

## **Meeting Minutes - Elected Committee of Managers (E C M)**

The **January 16, 2021** E C M quarterly meeting was conducted through the E C M conference call line due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Instructions to access the conference call line were distributed as follows:**

Conference number: 1-832-917-1510 access code: 172170 (after the voice prompt press \*)

Press 5\* to be recognized for questions or comments (This will let the conference manager know you have raised your hand and you will be recognized by the E C M Chairman.)

Press 4\* to mute or unmute

NOTE: conference call was recorded

Attendees were urged to register the phone number they would be calling in with in advance with Mr. Tommy Crawford by calling him at 254-654-0119. This helps the E C M recognize who is attending the meeting and helps to make communications more efficient.

**Call to order 9:00 a.m.**

**Invocation presented by E C M Representative Laydell Rogers**

### **Roll call of E C M and Guests**

Mr. Tommy Crawford read a list of audience members names on the call and named each of the E C M Representatives that were present.

### **Business Enterprises of Texas (B E T) Staff Attending**

Lizet Hinojosa, B E T Director

## **Election of E C M Officers / Executive Committee**

### **E C M Chair Nominations -**

Mr. Tom Chepey announced the nomination of Mr. Mike Sparks for E C M Chair; Mr. Sparks accepted. Ms. Aloha Cook offered to second Mr. Spark's nomination. Mr. Manny Sifuentes concurred with the nomination of Mr. Sparks. Mr. John Mahler requested to move the nomination of E C M Officers to the last agenda item of the meeting. However, Mr. Mahler's request was denied. Mr. Tommy Crawford cited the By-Laws and announced that there were no other indications of any other nomination. Mr. Mike Sparks reports by default, he has been elected E C M Chair again; he expressed his gratitude for the confidence the committee has bestowed and says how hard the previous year has been but is looking forward to a good year and announced his desire to move ahead.

### **E C M Vice Chair Nominations –**

Mr. Tommy Crawford nominates Mr. Tom Chepey for E C M Vice-Chair; Mr. Chepey accepted the nomination. Mr. Larry Watson said he was going to nominate Mr. Chepey too. Mr. Nure Kebirtilmo announced his self-nomination; Mr. Sparks asked if he accepts the nomination and Mr. Kebirtilmo cited yes. Mr. Laydell Rogers also nominated Mr. Kebirtilmo. Chairman Sparks announced an election and enlisted the assistance of Ms. Karla Martinez and Mr. Greg Stavinoha to begin the count. Each district member representative announced their vote for Vice-Chair as follows:

D1A – Manny Sifuentes votes for Tom Chepey

D1B – Mike Sparks votes for Tom Chepey  
D2A - Sophia Sparks votes for Tom Chepey  
D2B - Larry Watson votes for Tom Chepey  
D3A - Nure Kebirtilmo votes for himself  
D3B - Laydell Rogers votes for Nure Kebirtilmo  
D4A - Jerry House votes for Tom Chepey  
D4B - Rames Gonzalez is not on the call – no vote  
D5A - Tommy Crawford votes for Tom Chepey  
D5B – John Mahler votes for Nure Kebirtilmo  
D6A – Tom Chepey votes for himself  
D6B – Aloha Cook votes for Tom Chepey

Vote completed for the E C M Vice-Chair position; Ms. Karla Martinez announced eight votes for Mr. Chepey and three votes for Mr. Kebirtilmo; one no vote. Ms. Martinez announced Mr. Chepey as the new Vice-Chair.

### **E C M Treasurer Nominations –**

Nominations were cited for the treasury position with Mr. Manny Sifuentes nominating Mr. Tommy Crawford; Mr. Crawford confirmed his acceptance. No other nominations for treasurer were announced. Mr. Sparks offered a congratulatory note to Mr. Crawford and acknowledged the completion of the new E C M executive committee for 2021.

### **Approval of Minutes for October 2020 Meeting**

Chairman Sparks called for approval of the meeting minutes however, Mr. John Mahler asked to be recognized to discuss the committee's lack for following the format of Robert's Rules of Orders; he stated that the approval of the meeting minutes should have taken place during the previous meeting. Chairman Sparks acknowledged Mr. Mahler's request as he proceeds to consider the minutes as approved.

