**BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM OF OREGON BECC Regular Meeting**

**Thursday, February 22nd, 2024**

**3:00 PM – 5:00PM**

OREGON COMMISSION FOR THE BLIND

This meeting will be held by videoconference. Attend the meeting using the Zoom.com platform or by telephone.

• Any agenda item may become an action item.

• Any of these items may be a conflict of interest.

AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER- Chairman Hauth.
   1. Roll call.
   2. Adoption of past meeting minutes.

Replace Salem 1 representative and vice chair position.

The nature of this meeting I propose will be to not only discuss items of impact upon VFM’s, but as well to understand the agencies point of view and then identify the possibility of common ground understanding.

I would ask that these discussions include but are not limited to the following.

1. Public Comments.
2. Script Vending.
3. Self Service Initiative.
4. Full Time Employment.
5. Unassigned Vending Assignment and Facility Development.
6. Active Participation.
7. Program Image.

Adjournment.

**Transcript**

Hauth: So, anyway, just, I'll, I may switch in and out in the meeting, but obviously, that's something that I gotta prioritize. So…

Stewart: Yeah, of course.

Hauth: Let's go ahead and open the meeting and start the meeting. Anyway, I apologize. But just what I wanted to hear.

Stewart: Hey, Randy? I just wanted to mention that I started recording the meeting.

Hauth: Yep, yep, thank you. So, let's go ahead and open the meeting. Let's see if we have a quorum. I heard Lewanda? Lewanda?

Miranda: Present.

Hauth: Derrick Stevenson?

D Stevenson: Here.

Hauth: Hey, Derrick. Steve Jackson? How about Carole Webber?

Webber: I'm here.

Hauth: Hey, Carole. And I'm here as well. So, we do have a quorum. Steve's not on the call? Okay? And so, as far as managers, I did hear Char and I did hear Harold, you guys are both here. Correct?

Young: Yep.

Hawkins: I am here.

Hauth: Okay, director, Director Stewart is here. I heard him as well. So, who else is on the line?

Brown: Celyn.

Miranda: Celyn's here, but she's on, on a bus.

Hauth: Yeah, that's what happens when we're blind, isn't it? So, hop on the bus, Gus. I don't know if there's anything like Celyn. I didn't hear that name in the song, but anyway, we'll have to think how that would work. Hop on in, Celyn. Yeah, there we go.

Miranda: There we go.

Hauth: Okay. Who else is on the line?

Babcock: You also have Michael Babcock, member of the public here.

Hauth: Hey, Michael, thanks for joining.

Miranda: Hi Michael.

Hauth: Okay anyone else?

Van Rooy: Skylar's here.

Hauth: Hey, Skylar. Okay, anyone else? All right, all right, all right. Well, Carole, if you would do the honors of helping me go through the agenda why [sic] I kinda navigate through this, I'd sure appreciate it. I know a couple of things we're hoping to do today is to appoint a new board member based on Art's decision to resign from the board. And so, also, he resigned as vice-chair, so, we'll have to try and navigate through that to figure that out. So, Carole, if you’d do the honors, I'd sure appreciate it.

Webber: Sure. What's next is the adoption of past meeting minutes.

Hauth: Okay. Hopefully everybody looked at, read the minutes, and I'll accept a motion to adopt the minutes, if you so choose.

Miranda: I'll make that motion to adopt the January 11th meeting minutes.

Hauth: Okay, do we have a second?

D Stevenson: I second.

Webber: I second it.

Hauth: Okay, thank you, Derrick. Thank you. And so, all in favor. Derrick?

D Stevenson: Yea.

Hauth: Lewanda?

Miranda: Yes.

Hauth: Carole?

Webber: Yes.

Hauth: And I'll vote yea, as well, so, motion passes. What do we have next on there?

Webber: Okay, next is the, your explanation about what we would, the discussion, and there's quite a few listed here. It has to do with the manager s and other business that falls under this criteria. The first one is [inaudible] public comment.

Miranda: Before that on here, though, is replacement of... Replace Salem 1…

Webber: Replacement of Salem 1 representative. Yeah.

Hauth: Okay, okay, so, as I think, as most of you know, Art resigned from the board, and also I announced his resign--, or his retirement from the program in, I think, July. So, anyway, you know, it's a, it's a sad thing as we all kinda age through this program. But you know, kinda what it is. So, anyway, that said, replacing Art's position. Is that Salem 1? Is that the Salem 1 position? I get a little confused on that.

Webber: Yes.

Hauth: Salem, 1, or Salem... Salem 1 position. So, I know the rules say that the first priority would go to the two managers within that area, which are Salvador and Robert. And we reached out to both of those [sic] and asked if they had any interest, and none was expressed, and it doesn't appear that they're on the call, and I know Lewanda sent out another notice to anybody else that would be interested to serve the remaining portion of Art's position.

Brown: Mr. Chair. It's Celyn.

Young: I think we lost Randy.

Hawkins: I can hear you, Celyn.

Brown: Can you hear me?

