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, March 30, 2021

PLACE: Ho’opono

 1901 Bachelot Street

 Honolulu, HI 96817

 (via Microsoft Teams or Call-in)

PRESENT:

1. ­Committee: Stan Young, Chris Akamine, Dane Alani, Ivy Galariada, Steve Kim, Lespaul Naki, Don Patterson, Wanda Takaesu

Excused: Kyle Aihara

1. Members: Evelyn Ah San, Ted Chinn, Joel Cho, Ron Flormata, Byron Jitchaku, Kenny Johnson, Doug Moises, Norman Ota, Lyn Pasak, Lynn Schempp, and Martha Vo (Trainee)
2. Ho'opono: VRA Maureen Bates, SBA Lea Dias, BEP Manager Kathleen Fujimoto, VFS Tad Matsuno and Bruce Chin, and BEP Secretary MJ Andres
3. Guests: DAGs Lori Wada, Lily Young, Erin Yamashiro, and Erin Lau, and New Vision students Isaiah L. and Jonah Sniffen

CALL TO ORDER:

Noting the presence of a quorum, Stan called the meeting to order at 2:06 p.m.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Ivy moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Committee meeting held 1/26/21 as submitted. Chris seconded and the motion pass unanimously by voice vote.

PROGRAM REPORT:

Kat reported the balance of the RSRA was $2,242,865.65 as of 3/29/21 and the remaining allotment was $762,284.85. She also noted the retirement of Lorna Kipilii from the program.

NEW BUSINESS:

1. Review Hawaii Legislature Status of HB1112, SB1233, and HB1299: Stan thanked the members for submitting their testimonies and the help of Jim Gashel. HB1112 and SB1233 were bills to allow mentally ill clients to become part of the blind vending program, but they were able to get bills deferred at this time. HB1299 was to gather funds from special funds, which includes the RSRA, to reduce the state deficit, but they were able to contact key politicians and successfully removed the RSRA from bill.
2. Discussion and Set Guidelines for Disbursement and Supporting Documentation of Federal FRRP COVID-19 Relief Benefits Vote: Stan noted that through the efforts of Nicky Gacos, President of the National Association of Blind Merchants (NABM), and Mark Riccobono, National Federation of Blind (NFB) Wisconsin, they were able to get $20 million appropriated to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). No direct guidelines were sent from RSA but a set of FAQs, so the committee and SLA need to establish a plan to submit to RSA in order for funds to be distributed.

Following a lengthy discussion of proposed plans by Stan, Ivy moved to defer this item to next meeting in 2 weeks. Steve seconded and the motion to defer this item for 2 weeks was passed unanimously by voice vote.

Stan will be sending out proposals to all blind vendors to review.

1. Review Programs to Solicit, Train, Allow On-the-Job Training, and Satellite Facilities in Order to Fill Open Vacancies: Stan noted they are opposed to placing mentally ill candidates into the program and recommended filling 8-9 vacant facilities and get more students in through on-the-job training and to allow vendors to take on satellite facilities in order to keep facilities open.

Kat replied that all the items are on the table and the agency is always to looking for candidates.

1. Committee Plans for Annual Statewide Training: Following discussion, Stan tabled this item until we get a better picture of the pandemic.
2. Set the Date of the Annual Statewide Meeting and Elections: This item was also tabled.
3. Update on Facilities:
4. Silver Dolphin: Kat reported that Ivy will begin operating on 5/6/21 with Blackstone Consulting, Inc. (BCI).
5. Joint Base Pearl Harbor Hickam Buildings 167 & 2: Both applicants declined to take facility, so Ivy has agreed to continue operating as a satellite for the next 6 months.
6. Kahului Airport: Joel has made upgrades to the facility and may be installing another door to help with the traffic flow. Gate 29 is being substituted for Gate 27, which is a smaller facility but in a good location. The funds originally allocated for Gate 27 will now go to Gate 29.
7. Kona Airport North: The Kona Airport superintendent offered SLA to take a facility that shares a wall with the current facility. It will need a new entry that will open for more visibility. We are considering this. Joel suggested against it noting that the vendor will be competing immediately with each other.
8. Kona Civic Center: Remains vacant, has vending machines only.
9. Kona Judiciary: Remains vacant, has vending machines only.
10. Hilo County Aupuni Center: Currently operated by Byron as a satellite facility.
11. State Office Tower – Honolulu: Remains vacant, has vending machines only.
12. Honolulu District Court: No interests received.
13. Arizona Memorial: The selection is still in process.
14. Kapolei State Office Building: Vacancy announcement was mailed.
15. Kaneohe Marine Corp Base: DAG Lori reported that they are happy with the current vendor in place and we will continue to operate there until we settle by arbitration or settlement.
16. Schofield Barracks: DAG Lori reported that all appeal and briefing paperwork were submitted, and we are hoping to hear in May. They are hopeful they will win the appeal and the blind vendor will be back in.
17. Plans, Support, Training and Procedures for Re-Opening Facilities, Progress and Arrangements to Get All Vendors Vaccinated: Stan reported the plans and procedures are in progress with task force and vaccinations are also in progress.

NEXT MEETING: The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for April 13, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to discuss and hearing no objections, Doug (not a board member) moved to adjourn the meeting. Ivy seconded and the motion passed by unanimous voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 4:45 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

KF:mra

Ho'opono/Employment Section