

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

**April 24, 2021**

**Embassy Suites  
600 Commerce Street  
Ft. Worth, Tx 76102**

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

Conference number: 1-832-917-1510

Access Code: 172170 after voice prompt press \*

One tap mobile 832-91791510, 172170

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

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.

NOTE: conference call was recorded

**Call to order 9:00 A. M.**

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

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

Ms. Kim Chepey instructed E C M Representatives to announce their presence. All E C M Representatives were present. The following is a list of audience members that were present: Dwayne Sparks, Kim Chepey, Mark Russell,

Ronnie Watson. Two of the attendees could not be identified due to inaudible recording.

**BET Staff Attending:**

Lizet Hinojosa, Director, Business Enterprises of Texas

**Approval of minutes for January 16, 2021 meeting**

E C M Chairperson Mike Sparks called for approval of the minutes from the prior E C M meeting; minutes were approved.

**Director's Report:**

Ms. Hinojosa welcomed everyone and thanked those who traveled to attend as she proceeded to report on the program status.

**Facilities Information**

There are currently 111 facilities in B E T. No new facilities opened, 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.

In addition to the new facilities mentioned Ms. Hinojosa said she will be giving details at the next E C M meeting about two additional new facilities:

1. A facility in El Paso, William Beaumont Hospital
2. The Naval Air Base facility in the Ft Worth District

Director Hinojosa continued her report that B E T ended the second quarter with one hundred assigned managers and two unassigned managers.

**Business Consultant Visitations Completed**

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter: 47

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter: 51

Value of equipment ordered and or delivered in support of businesses: \$90,000.

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

**Businesses:**

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

2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter: 8

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: 137

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: 1359

3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter:

4<sup>th</sup> Quarter:

Ms. Hinojosa announced the conclusion of the B E T Directors report and asked for any questions or comments on the information on the report she just provided.

Mr. Tommy Crawford asked Ms. Hinojosa if she could identify the two managers not assigned. Ms. Hinojosa replied Mr. Jorge Heredia is pre-assigned because he is waiting on clearance for a facility and Ms. Sylvia DeLaney is unassigned.

### **Director's Financial Report**

Ms. Hinojosa informed E C M that B E T is working with Texas Workforce Commission (T W C) editing to clean up and remove old financial reports on the T W C Public Website. Financial Reports will be updated quarterly and will be available and accessible to all B E T Licensed Managers. A couple of changes have been made and the project is nearing completion and as soon as these reports have been approved by Finance and shared with E C M they will also be made available via link on our 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. Ms. Hinojosa concluded the budget report and called for any questions or comments. Mr. Sparks requested E C M be able to participate in the budget planning.

Ms. Hinojosa left the meeting. Due to the E C M rescheduling this meeting, she had prior commitments and was not able attend the remainder of the meeting.

### **National Association of Blind Merchants (N A B M) Updates – Terry Smith**

Mr. Smith thanked everyone for inviting him to speak at this meeting and brought greetings from Nicky Gacos. Mr. Smith first spoke regarding the \$20 million dollars received as part of the appropriations bill. Mr. Smith transitioned to Rest Area issues and explained there is a plan to install electric charging stations in the Rest Areas. N A B M is opposed to

this plan because they are a part of the coalition which supports the National Truck Drivers Association. They believe the charging stations should be at the exits and placing the charging stations in the Rest Areas would lead to commercialization taking away from the blind vendors. The opposition of placing charging stations in the Rest Areas long term will lead to more commercialization. Mr. Smith moved on to the topic of R S A. All arbitrations were stopped as R S A had determined there was some concern with security. R S A froze arbitrations until they could correct the security violations. R S A agreed to release the arbitrations under the current system and continue working on the security issues as they continue with the arbitrations. R S A has taken a position on limiting the ability to spend set aside dollars and federal dollars on equipment on vending facilities. N A B M will be having their first face to face meeting September 28, 2021 thru September 30, 2021. Mr. Smith said information will be sent to the B E T Managers regarding the N A B M September meeting. Mr. Smith encouraged managers to take advantage of the restaurant relief program. Any manager running a food service or snack bar that suffered losses will qualify for restaurant relief funds. Vending will not qualify. Mr. Smith advised B E T Managers running a food service or snack bar to contact the Small Business Administration website for information and applications.