Miranda: Yes.

Hawkins: I can hear you. We can hear you. I don't know where Randy went though.

Brown: Okay, okay. Well, I just wanted, you can still hear me, right?

Miranda: Yeah.

Hawkins: Yeah.

Brown: Okay. Then I am interested in the position. So, I'm just throwing my name out there, whenever Randy comes back, because I don't know if I’ll be able to say anything.

Hauth: Hey, guys. Hey, so, what was it, what was the last thing you heard from me?

Miranda: Nothing, but Celyn said that she was interested.

Hauth: Okay, so, did you hear? Did you hear me say that we had requested two of the managers from that area and nobody responded?

Miranda: Yes.

Webber: Yes.

Hauth: Okay, and did you hear that we sent out notice, that you sent out notice?

Miranda Yes.

Hauth: Okay, good enough. That's what I was wondering. Okay, so, so, Celyn has apparently announced that she's interested. Is there anybody else interested? Okay.

Young: Randy?

Hauth: Yes, yes?

Young: I'm, I'm interested, too. So, I'll throw my hat in.

Hauth: Okay, okay. And so, Harold and Celyn are both interested. I know Harold's not in that area. I know he's from Salem, but so it comes back to the board deciding what they want to do on that. So, it says, I think in the rule, even though I don't have it right here in front of me, that the appointment, you know, somebody would be appointed by the board. So, board members, let me know what your thoughts are on how we proceed on this. You know, I don't know if you want to ask Celyn or Harold, you know, why they're interested, or their qualifications, or what you want to do? But clearly, it's, needs to kinda go from here forward. So.

D Stevenson: I would, I myself would go for Harold.

Hauth: Okay, okay, thank you. Lewanda, Carole?

D Stevenson: Because he has experience, past experience in…

Hauth: Sure.

D Stevenson: He pretty much knows how the board gets ran.

Hauth: Thank you, Derrick.

Webber: Mr. Chair?

Hauth: Yes, Carole?

Webber: Well, it's hard to make a decision right at this moment. But if Harold has been on the board before and he knows how a lot of the procedures and things go, I think that I would have an option for Harold.

Hauth: Okay. And Lewanda, you have, want to add in anything?

Miranda: Yeah, I feel really uncomfortable.

Webber: Yeah, me too.

Hauth: Well, well, hey, listen! Who, who doesn't, you know what I mean?

Miranda: Yeah. But I'm, I think both, either one of them would be good. Harold does have experience. But I think Celyn deserves an opportunity. And so, I'll just go with the majority of the board.

Hauth: Okay, yeah. So, you know, so it does say appointment of the board, and it sounds like there's a majority, I mean, we can, you know, do a consensus vote of the board. Celyn, I do appreciate you offering and wanting to step up. And you know, maybe there's a way with, we can include you, or you know, par, have you participate in one of the subcommittees or something? I hate for somebody, ask for a volunteer, and somebody steps up, and then they don't get, you know, awarded that opportunity. It's really not a great opportunity. But anyway, we sure do appreciate people that serve on the board and try and advocate for the program and the managers, but... So, board, if you want to do a motion for, if one of the board members wants to do a motion for either one and then we can go from there.

D Stevenson: I would put my vote for Harold.

Hauth: Okay, so a vote motion has been made. Do we have a second on that?

Webber: I'll second it.

Hauth: Okay, second's been made, and we're doing yea or nay? Derrick?

D Stevenson: Yea.

Hauth: Lewanda?

Miranda: Yea.

Hauth: Carole?

Webber: Yea.

Hauth: And I'll vote yea, as well, thank you very much, both of you guys. And again, hopefully, hopefully, Celyn, you know, your interest remains, so. Apologize for that. But kind of what, what's going on. So, what do we have next on the, and Harold, welcome to the board! Welcome to the board again. So.

Young: Thank you.

Hauth: Public comment?

Webber: Yes.

Hauth: Okay, public comment. Do we have any public comment?

Young: I'll say a few words.

Hauth: Sure.

Young: Randy. Thank you, Randy.

Hauth: Yes, yes.

Young: Well, as you all know, I've, I've been around for a while, and I have to say that I am getting closer to that retirement age, too. So, you know, who knows? Maybe by the end of the, this two-year term that I'm gonna finish. Maybe I'll be retiring and give Celyn an opportunity to jump in. I know, I know right now, that I've seen some changes happening. You know, Ron's on board now, and I see a few positive movements towards getting this program back together, and I'd like to be a part of it. So, anyway, I'm going to do my best. Thank you.