### **National Association of Blind Merchants Update – Mr. Terry Smith**

Mr. Smith graciously thanked everyone for extending to him the invitation to speak but before he began to present his talking points related to the \$20 million dollars and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (R S A) document about active participation, he gave a housekeeping update on behalf of the N A B M's president, Mr. Nicky Gacos, who was unable to attend the meeting. Mr. Smith then transitioned into a discussion of the role the N A B M serves by offering educational and training opportunities; was excited to announce a series of virtual informational sessions called LEAD 2021 and Beyond (Leadership Enrichment and Development). These informative 90 minute/sessions presentations will engage the blind entrepreneurs to take advantage of the opportunities that will evolve from the challenges the pandemic has placed. Registration required at [www.blindmerchants.com](http://www.blindmerchants.com), the series will run each Thursday per ninety minutes. Mr.

Smith continues his report to announce that the next informational opportunity for blind entrepreneurs will be the BLAST LIVE event; these sessions will revisit the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans and provide updates on the vendor relief funding. Another virtual training, with a practical format, taking place is the quest to run better and more effective meetings using the fundamentals of Robert's Rules of Order; N A B M has coordinated with two contractors that will provide this training opportunity that will be offered mainly to committee chairs and vice-chairs. Mr. Smith highlighted these upcoming events as the N A B M has "lots going on" and with the recent news pertaining to the \$20 million, Mr. Smith reports that his "phone is ringing off the hook". Mr. Smith talked about the steps with the relief package that his organization took last March to implement a strategy to get money/assistance for blind entrepreneurs; he mentioned how they wrote the language for the proposal which originally asked for \$35 million but ultimately reduced to \$20 million. Mr. Smith shared information concerning the waiver language which would allow states to use federal dollars to pay for replacement inventory. However, Mr. Smith acknowledged that this request did not make it through as he addressed what a shock this outcome was to everyone. Mr. Smith gave information about the steps the N A B M has taken with Congress now that the new Biden administration is in place; he talked

about the prospects of putting the waivers into the new stimulus relief package. Mr. Smith moved on to discuss how the \$20 million will be divided up. Mr. Smith confirms the RSA15 numbers that were reported by Texas as 111 vendors; the estimated share that would be allotted to Texas comes out to \$1,221,000.00. Mr. Smith emphasized that it's not a one size fits all mentality to decide how to spend the money; there is no mandate on how it will be done. He made it very clear that it is not intended to be \$11 thousand per vendor. Mr. Smith continued to inform everyone that this is simply a formula based on the amount each state is going to receive. He gave scenarios of vendors asking for their \$11,000.00 check while pointing out that some vendors may not receive anything. Mr. Smith provided information about R S A giving some guidance as he addressed the steps that the State Licensing Agency's (S L A's) will need to take after the public comment process takes place; looking at late April or May timeframe before anyone sees any money. Mr. Smith went on to highlight the criteria that R S A will most likely have as a requirement in the guidance:

1. To qualify you must have been impacted by the pandemic. This money is intended only to help those vendors that were impacted.
2. R S A will want documents of assurance and evidence for active participation in the process.

Mr. Smith talked about the concern that there is known friction between agencies and vendors towards how the monies will be spent; he encouraged Texas to “sit down and work together” while commenting that the assistance plan was put forth to provide relief to all vendors that were impacted. Mr. Smith gave an example of standards that may be used, i.e., come up with a scale to measure vendors making “x” amount or base it on a percentage of sales from the previous year. Mr. Smith commented if any monies are left, they may be used for the same purposes that set-aside fees are expended; he gave examples of allowed expenditures while citing actions that are not permitted. Mr. Smith wraps up his report by encouraging everyone to have active conversations geared towards working collaboratively as he points out that the N A B M does not want to get involved in refereeing, however, is available for technical assistance. He addressed how this plan is not a Randolph Sheppard appropriation to run the program and reiterated again the sole purpose is to provide relief to vendors. Before closing to accept questions, Mr. Smith mentions the active participation directive and talked about the report that was submitted to R S A as he detailed the positive results that came about from this legislation.

A session with questions, comments, and many thank you's directed to Mr. Smith, took place after he concluded his report.

### **Director's Report**

B E T Director Lizet Hinojosa welcomed everyone to the first quarterly meeting and thanked everyone for joining the meeting as she proceeded to report on the program status.

