that the current meeting agenda only allows for discussion, not action. For the committee to vote on this change, the item must be listed as "for possible action" on a future agenda. Therefore, Joe withdrew his motion.

Drazen emphasized the importance of following public meeting laws, which require transparency and proper notice before any decisions are made. The chair confirmed the item will be added for action at the next meeting. Drazen also noted that urgent matters can be addressed through emergency meetings if necessary, and those meetings can be held virtually.

Chairman, Ivan Delgado, began by expressing a sense of personal failure and took full responsibility for the issues affecting the group. He acknowledged challenges in communication with the board and shared concerns that his message may not be getting through. Despite past efforts at transparency and regular meetings with previous leadership, he admitted to imperfections and ongoing struggles with internal conflict. The Chairman referenced tensions among operators and discouraged forming cliques or working against one another, emphasizing unity and teamwork over personal loyalties.

He addressed a canceled November meeting, explaining it was due to inappropriate messages from a fellow member, despite multiple professional requests to stop. He expressed disappointment at the lack of respect and collaboration, and frustration over unresponsiveness regarding vending machine operations. Financial accountability was raised, questioning whether members were engaging with Burnetta for necessary reports. The Chairman praised several members for their expertise and admitted they should have reached out to them more often.

The Chairman reaffirmed his passion for the program and emphasized that he would no longer tolerate being disrespected or talked over by other operators. He spoke about the importance of demonstrating leadership and control while also apologizing for past mistakes, including offensive messages and public emails that may have harmed the program's image. The Chairman stressed that his intentions were never malicious and expressed a desire to help when asked. He extended forgiveness to Marcos despite ongoing personal attacks and voiced hurt over the lack of support from others during those times. While acknowledging his own missteps, He called for unity, transparency, and continued communication, and expressed hope for a stronger future. The Chairman thanked everyone for participating in the meetings and stated that increased involvement has been one of the most rewarding aspects of their role.

Following this, Marcos Hurtado expressed concerns about repeated apologies without visible action, stating that this has affected the credibility of leadership. Marcos noted a personal complaint that was promised to be added to the agenda but never was, leading to frustration and a sense of being ignored. He called for more responsive leadership and suggested forming a committee that genuinely represents operators' interests. Marcos then emphasized that leadership should not take criticism personally but instead focus on accountability and improvement.

Attorney General added that the chairman can open the discussion to public comment or add this to the next meeting's agenda.

Richard Taylor, speaking on behalf of himself and the other operators, expressed concern that Ivan appeared to prioritize the program over the operators who voted him into office. He emphasized that operators fund the program and therefore deserve to be the primary focus. The Chairman clarified that his loyalty to the program meant making fiscally responsible decisions—such as avoiding overpriced vending machines—and ensuring all operators benefit from fair and transparent practices. Sweet Daughtery added that the meeting structure had become unproductive, with people speaking over one another and old conflicts being reopened. He stressed the importance of professionalism, clarity on agenda items, and creating space for real, solution-focused discussions. Sweet acknowledged his own learning process but called for stronger leadership and organization moving forward. Sweet emphasized the importance of coming to meetings prepared and understanding the agenda beforehand. He highlighted a desire to become more confident and knowledgeable, aiming to engage in discussions with the same boldness and clarity as peers like Joe and Marcos. Ivan acknowledged their current learning process and their effort to improve. Sweet spoke regarding the relevance and tone of certain contributions, with concerns raised about maintaining professionalism and respect during meetings. He expressed his frustration over perceived rudeness but followed up with multiple apologies and chose to step away from the meeting, stressing the need for mutual respect and cordial behavior. Before concluding, they suggested organizing a more personalized meeting and proposed a vote on the next agenda.

Drazen raised an off-agenda topic concerning recent developments involving the U.S. Department of Education and their potential impact on related programs. He explained that the Randolph Shepherd Program and vocational rehabilitation services, which fall under the Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration, could be affected if the department is dismantled following a recent executive order. Although there is uncertainty about which agency, possibly the Department of Labor or Health and Human Services—will oversee these programs in the future. Drazen emphasized that both programs are established by federal law and will continue regardless of administrative shifts. He reassured attendees that there is no current threat to program continuity and stated that any updates will be shared as

they become available. Joe Urbanek also hinted at forthcoming positive news, specifically for Nevada, related to the Randolph Shepherd Program.

There was also discussion around including broader agenda items, such as adjusting the retirement policy and reviewing the financial thresholds for licensing operators, in response to inflation. It was noted that retirement-related changes would require more complex procedures, including legal review, subcommittee evaluation, federal approval, and possibly state legislative action, which cannot begin until the legislature reconvenes in 2027. The group agreed to start this process by adding it to the next agenda. The meeting concluded with a formal motion to adjourn, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

For Possible Action

Second Public Comment: Ivan Delgado, NCBV Chair

The group discussed scheduling future meetings, proposing two upcoming sessions. The first was set for June 11 to address the proposed increase of the P&L line to \$1,000. There was also discussion around including broader agenda items, such as adjusting the retirement policy and reviewing the financial thresholds for licensing operators, in response to inflation. It was noted that retirement-related changes would require more complex procedures, including legal review, subcommittee evaluation, federal approval, and possibly state legislative action, which cannot begin until the legislature reconvenes in 2027. The group agreed to start this process by adding it to the next agenda. The meeting concluded with a formal motion to adjourn, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

Date for Next NVBV Meeting (discussion): Ivan Delgado, NCBV Chair

Wednesday, July 16th, 10:00 AM

Adjournment: Ivan Delgado, NCBV Chair

Ivan Delgado adjourned the meeting.

The meeting adjourned.