Hauth: Well, thank you. Thank you, Harold. We, we welcome that. So, anyone else? So, I'll say just a couple of words. You know, one thing that kinda tickles me is people talk about retirement. Well, yeah, you're talking about leaving the program. Cause we really don't have a standard retirement. Right? You leave the program is basically, you know, talking with my good friend, Steve, he said, you know, I'm retiring from the program that basically it forced me out. But I'm retiring from the program. And I'm thinking, well, what do you mean? You're retiring, you mean you're leaving, because we really don't have any retirement. We don't have any benefit other than leaving. But you know, I mean, I get it, it's kinda semantics. But you know, it's kind of what's going on unfortunately. They'll have to carry me out of here feet first. But you know, that's the way that goes, so, hopefully that'll be, hopefully that'll be later than sooner. Anyway. So, anyway, I, I will say just on a constructive note to tie into what Harold says. You know, they hired Director Moore [sic], oh, jeez, excuse me, they hired Director Stewart in December. We had three candidates. Quite honestly, Ron was not my first choice and maybe a couple of you, as well. Maybe not the first choice. But what I can say first and foremost, is in the two months that I've been able to start to get to know Ron and communicate with Ron, even though he's trying to understand and learn different personalities and learn the program and trying to do his best, you know, he has said, I'm here for you guys. I'm here to support the program. I'm here to do my best, you know, without you, there’s no me. I mean, a lot of things that, you know, I want to build that program. I don't want to work, you know, constructively. Those are the things that we never heard previously from Eric, never heard any of those type of, you know, comments, or never even felt that. And so, like I said a couple of times and my short exposure to Mr. Stewart, I think he's a genuine person. I think he's a caring, kind, compassionate person, that's going to do his best within the structure that we all have, which is a bureau--, bureaucratic government. But if we can find a way to navigate, make the agency look good, make our bottom lines look good, grow the program. You know, live, live in harmony to the best of our ability, then why the heck not, right? So, that's why I'm throwing my hat in the ring right now to, you know, believe in that, and hope in that, and you know, we'll, we'll see where it goes. But I've been, I've been pleasantly surprised and optimistic so far, so we'll go from there. So. Okay, anybody else before we go forward? Okay, what do we have next, Carole?

Webber: Script vending.

Hauth: Okay, hey, Ron? So, you're, you're on. You're up to bat.

Stewart: Sure. So, the script vending. What I can say is, unfortunately, I don't have a lot to say, because we've been very frustrated with the communication regarding the script vending. But I, I was talking with Randy about this, and I, I will let you know that it's on the top of my priority list. And I, I have a [sic] in-person or Zoom meeting coming up very soon. I'm hoping it will be for tomorrow. The confirmation, I'll get the confirmation tomorrow, and my intention is not to leave that meeting without a resolution and a commitment for, for, for, for the increase. So, I apologize for not knowing more, but I will know more very soon, and I'll let you know. But I do want you to know that it's everybody at the agency's highest priority to, to get this, to get this increase implemented as fast as possible. It's, it's quite frankly, it's, it's been delayed way too long, and I'm, I'm really working hard on it.

Hauth: Well, and I, you know, I believe you are, and I know you, you know, I know you are. I would just ask that you not allow the Department of Corrections to push us off anymore. They pushed it off way too long. It's a year overdue, and we've all suffered. Our subcontractors have suffered. You know, I've given thought about just authorizing my subcontractors to raise the price, and you know, let the chips fall where they may. So, these people haven't been working in good faith, haven't been acting in good faith, and nobody else would get along, get away with it. So, I’d just encourage you to make sure that, if you would please, that, don't let them kick the can down the road. And please don't make any decisions that maybe you think won't be received well by us, you know, even if you have to, you know, confer with, with us about that. But I guess that's my ask on that. Anybody else have any comment? Okay, well, no. Hearing none. I appreciate it, Ron, and I know you're trying to do your best, and it was kind of a bad hand you were dealt, so.

Stewart: Sure. Yeah, and like I said, I'm working on it.

Hauth: You're, you're the guy in the driver's seat. So.

Stewart: Yeah, and I will let everyone know as soon, as soon as I know. But, but, but I really am forcing the hand, and, and very impatient with any more delays.

Hauth: Yeah, thank you.

Stewart: Yeah.

Hauth: Okay. What do we have, what do we have next, Carole?

Webber: Self-service initiative.

Hauth: Okay. So, I think, you know, I think one of the, just, just to share with everybody. So, you know, we've had a, we've had a history of butting heads with the agency, and rightfully so, because a lot of the things, in my opinion, a lot of the things and actions that the agency had put our way, impact us, you know, impact our bottom line, impact our profitability. We're not just these little blind people that can be told what to do and where to go and how high to jump.

D Stevenson: [inaudible] to say something?

Hauth: Hold on. Yeah, just a second. You sure can. And anyway. We're supposed to, but one of the, one of the things that I did want to share is that instead of just coming to a meeting, making a motion to try and get the agency to do something, which inevitably our motions of any substance are always denied. Right? Yeah, I mean, you can go back the last 10 or 12 years, and most any motion has been denied or partially accepted. But it's been like, no, we're not going to do that. We're not going to do that. So, my thought is with the new director in place, and a new care and concern going forward, let's try and discuss and work through these issues of impact, if at all possible. And let's try, let's try that. So, that's why I wanted to have this meeting to try and discuss and open up and share our concerns with what's going on and what we can go from there. So, was that Derrick that was wanting to say something? Hello? Can you hear me now?