### **Facilities Information**

The first quarter was closed out with 111 facilities in B E T. No new facilities opened this quarter, and no facilities closed this quarter.

There are four pending facilities:

1. Health and Human Services - Triangle Campus is projected to open Spring or Summer of 2021.
2. 1601 N. Congress Facility (or Capital Mall), with a projected opening date of Spring 2022.
3. TxDOT Campus in southeast Austin, with a projected date of Spring 2022.
4. 1801 Congress, with a projected date of Spring of 2022.

Director Hinojosa announced that because of the pandemic and B E T's inability to enter facilities, there were no facilities upgraded this quarter. B E T ended the 1st quarter with one hundred assigned managers, three unassigned managers and two newly licensed managers who were pre-assigned (Mr. Tyrell Smith and Mr. Jorge Heredia).



**Business Consultant Visitations Completed**

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter: 63

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter:

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter:

4<sup>th</sup> Quarter:

Year to date total visitations: 63

Value of equipment ordered and or delivered in support of businesses: \$36,982.00 (year to date)

**Number of Employees whose disability is blindness in B E T Businesses:**

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter: 11

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter:

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter:

4<sup>th</sup> Quarter:

**Number of Employees with Other Disabilities in B E T Businesses:**

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter: 112

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter:

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter:

4<sup>th</sup> Quarter:

**Number of Employees with No Disability in B E T Businesses:**

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter: 1406

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter:

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter:

4<sup>th</sup> Quarter:

Ms. Hinojosa announced the conclusion of the B E T Directors report and specified moving on to the program's financial

information. However, before Director Hinojosa furnished the financial status, a few questions were presented. Mr. Laydell Rogers asked for clarification concerning the ratio of 105 managers to the 111 facilities. Ms. Hinojosa responded that 6 managers are involved with the management of an additional facility to the one they currently run. Mr. Kingsley La Roi Fier asked for Director Hinojosa to reiterate the information she shared about the Stassney location in Southeast Austin slated to open spring of 2022; he asked if this facility would feature a micro market, cafeteria, and vending. Ms. Hinojosa confirmed that location as the TxDOT campus project which will include the all-inclusive business model of a micro market, café, and vending. Mr. John Mahler brought up another topic – he asked about the timeline of advertisements for the new facilities. Director Hinojosa's response reflects the timeline for each of the new projects and once B E T gets closer to nearing the end of each project and the opening dates for the projects become available, the advertisement discussions will open. Mr. Mahler had follow-up questions and requested affirmation regarding a meeting that the State Licensing Agency (S L A) and the TxDOT project team had to discuss new equipment; Mr. Mahler suggested that not all information is being provided. Director Hinojosa informed Mr. Mahler that his questions were previously addressed via an email. Chairman Sparks made assurances to Mr. Mahler letting him know should he have any other concerns that they would be addressed via a separate meeting or phone call. Mr. Sparks suggested that the meeting move on to the next agenda item. However, a final question was posed by Mr. Greg Stavinoha regarding a request to elaborate on the 1801 Congress project. Before Director Hinojosa continued with the program's financial status report, she addressed Mr.

Stavinoha' s request by providing details on the 1801 Congress project.

Director Hinojosa continued her presentation; she talked about the work that B E T, T W C webpage administrators and T W C Finance are doing to provide links to all the B E T financial information/reports on the B E T website. Ms. Hinojosa transitioned into reviewing the B E T financial information; she gave an informative report on each of the B E T accounts/budgets. A session for questions took place with a myriad of topics involving the budget.

Recording was paused for a break at 10:30 am.

### **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Sparks began his report by highlighting the responsibility that is shared by all, the E C M, managers, and the S L A, to work together as a team. Chairman Sparks talked about the E C M coming together with the establishment of the new sub-committees. He encouraged managers interested in participating to get involved. Chairman Sparks touched on the topics of dispersing the RHIVS payments and the early RHIVS payout that was voted on to assist managers affected by the pandemic; he also addressed the initial inventory refunds that has been delayed due to the state's financial processing system. Another item Mr. Sparks addressed was the inventory assistance plan that is out for bid. Chairman Sparks closed his report by discussing the managers 1099 forms being available electronically.