Mr. Smith was asked to address the F R R P (Financial Relief and Restoration Payments) for managers. He explained the \$11 thousand dollar formula per vendor was never intended that every vendor get \$11 thousand dollars. There had to be a formula to determine how much each state would get and that was the easiest and cleanest way to base it on. Mr. Smith continued you can't just give every vendor \$11 thousand dollars. The intent is to offset vendor losses.

A session for questions and comments that were directed to Mr. Smith, took place after he concluded his report. Chairman Sparks thanked Mr. Smith for speaking at the E C M meeting.

### **Chairman's Report**

Chairman Sparks began by announcing the resignation of Mr. Manny Sifuentes from the E C M board. He thanked Mr. Sifuentes for his service on the board. Chairman Sparks encouraged B E T Managers to sign up for the R S A Buying Groups rebates. Other companies such as Big Red and Dr. Pepper may be offering rebates as well. K R T is offering a food machine that can be put in locations that dispenses refrigerated food. The product within the food dispenser is robotically sent to a heating portion and then dispensed to the customer. This company provides a chef that is available to help customers with menus. The food products can be purchased by several suppliers – one being Ben E. Keith. K R T also has a yogurt ice cream machine. Chairman Sparks informed E C M that U S A Technologies was renamed Cantaloupe. He encouraged B E T Managers not to become discouraged in submitting information for unemployment. He expressed his difficulty in filing through the system but was able to succeed in being able to receive unemployment payments. E C M Rules Committee has been reviewing the changes by T W C. Inventory Assistance is a go. Chairman Sparks will ask Ms. Hinojosa when the Inventory Assistance can start being utilized.

### **Update on Credit Card Readers – by Travis Warren**

Mr. Warren gave an informative report about his research on purchasing Credit Card Readers that the S L A has agreed to purchase. Mr. Warren was not sure how many credit card

readers will be purchased. He expressed the new machines will have the readers installed but he is not sure if the existing machines will get the credit card readers. Mr. Warren went on to say the game changer is that the B E T Managers will be able to access the P O S System from their computer and determine how much product they will need to bring with them to restock their machines. Mr. Warren said the US Technologies / Cantaloupe has not had the best customer service in the past, but he has been assured this company is working out the kinks and will be able to provide quality customer service.

Recording was paused for a break.

### **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 reports all facilities are still closed except for temporary assignment at DDS operating at 25 percent of sales from the previous year. Harvey Stavinoha's facility is functioning at 40 percent sales. His dining area at 40 percent has been taken over by I R S to store their files. Mac Cantu's facility is closed due to major plumbing repairs that are not being done and probably not scheduled because it is scheduled to be closed. Mr. Sifuentes concluded his report.

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

Chairman Sparks reports Mark VanLaningham and Jamie Garza's facilities are still open but at a reduced income. He announced that Clayton Hell will be joining District 1 in June.

### **District 2A – Sophia Sparks**

Ms. Sparks reports all facilities in District 2 A are still closed. Mr. Chung will be transferring to Food Service. Some managers are suffering from "snowvid". Mr. Chepey later added some additional information for District 2 A. Nure Kebirtimo is now in district 2 A, he will be starting at Farmer's Branch at the Micro Market. Another opportunity opened at a joint Naval Military Base in Ft. Worth

### **District 2B – Larry Watson**

Mr. Watson reports District 2B has a new manager, Tyrell Smith that is managing Hopkins County Rest Area. Mr. Watson stated all facilities in District 2 B are open except his. A couple of managers are waiting for deliveries from the warehouse but can't seem to get answers as to when the deliveries will be made.

### **District 3A – Ashley Edwards**

District 3 A has three food service locations that are open, three other locations are operating at a limited capacity as to be expected. There have been no major updates on the opening of other locations in District 3 A

### **District 3B – Laydell Rogers**

Mr. Rogers stated he has not talked to all the managers in his district. The prisons have opened but are not allowing vending products to be sold. One manager's facility is open but at a low capacity. He has given the count of vending machines for the purchase of the card readers. Mr. Rogers

asked to be excused for the rest of the meeting for family matters.

### **District 4A – Jerry House**

Kristin McNabb Pattison's facility is open – both the coffeeshop and the vending. Mr. House did not hear back from the rest of his managers. Six of his manager's replied to the email regarding Mr. Manny Sifuentes' motions. The six managers that replied were in favor of Mr. Sifuentes' motions.