D Stevenson: Hello?

Miranda: Derrick, are you there?

Hauth: Hi, Derrick? Derrick, go ahead.

D Stevenson: Yeah. Yeah, I didn't really have anything to say. I'm sorry. I just wasn't on mute..

Hauth: Oh, that's okay. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, okay, no, no, no worries. Okay. Does anybody want… So, the Self-Service initiative? Does anybody want to, like, share their concerns or any ideas, about you know, what we can hope to achieve or accomplish, or look through? Or, I mean, is there anything that you can offer at time for Director Stewart's consideration?

Miranda: This is Lewanda, I would just like to know you know, originally it was 50 machines. But now there's some vendors that are doing less than that. So, are we no longer at a 50-machine mandate? Do you know, Director Stewart?

Stewart: Sure. Yeah. You know, in my time here, what I've seen is and what I've heard from, from the group here, is every site's different. There are so many different variables as to how each site is built. Some people are, are able to do 50 machines, some are not. Some machines are grouped together very close to each other, so it's easy to do more. Some are very far apart. So, I think that the focus should probably just be shifted to the 30-hour a week minimum and not really, not, and not focus on the 50-machine minimum. That's kind of my thoughts. I know I shared that with you, Randy, a little bit. But I think that's much easier to quantify from route to route and from person to person.

Miranda: Yeah.

Stewart: So, that's, that's kind of my thoughts on, on where we're at. I think, I think.

Miranda: I do agree with that.

Stewart: Yup. And I think that…

Miranda: Is Dasha [sic] on board with that?

Stewart: What's that?

Webber: I do, I think it's great. Great idea!

Miranda: Does, does Dacia share, does Dacia feel the same way?

Stewart: Dacia does, yeah.

Miranda: Oh, okay.

Stewart: So, because, you know, it's, like I said, as long as we can, you know, properly track the time, you know, which I'll bring up to something we'll talk about a little later. But.

Miranda: Okay.

Stewart: I, I think that it's just much easier for everyone to quantify. And it's, it's, it's a lot more fair across the board.

Miranda: I agree. Alright, thank you.

Stewart: Thank you.

Hauth: And obviously, this is the first…

D Stevenson: This is Derrick.

Hauth: Go ahead, Derrick.

D Stevenson: I'd just like to say thank you for working with us, and, and noticing that there, is, there was a problem. Cause I know I was standing to have to do 50 machines which, down here the buildings and stuff are so small and, and understaffed. It's just almost impossible to do 50 machines in, in a good way. So, I thank you for working with us.

Stewart: Yeah, sure.

Hauth: And hopefully, we can find something that's gonna work out to benefit the managers and also that supports the agency, right? The program is to benefit the managers. So, the, the kickoff on that is to support the agency. I mean, you know, if the managers ain't happy, ain't nobody happy, right? So, let's make the managers happy and doing that by, you know, making money and being able to be proud of what they're doing and not just be, you know, dictated around. And also, in turn, we want to support the agency right? So, if we can find that going forward, and I would agree with you. I know, Ron, we've had a couple of talks, and I share some information from you. And it's not a one size fits all. And I don't, maybe initially, people thought this was going to be a good idea. But you know, the 40% profit that the agency proposed the managers were going to make to the legislators isn't, isn't accurate, you know. It may be was thought that it was going to be. The increased set-aside isn't accurate. The cost of repairing the machines, I mean, it's just, you know. The list goes on and on, and, like Derrick said, you know, down in his neck of the woods, he has to drive a hundred miles, or the machines don't have that kind of volume. But here in Portland, I'm stuck in traffic for an hour and a half, just to go five miles, you know. So, what I will say for the record is, you know, I was put out to do the Self-Service initiative two years ago. I was the one that was put out there first, and I did it because, well, you know, they were threatening to take my license and discipline me and all that. So, I went out, and I did it. But right now, I am in a system of self-service. That's what I want to do. That's what I choose to do. Because personally, I built that whole system around being able to hire an employee and pay for my warehousing and pay for my telemetry and pay for the insurance on the truck and pay for the diesel and all that. So, right now, even if the agency said, gosh, you guys don't have to self-service 50 machines anymore. I'm sorry I'm, I'm stuck in that, and I'm pushing myself to maintain the 50, even though I've lost some. I'm trying to work with the agency to help me sustain the income that I determined that I needed to generate to pay for that self-service. For the record, the Self-Service initiative portion of my route is a break even or a loser at best. But again, it's kind of what, where, where I am and what I am. But the good news with all that is that the agency is interested and amicable to trying to figure out how to quantify, what does it mean to work 30 hours, and can somebody run a micro-market, or can somebody run 18 m--, you know? And so, that's, that's good to hear? Right? So, we're, we're, we're happy to, happy to hear that. So, and I know there's more discussions to be had about that. Does anybody have anything else to, to add in? Okay, hearing none, what do we have next? Carole?