### **Update on PayRange System – by Rebecca Chambers**

Ms. Chambers gave an informative report about PayRange, a touchless payments system that is utilized via an app on smart

phones to secure and accept socially distant payments for an array of items such as purchasing vending products. PayRange uses a Bluetooth platform that is comparable to Apple Pay. Ms. Chambers shared her personal experience using credit card readers and the high fees attributed to those devices; she discussed the advantages with PayRange saying that her sales have almost tripled since installation. Ms. Chambers advised that there are some disadvantages related to the requirement of having a very reliable Bluetooth connection whereas this system would not be a good resource at rest areas as good cell phone reception is a hardship. Ms. Chambers talked about the idea that some users may be deterred if they are not wanting to download a free app. However, she gave examples of incentives that she uses at her facilities to gain customers that may be leery in using PayRange. As Ms. Chambers closed her report, she commented that the PayRange salesperson she is working with was a former Department of Assistive and Rehabilitative Services (D A R S) employee.

## **District Reports**

Each representative provided a report on events occurring in their district. Chairman Sparks reminded everyone to adhere to a 2-minute time frame per each representative's report. However, the individual committee reports may adhere to a 5-minute limit.

### **District 1A – Manny Sifuentes**

Mr. Sifuentes began his report by commenting that he did not get any feedback from his managers. However, he did acknowledge that he reached out a little late. Mr. Sifuentes talked about the management of the temporary location he's involved with and the ongoing struggles with COVID that everyone can relate to, slow

business and closures because of confirmed COVID cases. Mr. Sifuentes reflected on his own COVID health experience that took him down for a month. He gave an update concerning the TxDOT project; has been working with TxDOT, and the teaming partner to ensure that everything is ready. He closed his report by citing his to do list regarding moving equipment from the existing TxDOT facility to the new TxDOT site and acknowledged Director Hinojosa for her assistance.

### **District 1B – Chairman Mike Sparks**

Chairman Sparks confirmed that not many changes have occurred since his previous report. Mr. Sparks gave an update on the Guadalupe Rest Area advertisement; interviews being set-up. Mr. Sparks talked about a great opportunity for the Micro Market sub-committee to review the two micro markets satellites that are coming up. Mr. Sparks closed his report by saying that it is a good time to prepare for the two facilities advertisements for the new micro markets in his district.

### **District 2A – Sophia Sparks**

Ms. Sparks reports that all managers in her district continue to be closed with no anticipated opening dates. Ms. Sparks concludes her report by asking everyone to keep her managers in prayer as so many have endured a lot of personal challenges.

### **District 2B – Larry Watson**

Mr. Watson reports that the same is occurring in his district as so many managers are completely displaced; some rest areas and post offices are operating but it is a struggle for everyone as sales are down due to COVID affecting everyone. Mr. Watson mentioned

a pending changeover as the only sign of activity leading to any business opportunity.

### **District 3A – Nure Kebirtimo**

E C M Kebirtimo begins his report by expressing that everyone in his district is experiencing the COVID-19 effect as most managers are not working and the very few that continue to work are bringing in very little money. Mr. Kebirtimo reports that most of his managers are in lockdown as far as their vending sites go; he shared an experience that a manager went through in regards to throwing away and replacing spoiled food products, being asked to open and then to abruptly close again because of a COVID exposure in the building. Mr. Kebirtimo reaffirms the unanimous desire by all managers for COVID to be over.

### **District 3B – Laydell Rogers**

E C M Rogers reports due to unfortunate circumstances, he has not been able to talk to all managers; he asked for Manager La Roi Fier Kingsley to contact him. Mr. Rogers reports that 98% of the managers in his district have been greatly impacted by the pandemic with very few continuing to work allowing those to break even and some making a little money. He gave kudos to Manager Cecilia Wilson about the new rest area she is managing which is doing pretty good considering interstate travel is down. Mr. Rogers talked about the prisons still being shut down with only access into the guard's areas. Mr. Rogers reiterated that the guards areas does not bring in even a fraction of income but because he believes so strongly in the Randolph Sheppard program, he is determined to be productive even if it means he's only removing old product and keeping the machines clean. Mr. Rogers urged managers in his district to contact him; said he spoke to a manager concerning the

inventory assistance plan and he expressed how all managers are grateful for getting RHIVS paid out sooner but so many have concerns about the shortfall expected in next year's RHIVS payout. As Mr. Rogers closed his report, he talked about a request that he would like to pursue with prison administrators for allowing non-contact visitations.