### **District 4B – David Corbett**

Mr. Corbett said he talked to Mr. Sifuentes and he was receiving chemo and not getting around much. Mr. Corbett offered his assistance if he needed him. Mr. Clayton Hell is looking forward to the change over to his new facility and he is getting a lot of calls regarding the facility he is leaving. Mr. Luis Cantu and Ms. Jenna Norwood inquired about when the F R R P issues have settled. Mr. Cantu would like to know when they will be getting money and Ms. Norwood wanted to know how much money she would be getting. Mr. Corbett stated he is operating at around five percent.

### **District 5A – Tommy Crawford**

District 5 A has a new manager, Jorge Heredia. He is not assigned yet but will be working in District 5. Mario Cantu is working on remodeling at his facility and is still closed. Mr. Fonseca has limited operations. Tony Campbell had an accident – he fell off a loading dock and is having trouble getting adequate help. They are uncertain on his recovery. Mr. Dilly's facility is shut down. Ft. Bliss is facing staffing challenges and Mr. Crawford asked if anyone needed a job.

### **District 5B – Travis Warren**

Mr. Warren stated all but two managers responded. The managers running the prison vending are having some sales because it is open to staff. But the vending is not open to visitors. Mr. Warren said the vending committee needs to pull together and formulate a program to implement a cashless system so that the prison facilities can open. The roadside facilities sales are worse than the 2020 sales. Mr. Warren said he hoped things will open soon.

### **District 6A – Tom Chepey**

LeRoy DeLaGarza is still in operation, but it fluctuates depending on the training going on. John DeSimone is operating out of his back door, selling whatever he can to the construction workers. There are roughly 18,000 construction workers in that downtown area and he's taking advantage of whatever he can sell. Mr. Ronnie Watson said there may be some people that will be returning in June however part of his building might not ever return. In the state buildings, in the end it's uncertain how much of building population will return. Mr. Chepey went on to say just like in his facility there is an uncertainty of how many of the building population will return. One piece of information Mr. Chepey got from the building host in the Department of State Health services is starting the first week in June, 200 people a week are going to start moving back in until all five buildings are full to the maximum of 1,670. Mr. Chepey continued to say this is a great opportunity and really looking forward to Jay Wolf getting in there and looking forward to supporting him.

### **District 6B – Aloha Cook**

Ms. Cook reported she has twenty-four prison facilities in her district. The prison facilities are not making much money as they are not allowing visitors to buy from the vending machines. She was told it could be next year before the

prisons will be allowing visitors to purchase vending products. Jerry Ramirez who operates a roadside vending reports his sales are down fifty percent. Cha Cha Lima's sales are down by forty percent. Ms. Cook reports she was told post offices will be bringing in robotic machines to do the work humans would. This will affect her sales at her facility. Ms. Cook reports a new facility is being opened at the Triangle. The new facility will be a Grab and Go Micro Market. They are currently reviewing interviews from the B E T Managers.

Chairman Sparks announced they will move on with the subcommittee reports. He added working with F R R P hindered some of these committees. He also announced Mr. Manny Sifuentes will be resigning the E C M after this meeting and he will be temporarily be stepping in as the chairman for the rules committee.

### **Sub Committees Reports:**

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

Mr. Sifuentes reports that work on the Rules and By-Laws stopped in as things slowed down due to work needed with the F R R P. They are working on the last by-law giving the managers ability to recall a(n) E C M manager if they are not representing the district correctly. Mr. Sifuentes said he will have the by-laws to Mr. Hooks within two weeks. Mr. Sifuentes reports that the work that is left on the Rules is near the end as there may be one or two sections needed to be reviewed by the committee and presented to the E C M. Mr. Sifuentes said he plans to stay on the committee. Mr. Sparks informed the E C M that Mr. Hooks has indicated there will be rule revision on June 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr. Sifuentes stated there is a grievance filed because the rules went through revision

without E C M active participation when it came back from R S A. The committee is thinking it might be better to concentrate on June 1<sup>st</sup> rather than putting their energy into moving backwards.