Webber: Full-time employment. That kind of goes along with the other.

Hauth: Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah. I think they're kind of connected. I think…

Unidentifiable: [inaudible]

Hauth: …years, whatever it's been. But you all remember the agency tried to end subcontracting by going to the AG's office to try and get an opinion, right? You remember that? We weren't aware of that. And so, when we were found, when we found out about that, that the agency was trying to do that, of course we were concerned, and we kinda reared up and long story short, when the agency was trying to end subcontracting, we went to the legislators and incorporated House Bill 3253, which not only addressed subcontracting, but also some other program issues, you know, about growing the program. I mean, that's we want, right, growing the program and making as much money as we can as, as businesspeople. But so, one of the, one of the things that we did in some of those many meetings that we had with the different representatives was, okay, well, so, why are you guys subcontracting? You know? Why is that okay? And how do you, how do you control, direct and supervise? So, we built a bunch of parameters around what it meant for a blind person to manage their business, right? I don't know if you remember that, but we tried to build some sideboards around, we're… Look it, even though we're subcontracting, we're in charge of all the major duties. We're in charge of the price, and we're in charge of the service. We're in charge. We go out and we review our machines. We keep in touch. So, we built all these things to try and quantify and sustain that and long story short, it got kind of manipulated and mulled over along the way. But if we're back to trying to build some things about, you know, how can, how can teaming with the private company be a good thing for everybody? And how do we know that a manager is doing their duty, cause, really, it's not okay, in my opinion, just to sit at home and let everybody do your business and not know what you're doing. I'm not saying anybody did that, but you know, if that's the concern of the agency. Well, these guys are just sitting at home collecting a check. Well, let's figure that out, so. Enough, enough out of me. But anybody else on that before we move forward? Okay, what do we have next, Carole?

Webber: Unassigned vending assignment and facility development.

Hauth: Okay. So, and I'll let Ron talk on this, as well. But another one of those long overdrawn things that shouldn't have been that way. This program is about building facilities. It's about assisting and making sure people have viable locations. And you know, being the best you can be. Maximizing your true vocational potential, right? And so, I do know that there's a bank of unassigned vending machines that the agency has been collecting for a number of years. Hundreds of thousands of dollars and should be going to the program participants. And so, it sounds like, and correct me if I'm wrong, or kind of just clarify that, Ron, sounds like there's an interest from the agency to possibly work with the subcommittee to build a route that would go out for bid and possibly look at the, you know, bottom three or four facilities and see if there's a way to, you know, bolster those or… That's kinda, I think in a general, in a general conversation, we've talked at least about the idea behind that. So.

Stewart: That's exactly right. Yeah, that's exactly my goal. I'd like to see all of that unassigned vending be assigned. And actually, we've been working on that since you and I had a discussion, Randy. And so, we're putting together a spreadsheet, and I will be able to send that out probably tomorrow, by the end of the day tomorrow, to everyone, and it'll have I, I can, it will list out all of our unassigned vending machines, so everyone can see them. And then also, of those machines, we put together kind of a proposed route, and I'll, and I'd like to submit that to the committee to, just to take a look at. And, and, you know, maybe tweak it as you see fit, or, or maybe come up with your own ideas. But just, just to kind of begin the conversation on building that route, and who knows? Maybe we could build two. But we'll, we'll start with the one, but I, I'd really like to see that move forward and get those machines earning for people.

Hauth: Yeah, well, that's, that's good to hear, Ron. I, I can just tell you that I know, from my point of view, I would need to know where the location is, how many machines, what the sales are. I mean, those are, kinda, you know, they’re the kind of the key components of what a person would need to know, how to build a route around that, just in my mind.

Stewart: Sure. Yep.

Hauth: So, yeah, anybody?

Stewart: I believe, I believe that's all included.

Hauth: Sure, okay, anybody have a, a comment?

Miranda: This is Lewanda.

Hauth: Hi Lewanda.

Miranda: Yeah. Sorry. I agree with both. Hi. I, I agree with both you guys. And it sounds really good. But also, so, I would like to build a route or two, to get a couple of people employed that aren't, but also my interest is in the people that are running micro markets because I know they're hurting really bad. And so, that's one of my interests.

Stewart: That's a good point. Sure, we can, we can look at that as well.

Miranda: Okay. Sounds good.

Stewart: Excellent point.

Hauth: Anyone else? All right, Carole, if you would please.

Webber: I do have a question, Randy.

Hauth: Yes?

Webber: If, if maybe Ron can answer it, or maybe you can answer it. I don't. Okay, I know that we have unassigned vending and all that. And we're, you know, we want to work on the routes and that kind of thing, and that's great. That's what we need to do, should have been done a long, long time ago. And, but I do have kind of a question about, do we have any new people that are training to be managers? And the reason I'm asking is because, you know, we really do not have a lot of opportunity for people, and we've lost several people in the past. So, I just kind of wondered.