#### **District 4A – Jerry House**

Mr. House announced that he underestimated the time it would take to contact all managers as he reports on manager Elizabeth Chaney who was assigned to a prison in Huntsville and is continuing to manager her previous facility. Mr. House communicated that not many managers are hitting their numbers; he addressed talking with the Delaney's who are not working and suspects that their facility will not open again – Chairman Sparks confirmed that it would not. Mr. House reports on manager Kristin McNabb Pattison who was down at the beginning of the pandemic and has resumed working but is not making what she did prior to COVID. Mr. House wraps up his report by citing his experience as doing okay but because there are no visitors coming to the hospital, sales are down at the cafeteria's.

#### **District 4B – Rames Gonzalez**

Mr. Gonzalez was not on the call.

#### **District 5A – Tommy Crawford**

Mr. Crawford expressed delivering a brief report as he reiterates the same situation is true in his district as many managers are not working and the few that do continue to work are working in a limited capacity.

### **District 5B – John Mahler**

Mr. Mahler echoed Mr. Crawford's statement of no managers working as he reflects on the same information that Mr. Rogers shared regarding prisons still being closed to visitations. He talked about his own experience with not being able to get into his prison facility because of the "tougher wardens in Amarillo". Mr. Mahler brought up a conversation he had with a manager who shares his concerns about RHIVS; suggesting that it should go to quarterly payouts. Another topic Mr. Mahler touched on was the need to discuss and vote on set aside fees; he reiterated having support for this endeavor as he comments that the S L A "keeps taking money from us, for themselves, and not giving us anything in return". Mr. Mahler urged every manager across the state to not be "complacent". He comments that the "state has hijacked our program".

### **District 6A – Tom Chepey**

Co-Chair Chepey gave a detailed report on all the managers and the closures of their facilities due to the pandemic as he named facilities that have subcontracted vending. They are as follows: Brandi Bengler's VA café in Waco is closed but vending is open and is expecting new machines; Myra Escalante at Texas Commission on Environmental Quality ( T C E Q) is closed, and vending is sub-contracted; Maria Bosch at Department of Public Safety ( D P S) is closed and vending is sub-contracted; Karla Martinez at the Brown Heatly Building café is closed and vending is open but very few people populate the building; Tim Dawson at the Winter's Building convenience store is closed has some vending but very few personnel in building; Mr. Dawson is also managing a temporary assignment at Texas Department of State Health Services ( D S H S); Jay Wolf is pending assignment at D S H S, changeover is on



hold; John Latigo is at a TxDOT location, his café is closed but vending is open but with a very small amount of vending sales. Mr. Chepey shared information Mr. Latigo gave him concerning an update from the building host at TxDOT – said 25% of staff have asked to volunteer to return to work; Mr. Latigo counted 85 cars in the parking lot in comparison to the pre-COVID stats of 750 employees. Manager Latigo is going to open as a convenience store and is embarking on a study to gauge his customer base and will eventually need to re-hire staff; he predicts losing 40 to 50% when the new TxDOT site opens in Southeast Austin. Mr. Chepey continues his report to cite Leroy De La Garza at Camp Mabry is operating under normal operations but with a fluctuation of business; John DeSimone is Stephen F Austin with limited business but has orchestrated selling food to construction workers near his building in downtown Austin. Ronnie Watson at the William B. Travis Building is still closed and awaiting news from the building host. Mr. Chepey reports that his building, the Winter's Complex, is still closed with 40 to 100 people a day in comparison to 1500 pre-COVID with no update for a return. Co-Chair Chepey wrapped up his report by mentioning that he is not getting any information from the S L A concerning the new facility, The Triangle; he said that “he has been refused any type of participation, planning or discussion”; his Business Consultant's informed him that the site walk-through has been delayed because T W C is not permitting any in person meetings.

### **District 6B – Aloha Cook**

Ms. Cook reports talking with her managers and acknowledging that a few are reporting providing services only to the guard stations at their prisons. Ms. Cook reports on behalf of one

manager that had been denied access into the guard station – said once he was allowed in to load a snack machine, he discovered that it had been vandalized. The manager reports that the prison warden did not notify him of the product theft and damaged machine. Ms. Cook shared information from manager Cha Cha Lima at Fort Hood, saying most facilities throughout the base are closed. As E C M Cook nears the end of her report, she states that her operatorial sales are down by 50%, however, Ms. Cook expressed an appreciation for the things she does have. She concludes by commenting that her managers are thankful for RHIVS, and that she spoke with them concerning the set-aside fee proposal – said they will not vote until they have all the details and more answers.

