HO’OPONO

Business Enterprise Program

Services for the Blind Branch

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

State of Hawaii Department of Human Services

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M I N U T E S

REGULAR COMMITTEE MEETING of the HAWAII STATE COMMITTEE OF BLIND VENDORS

DATE: Tuesday, January 26, 2021

PLACE: Ho’opono

 1901 Bachelot Street

 Honolulu, HI 96817

 (via Skype or Call-in)

PRESENT:

1. ­Sub-Committee: Stan Young, Don Patterson, Steve Kim, Chris Akamine, Kyle Aihara, Dane Alani, Ivy Galariada, and Lespaul Naki
2. Members: Evelyn Ah San, Ted Chinn, Joel Cho, Ron Flormata, Flordeliza Galiza, Wilmer Galiza, Kenny Johnson, Roxane Kaneshiro-Sasaki, Mike Miyashiro, Doug Moises, Rhani Naki, Norman Ota, Lyn Pasak, Lynn Schempp, Virgil Stinnett, Wanda Takaesu, and Martha Vo (Trainee)
3. Ho'opono: VRA Maureen Bates, SBA Lea Dias, BEP Manager Kathleen Fujimoto, VFS Tad Matsuno and Bruce Chin, and BEP Secretary MJ Andres
4. Guests: DAGs Lori Wada and Lily Young

CALL TO ORDER:

Noting the presence of a quorum, Stan called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Efforts by the State to Reduce or Eliminate the Randolph Sheppard Revolving Account: Stan noted that VRA Maureen and the agency submitted frequently asked questions and said that under law, the RSRA funds can’t be reallocated to other branches of the state; income to the fund are mainly from vendor contributions and vending machines; to be used specifically for expenses such as equipment and benefits for the vending program; hopeful no further attempts will be made to take funds from the RSRA. He asked the vendors to attend any hearings should there be any to protect the RSRA.

DAG Lori clarified that the legislature is only taking written testimonies because it is being held virtually, and it must be within 24 hours of the hearing or no late testimonies will be accepted.

1. Approval of Budget & Finance COVID Supplemental and Move June Retirement Benefit to Present: Stan noted the Budget & Finance Sub-Committee recommended $5,000 medical supplement next month and $3,000 retirement.

Don noted that the Budget & Finance Sub-Committee voted to recommend a $5,000 medical supplement be distributed next month and $3,000 retirement be paid in June.

Dane moved to accept the recommendation. Ivy seconded and the motion passed unanimously with Dane, Kyle, Don, Ivy, Lespaul, Chris, Kyle, and Stan voting aye.

1. Update on the 2021 Congressional COVID Relief for Randolph Sheppard Programs: Stan noted information is still coming; funds will go directly to VR and a separate account will be set up; payments will be for losses incurred up to a limit of $11,000; monies leftover will be used for the Randolph Sheppard program; another meeting will be held next month when more information is received.
2. Replace Retired Clyde Ota on the Committee: Stan nominated Wanda Takaesu to fill vacant position created by Clyde’s retirement and asked if there were any other nominations. Dane moved to accept Wanda to fill vacancy. Wanda accepted the nomination. Ivy seconded the motion and the motion passed with Stan, Don, Steve, Chris, Kyle, Dan, Ivy, and Lespaul voting aye.
3. Vending Facilities Status:
4. Silver Dolphin: DAG Lori reported Attorney Dan Edwards won the 6th protest at the GAO for the Silver Dolphin and thanked VRA Maureen and the agency for their generous financial support. TSG hasn’t stopped and recently filed a claim against Ho’opono in the federal court. We are hopeful we will prevail again with Dan’s representation.

VRA Maureen acknowledged Kat and Lea for all their hard work and efforts.

1. Pearl Harbor Buildings 167 and 2: Kat reported that a vendor has been selected and will be notifying the winner.
2. Kona Airport North: Kat reported that they are continuing to reach out to the airport manager and are committed to expand the facility.
3. Kona Civic Center: Kat reported that sadly no one has expressed interest in the facility, but we will keep facility because we believe it can be feasible. We are currently receiving vending machine commissions from Kona Civic Center, Kona Judiciary and Hilo State Building.

Stan asked if Kona Airport will be opening soon. She replied that we are doing as much as the airport is allowing us to do.

Stan expressed concern about not having any candidates, training in the past 2 years and establishing a simple application process. Kat replied that our staff have been working closely with counseling both here and on Big Island but haven’t been successful.

Stan noted possibly simplifying application and to reach out to the public. Kat took suggestion under advisement.

1. Kona Judiciary: Included in above line item.
2. Hilo Center: Kat reported that Byron Jitchaku agreed to operate facility as a satellite last year and has someone running the operation but on a very limited basis.
3. State Office Tower: Kat reported that there was discussion to convert facility from a blind vendor operated to vending machines only, but no decision was received by the committee.

Stan noted he feels someone who needs supplemental income and employment can benefit from the facility. He agrees with installing vending machines temporarily, however, feels it will be harder to re-open. He supports filling in the facilities in the long run.

1. District Court: Kat reported there were no applicants received for District Court.
2. Schofield Barracks: DAG Lori reported that Dan has been handling all the federal litigations and briefings should be available in mid-March. Because of the pandemic there’s inclination to have Judge Kobayashi do a decision without oral argument which could result in a quicker decision, hopefully sometime in April. There’s rumor she doesn’t want to upset the Texas case which is very identical to Schofield and we’re hoping to win case and get Ted back into Schofield by summer.
3. Arizona Memorial: Kat announced the passing of Clifford Chong and noted she has been in touch with Brian to prepare the vacancy announcement.
4. Other Facilities: DAG Lori reported we won the temporary restraining order and the preliminary injunction for Kaneohe Bay Marine Corps. We’re waiting for arbitration panel to reconvene which may not happen for another 3-4 years due to the pandemic.
5. Solicitation and Training of New Blind Vendors: Stan reiterated he wants application simplified used to solicit blind people for the program.
6. Plans, Support, Training and Procedures for re-opening Facilities: Stan noted we need to have a checklist and procedures to integrate with the program. Kat asked Stan to have committee submit a draft plan for reopening and we can expand on it.
7. Addressing the COVID Pandemic Effect on the Promotion & Transfer Policy: Kat reported that due to COVID, on-site evaluations has been exasperated and not much activity for points for active-participation and asked for committee input.

Stan noted to continue using the last on-site evaluation on file and active-participation points will include virtual meetings.

Kat recommended Stan to defer this item to the Promotion & Transfer Sub-Committee review and make a recommendation to the committee.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting is to be determined.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to discuss and hearing no objections, Dane moved to adjourn the meeting. Ivy seconded and the motion passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 4:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

KF:mra

Ho'opono/Employment Section