Stewart: Yes, we do. We, we've, we've got actually two, two new and Robert, there's Robert and Skylar, and Rob, two new licensees, and Robert recently took over the DMV route, and then, and Skylar is, is looking to pick up a route as soon as he can.

Webber: I mean, that's, that's terrific. But I mean, we don't have any new people, from, that, joining us into our program?

Stewart: Oh, sure we do, we've got, we've got two people that are getting, getting close to licensed, becoming licensed.

Webber: Oh, really?

Stewart: Yeah, two at the, at the current time. I believe they're somewhere around four to six months out, depending on how things go.

Webber: Oh, okay, thank you. I didn't. I didn't realize we had anyone else training. So, thank you.

Stewart: Sure. Yeah, you’re welcome.

D Stevenson: This is Derrick.

Stewart: Hey, Derrick.

D Stevenson: Yeah, I'd just like to know… I mean, are we making sure that we're gonna be able to put someone, some new person in and help them make, you know, a good living? Do we have? I don't know if we have room to add more managers, to tell you the truth, because a lot like mini marts and stuff they're not, they're not making that kind of money. If we're going to stick 'em in and give 'em a little mini market that's not even going to make a minimum wage, I think that's counterproductive. So.

Stewart: I, I agree with you. Yeah, we want, we want to make sure that we're, we're real careful with, with these unassigned vending that we've, that we currently have, and, and try to put together some, some decent routes. And then also some, some of the folks that have some of the less, the routes that are earning less maybe, maybe add some to their route as well. So, I think we really want to look at all that and get the, get the program more equitable so everybody's earning and then grow the program, not only everybody earning money, but also, you know, more licensees coming, coming aboard and, and finding more opportunities, too. I'd like to get to the point where we're, we're thinking outside of the box and creating more different types of opportunities, you know. I think that's, that's going to be some of the strengths I bring, coming from the, you know, as a chef and restaurateur in the food and beverage industry, I got some ideas to where… I think we can go up, there's some, there's some opportunities to go out there and grab. So, I'd like to get to that point. But I think starting with the unassigned vending machines is, is a, is a good start.

Hauth: Well, and I, I just want to say, even having that, even having the forethought to have that positive energy and thought-provoking vision forward is something we're not used to, and we haven't had for a long time. So, it's going to take a little while for us to all build back trust, I mean, you know, our trust was crushed, demolished, dumped on, and it was allowed to be that way. So, with you in the, with you in that position, it'll be nice to at least try and navigate together forward what this program could be and should be, and look it, maybe some of the things that we think of don't work out, but maybe some do. So, at least it's nice and I, you know, I want to hear a “here here” from all the managers. But I mean, am I the only one that thinks it's a nice change of attitude, or what? So.

Webber: Most definitely, Ron, you're going to be a great, great director. You're a breath of fresh air.

Stewart: Well, thank you. Thank you. Well, I see, I see a lot of opportunity there for everybody, you know. So, I'd like to, you know, just work together in a positive way, and, and move forward and, and go grab all that opportunity.

Hauth: Yeah, yeah, let's do our best. Right? So. Yup, what do we have next, Carole?

D Stevenson: This is Derrick.

Webber: Active participation.

Hauth: Derrick, go ahead, Derrick, go ahead.

D Stevenson: Yeah, I just wanted to kind of get something clarified. I know in the past we had lots of cafeterias that, you know, managers worked in, and it's kinda like we're kind of abandoned people running these cafeterias and stuff, when that's basically, you know, we're obligated to do it. So, that's just my opinion.

Stewart: Yeah, sure, I, you know, I think from what I've been seeing, and I've kind of had my ear to the street a little with building populations, and I, I'm seeing a positive uptick, and I'm hoping that those populations get up to a healthy enough point to where we can start reopening our cafeterias. You know, it doesn't make sense to open them when, when we prepare food, and then there's not enough people to eat it. But I'm hoping I, I've heard, I've heard a lot of places are starting to kind of trickle back in and, and require that their employees work from, not work remote as much. So, that's something that, that we're really keeping an eye on, because that's a great opportunity once those buildings, once those buildings’ populations get up there and, and, and also like, I say, I've got some ideas because we still have those kitchens for those cafeterias. So, that's, I don't want to get ahead of myself, but I've got some ideas for those kitchens to maybe bring in, bring in some business, too.

D Stevenson: Sounds great. Thank you.

Stewart: Yeah. You're welcome.

Hauth: Okay? Anything else, Carole, what's next?

Webber: The active participation.

Hauth: So, you know, I mean, you know, you could, you could, you could beat this to death, right? You could try and figure out what it is. You could spell it out. You could, you know, legalize it. You could, you know, do all those things that really don't mean anything, even though they should, at the end of the day they don't if you have somebody that doesn't want them to. What I've seen so far is an eagerness to communicate and discuss and try and figure it out together. So, I don't know exactly, you know, other than you know the proof is in the pudding. I don't know exactly how we make that any different than, you know, adhering to what we're supposed to be doing, and what we're supposed to be doing together. Right? So, I mean, if anybody has an idea or Ron, if you have thoughts, or if we just continue to kind of forge a relationship together trying to address these things.