Chairman Sparks thanked all members for their reports. He recalled information that he wanted to share with everyone about a conference call with G S A administration – G S A is predicting that up to 75% of personnel may continue to work from home. Chairman Sparks reiterates the importance of the S L A and the Business Consultants looking into acquiring and starting up new locations for the program.

### **Information about Mobile Kitchens – Co-Chair Tom Chepey**

Mr. Chepey gave a detailed synopsis by providing bullet points/ideas of what is needed for the mobile kitchen business model. He talked about each county having a unique requirement that is specific to that area; said not to forget to check on health codes in county or city; to conduct research to determine if there is a requirement to have a certified kitchen; is there a mobile food unit license that is needed and are there any other code requirements

that the operator needs to be in compliance with. Co-Chair Chepey gave ideas and listed equipment that may be needed depending on the menu. Mr. Chepey shared his personal experience in building a mobile kitchen, gave advice pertaining to the electrical requirements, the pros, and cons of using propane tanks and generators and shared information related to weight calculations and how to safely tow a mobile kitchen. He went over the payment options available to customers and the implications that they bring to the mobile kitchen operator. Mr. Chepey also discussed insurance requirements and liability responsibilities for a mobile kitchen investment; he urged managers to contact him directly with any questions as he advised against trailers made in Mexico due to their poor workmanship. Mr. Chepey mentioned emailing his research notes to any manager that is interested.

### **Sub Committees Reports:**

#### **Rules and By-Laws Sub Committee – Manny Sifuentes**

Mr. Sifuentes reports that work on the Rules and By-Laws stopped in November as things slowed down due to the departure of committee members. However, work has resumed with the By-Laws to ensure that the E C M maintain better order and focus. Mr. Sifuentes reports that the work that is left on the Rules is near the end as there may be two to three sections needed to complete. Mr. Sifuentes acknowledged the continued assistance of manager Greg Stavinoha; his guidance, as a mentor, has served the committee advantageously. Mr. Sifuentes projects a completion date sometime in February which will lead to the negotiation period of the revised Rules to be set forth with the S L A. Mr. Sifuentes transitioned his discussion by applauding the detailed information

and work on mobile kitchens that was presented by Mr. Tom Chepey.

### **Micro Market Sub-Committee – Manny Sifuentes**

Mr. Sifuentes addressed the slowdown of the micro market sub-committee was not attributed to the S L A but rather due to his own hectic schedule; he affirmed work to begin soon with the intent to re-group. He informed every one of the committee's goals in working with the S L A to identify two to three possible conversions of existing B E T facilities.

### **Website Sub-Committee – Manny Sifuentes**

Mr. Sifuentes announced that there is not much to report but is excited to move forward with the new committee members that are on board. He reminded everyone about the YouTube videos that have been created by manager Greg Stavinoha. Mr. Sifuentes concludes his report by suggesting an idea, once the pandemic has ended, the possibility of creating YouTube videos as a resource for managers to utilize on tips for returning to operation and he also mentions the importance of getting an email distribution group list organized and updated to reflect the new executive E C M members.

### **New Planning and Goals Sub-Committee – Mike Sparks**

Chairman Sparks announced this new committee as not having any members other than himself. He proposed this committee be an important tool to organize and measure the success of the program. Mr. Sparks encourages members to join this committee.

### **Finance and Budget Sub Committee – Tommy Crawford**

Mr. Crawford gave a summary of the E C M committee's financial status as he confirmed that the balance had not changed as of the previous meeting. Mr. Crawford announced his request for hard copies with Wells Fargo for 2020 bank statements which he will later post to the E C M drop box allowing everyone the opportunity to review. Mr. Crawford gave a detailed breakdown of transactions as he announced a minimal amount left in the COVID Relief Fund. Mr. Crawford reminds everyone that the 2020 bank statements and PayPal transactions will be posted electronically to the E C M drop box for review and that he is always available should there be any questions. He expressed that the primary transactions filed in 2020 were related to the COVID Relief Fund. Mr. Crawford concludes by reminding everyone that the Finance Committee is still looking for members and he also talked about a monetary award that the committee agreed upon in celebrating and acknowledging the 50 year anniversary milestone reached by manager Ms. Esta Scott and other managers.