Stewart: Sure, you know, that's kind of my thoughts, too, is just... I think, as a group, we can get a lot more done than, you know, the more people, the more heads we get together, the better decisions we can make. And so, I'd like to just continue, you know, just continue to work together on things, and, and kind of… That seems, like you say, it's hard to define the parameters. So, just, just kind of proceed organically and, and, and make these decisions together on how, and come up with new ideas together, too, on, on how we can grow the program and, and, and grow our profits.

Hauth: Sure.

Stewart: You know. One thing I wanted to, that I kind of alluded to earlier that I wanted to kind of bring up is, is, I was hoping that I could get some help. I know that the time tracker, I've, I've noticed that there's been. It's, it's, it, it could use improvement, from what I'm hearing. You can correct me if I'm wrong. But so, I just kind of wanted to, maybe, maybe I could turn that over to the committee to take that time tracker and, and, and, and change it however you want, and, and just give me your ideas on what would make that better? Because I think that moving forward, with the, you know, the minimum 30 hours a week, would require, you know, some, some, some. We would want to be tracking the time correctly and, and so, any, any ideas that you guys might have for reworking that so that maybe it's easier to fill out or, or it's just, it just works better, I would appreciate. And so, I don't know if you'd be interested in doing that, but I wanted to put that out there as something that would be, I think, helpful to everybody.

Hauth: Yeah, thank you, Ron. Yep. And you know, I, I know I've heard some back and forth about, about that. So yeah, let's, let me think, let me think about that, and the others on the call think about that, and see, you know, if we can make that not so rudimentary, but more of a like, you know, a professional businessperson’s reporting and accounting of what they do to support the business, you know.

Stewart: Sure.

Hauth: You know, I mean that’s kinda what I think.

Stewart: And also, yeah, and also, I'd be glad to help with any, I’d be glad to participate as well. But I just wanted to throw it out there.

Hauth: Sure.

Stewart: And, and I know everyone [inaudible], all the managers know better how they're spending their time. So, it'd be it. That would be very valuable for all that input.

Hauth: Anyone else?

D Stevenson: This is Derrick.

Hauth: Derrick?

D Stevenson: Yeah, I'm, that all sounds good and stuff. But you know, active participation, just make sure that we're all on the same level, and we're not, we're not trying to get in there and say you have to accept all our, our opinions, or whatever, or do whatever we want. The, the power is still in the commission's hands, and I don't see how, how we could go wrong if we're just included in conversations, just as we move along instead of hearing it after the fact.

Stewart: Sure. That's fair.

Hauth: Yeah, well, well, well said, Derrick. I forget who it was. Scott La--, Scott Labarre maybe said, you know, you know, the, the policy or procedure or law is only as good as the paper it's written on, if it's not supported, right? And if the agency at the end of day wants to derail anything, they can. I mean, they have the money to throw at the AG. They have the, you know, where-for-all [sic] to kind of put up roadblocks, but hopefully, we're able to find a way around that. And you know, with Ron and us working together to make the agency, you know, look better and make us all achieve more. Gosh! Why not? Isn't that a smarter way to do business, you know, so yeah. So, anyone else before we move on to the next item? Okay. What do we have next? Carole?

Webber: This is the last one. Program image.

Hauth: So, anyway, I think, program image is pretty much all those things that we talked about. You know, if, you know, trying to understand what the agency wants for the program, maybe sometimes is different than what we as entrepreneurs want for the program. So, we have to find that happy medium. And you know, look it, you scratch our backs, we'll scratch yours. Really, we'd, I'd love nothing more than to go and, and, and support and sponsor the agency to the legislators, or to whomever I speak to nationally. I've started to be able to do that again where I couldn't do that before. And so, you know, the program image, if we work together and if we build new opportunities, if we build new routes, and we, you know, get off of the angst that exists, rightfully so, I think in a lot of ways. But if we get over that, gosh, you know, the image will create its own, and you know, what I'm hearing so far is, you know, a pathway forward. You know, a couple of things that I do want to share, I forgot to mention is that Ted Hughes passed away. I don't know, you guys might know Ted. He took us on about a ye-. So, you know our good friend Art Stevenson. I mean, I love Art, even though sometimes we don't always agree to... He's a strong, passionate advocate, has been, always will be, and sometimes his questions and his opinions are needed in the discussion. Right? But I can tell you he's, he's one of us, and, but you know, so Art, Art would get up in the morning, and he'd call in these different talk shows, and religiously he would do that. And so, Ted Hughes, who is in his 90s, who also lobbied, had a very successful lobbying career for a number of years. He lobbied for McDonald’s Corp, Southern Pacific. I mean, you know, he was a, he was a high roller, and so he listened to Art one morning and said, you know, I’m going to help those people. And so, he reached out to Art and Art gave him my number. And so, he reached out to me, and we talked, and we brought Ted in to try and help us share our woes to the legislators, right? So, about a year ago, Ted engaged with us, and Ted was like 93, 94 years old, and I could see him steadily kinda decline. Unfortunately, he lost his life about a year, about a week ago, and his son Gary, who lived with him and helped take care of him, was his biggest fan, said, “You know what? Thank you, guys for giving Ted a good remainder of his life, and he really enjoyed participating and listening and trying to help you guys.” So, you know, we can take solace in that. But he did pass away. So, you know, prayers to Ted. I am leaving next week, or Sunday, I think, I take off to BLAST Orlando Innovation. So, Blind Leadership and Superior Training in Orlando. There's going to be a number of people there. I think over 200 people, bunch of presenters. They're going to talk about trying to reinvent the program or come up with new ideas. I mean, we're down almost probably to 1,450 people in, nationwide, you know? That's not a strong presence. That's somebody that they could squash like a bug if they wanted to. Right. So, I remember when I joined the program, I think there was like, gosh, 3,500 or more people. And then, I remember, there were 2,500 people, and then I remembered there's 2000, then 18, and now we're down to 14 and we got to find a way to substantiate the program and to, you know, grow the program, and my personal opinion, RSA and most of the state agencies are at fault for not doing a good job. Specifically, RSA, who hasn't administered the program properly. Basically, let state agencies do whatever they wanted to do and taken this, like, hands off approach. But you know, all me saying that will do nothing other than us trying to work together to find a pathway forward. So, I'll give a full accounting and reporting of my return, upon my return at our next meeting. And for those of you who do or don't know, I was at Sagebrush last week, and Mr. Stewart joined in, and that was wonderful. You know, I've heard that stuff like last 18, 19 years. So, even though it's good, you know, and it's a great networking opportunity, and you do learn a little bit, it's not like Ron being fresh, fresh to the program and trying to understand and learn and network. We did have conversation with Silas Deane through Vend Engine and Tyler Technologies and talked about the nuances of jail commissaries, and how, you know, how that works and the stumbling blocks. We did talk with Southern Foods, Connor, I forget his last name, but he runs, like, massive million-dollar food corporations and so, we made a lot of headway and getting to know and network with people. And I know Ron was able to meet with other state directors, and so all in all was a good thing. It's changed a lot in the last 18 years. Most of the people that I knew are gone, you know, unfortunately. But anyway, it was, it was a fun time and a good time. So, but anybody, anybody else have anything to say or comments before we move on down the road?

Young: Yeah, Randy, this is Harold Young.

Hauth: So now, hey, Harold.

Young: Hey. I would just like to say I've really appreciated everything that was said today in today's meeting, it's, it's really positive. And you know, I, I look forward to working with all you guys directly and Ron and the Commission. I think maybe we've got a path forward like you said, and let's latch onto it and see what we can make of it.

Hauth: Sure.

Stewart: Yeah, I agree.

Hauth: We didn't, we didn't have that before, unfortunately, or we would have done it.

Young: No, we didn't.

Hauth: I mean, it's not like it's not like, oh, gosh! We just decided to do it. You know, there's a, there's a [sic] opportunity to work together, I mean, I just don't say this, you know, by happenstance. You know, even though Ron and I and, you know, might not agree on everything, or we may. Who knows but that opportunity wasn't there before. It is there now, and let's all embrace it and work together and see what we can make this. Make of this.

Young: The door’s open. Let's try it. I mean.

Babcock: Well put.

Hauth: Yeah, yep, yeah.

Brown: This is Celyn.

Hauth: Hey Celyn.

Brown: Hey. I just. I've been listening, and I just am excited about the future. So, I just want to let everyone know that, that, just things look more positive than they have in a long time. And that's exciting.

Stewart: Wow!

Hauth: Yeah, yeah, no doubt, no doubt. And Celyn, if we can find a way to incorporate you in somehow, if you're interested in getting more involved, that'd be, that'd be great. We need, we need younger people in the program. You know, we need people to step up and be participants, you know. Gosh, you know. So, if you have any interest, you know, maybe get a hold of me or Lewanda, or whoever, you know, your, your conduit is, and we'll, we'll get you. We'll get you in there. So.

Brown: Alright awesome. Thank you.

Hauth: Alright, you bet. All right, guys. Well, let's go ahead and adjourn this meeting, and thank you very much.

Stewart: Thank you.

Young: Thank you.

D Stevenson: Night everyone.

Webber: Night everyone.

Hauth: Goodnight.

**Motions Passed**

1. **“…that BECC adopt 1-11-24 meeting minutes**

Proposed: Miranda. Seconded: D Stevenson. Passed. Yes: Yeas: Hauth, Webber, D Stevenson, Miranda (Jackson not in attendance) vacant (A Stevenson)

1. **“…that** **BECC replace Arthur Stevenson Salem 1 vacant BECC seat with Harold Young**

Proposed: D Stevenson. Seconded: Webber. Passed. Yes: Yeas: Hauth, Webber, Miranda, D Stevenson (Jackson not in attendance)