### **Election Sub Committee – Tommy Crawford**

Mr. Crawford announced a different approach that took place this year – the District Address. This new process allowed each candidate to voice their views, reflect on their stance as an E C M member and present what they wish to accomplish should they be elected. Mr. Crawford reports getting extremely positive feedback with this new feature which was weaved into meetings/discussions that could also have been used as an opportunity to constructively debate.

### **Training of Potential Managers Sub Committee – Aloha Cook**

Ms. Cook gave an update on the facilities that the newly licensed managers, Mr. Tyrell Smith, and Mr. Jorge Heredia, may be

assigned to and their potential districts. She announced the name, Ms. Dianne Tu, of a C C R C Counseling administrator that will be a point of contact for information on future B E T trainees. However, Ms. Cook affirmed that C C R C and the B E T trainer do not know or have a date of when training will resume.

### **G S A Sub Committee – Aloha Cook**

Ms. Cook reports getting information relevant to G S A from Ms. Sophia Sparks and Dwayne Sparks. She announced no longer being able to contact G S A directly as before; said this was a request that was made by the E C M committee. Ms. Cook talked about reaching out to other G S A managers to ask what information the G S A building host has relayed.

### **Annual Conference Sub Committee – Mike Sparks**

Mr. Sparks announced the previous assistance with this committee lead by Karla Martinez who did a great job. However, Mr. Sparks reports that he appointed Mr. Tom Chepey to assist and asked Mr. Chepey to give an update. Mr. Chepey reports the goal of this committee is, even with the lack of funding, to target this conference as one of the best conferences with a look at more in depth training related to the food service side. Mr. Chepey also discussed the vendor participation aspect, possible trade-show sessions, and sponsorship. He also addressed the per diem challenge that will face each attendee as the travel numbers get communicated to T W C.

### **New Facilities Opportunity Sub Committee – Mike Sparks**

Mr. Sparks announced that he is now leading this committee and has many exciting facets to discuss; he proposed that the Micro Market Committee may be integrated into this committee. Mr.

Sparks mentioned the work being done with the mobile food trucks, the micro markets, and a possible location in Fort Worth. Mr. Sparks also touched on information that manager David Corbett conveyed concerning a possible vending opportunity with the city of Hondo, Texas. Mr. Sparks reminded everyone of a message from Nicky Gacos stating for the E C M to not wait on the S L A when looking for new business opportunities.

### **Resolutions Sub Committee – Mike Sparks**

Chairman Sparks reports that the set-aside fee proposal letter is still on the table; a draft letter addressed to T W C Executive Director, Mr. Ed Serna, has been composed to request the removal of the set-aside fees. Mr. Sparks announced, now that the executive committee officers are in place, the E C M plans to request a meeting with Mr. Serna to continue ahead with this endeavor.

### **Vending Sub Committee – Laydell Rogers**

Mr. Rogers begins his report by talking about a company named Microtronics US. E C M Rogers reminded everyone that he researched Microtronics US, a cashless payment systems platform, prior to COVID. Mr. Rogers discussed how this system would be beneficial for use by prison vending operations; he gave scenarios on delivery methods that may be utilized to accommodate each prison unit as they are different. Mr. Rogers suggested that success in utilizing this system may be dependent on the approvals granted by the prison wardens. Mr. Rogers has resumed his work to research distinctive methods for using this system; said that the biggest selling point that may convince prison wardens in accepting the use of this platform is the slowing down of contraband. The benefit to the vending manager will be the increase in sales

volume. Mr. Rogers encouraged managers to participate by joining this committee as everyone will benefit. To conclude, Mr. Rogers proposed the formation of a new committee that would serve to reach out to prison authorities for securing access by prison vendors to service the non-contact visitation side.

**Chairman Sparks announced that the next E C M meeting will be held in April at a hotel; details and information to follow in an email.**

**Open floor for Questions and Comments:**

Chairman Sparks announced the opportunity for questions would be next; instructed anyone interested to press 5\* to be recognized for questions or comments.

**Set Date and Location for Next Meeting or Workshop -**

Next meeting will be held in April 2021; details to follow.

**Adjournment -**

Motion made to adjourn and seconded.