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

Mr. Sifuentes stated the Micro Market Sub-committee has slowed due to their work with F R R P. He talked about the two Point Of Sales (P O S) systems. The Yoke P O S System that works and looks much like an iPad with a lot of accessories, is inexpensive, very modern looking, unique and could work at a micro market or Kiosk. Tom Chepey spoke about TOAST – but at this time they are still working on it as they say because customers could change parts of the screen that should be protected and locked at this time and they don't have a scanning process for it. Mr. Sifuentes stated he has very limited information.

### **Finance 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 asked E C M to approve and expenditure for a plaque honoring Esta Scott for her 50 years of service.

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

Mr. Sifuentes announced that there is not much to report but he 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 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 encouraged members to join this committee.

### **Election Sub Committee – Larry Watson**

Mr. Watson announced all elections went smoothly and are waiting for the results for the upcoming election this Monday morning.

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

Ms. Cook talked to Joe Gonzalez, Training Specialist for B E T and was informed that if B E T can do a training class it will be the two new applicants. Ms. Cook suggested training include P F R -Section B that needs to be tested on, R S A rules, more Customer Service training, stress retraining if M A P R is not mastered and Code of Conduct. Potential managers need to be aware of what is going on in state buildings. She also suggested extending the training from four months to five or six months to give them time to learn a little more. New trainees also need to know their state hosts, how to get along

with them and how to deal with issues. If they manage a Federal building, they will need to know how to deal with issues concerning G S A. Chairman Sparks asked if training on micro markets has been discussed. Ms. Cook said yes, Micro-market training is also suggested. Mr. Chepey asked if S L A has a plan to filter out those trainees, during the two-week evaluation, if there is situation or hostility that might not work in the B E T Program.

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

Ms. Cook turned the floor over to Dwayne Sparks for this report. Mr. Sparks shared some tips on getting along with GSA:

- Use the utensil dispensers that dispenses the prewrapped utensils. This is more sanitary than the open cupped dispensers.
- Using too much bleach can be toxic. Use a top off program. Mr. Sparks uses the company Centos that hooks up three compartment sinks to dispense the right amount of soap and dish sanitizer. Centos also keeps your paper towel dispensers full.
- Don't let employees use the hand sinks for anything other than washing hands.
- Glove and hair restraints should always be used by all employees
- Be attentive to your salad bars and drink stations. Check several times during lunch.
- Clean your fountain drink machines.
- Check your food temperature several times during lunch and keep a food log
- Uniforms are suggested for your employees as it shows professionalism

- Customer Service is important – take care of your customers, let them know you care

### **Annual Conference Sub Committee – Tom Chepey**

The conference was cancelled late October due to COVID. Mr. Chepey said since cost of hotels and meeting venues have increased there is not enough funds in the budget to hold a conference. One of the options is S L A has offered to assist E C M to utilize the T W C training in virtual meeting department to assist E C M with a training conference.

Ms. Cook stated she saw on the news if they do not use the funds awarded to them, the funds would not be available if not used within the timeframe. Mr. Crawford suggested putting this as an agenda item on the weekly call to discuss how to use this money. Mr. Mark Russell suggested using a state facility for a conference space to cut costs. Mr. Greg Stavinoha suggested general sessions and have managers pay for lodging and entertainment.

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

Chairman Sparks informed E C M that the Micro Market Committee will be rolled into the New Facilities Opportunity Committee. Ms. Sparks started with saying the New Facilities Committee started out really slow this year due to working on the F R R P. Ms. Sparks commented the state currently has six projects they are outfitting with new equipment that ate up a lot of the budget so they will not be able to support any new facilities that might be found feasible to roll into the program. She went on to state with the help of the committee members they were able to come up with a different solution and they posed that solution to the S L A. The S L A has agreed to entertain their proposal. The proposal is to look at the

temporary or satellite facilities and propose managers who make below the median income as of 2019 have their facilities combined. The committee is beginning the process of this new proposal and discussing how to determine which managers meet the criteria and additional qualifications beyond being below the median income. Each E C M representative has been asked to poll their district and provide the committee with a list of managers meeting the first criteria which is being below median income. The committee will be meeting next week to further delve into this proposal and how they will move forward.

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

Chairman Sparks started his report with explaining he is temporarily chairing this committee and has not had a lot of movement until recently. He is getting meetings together with the committee members and moving forward. Additionally, Chairman Sparks commented he is adding Mr. Kingsley (LaRoi Fier) as a committee member and feels he will be a great asset for them. They are preparing to meet with Mr. Serna and setting up an outline of things they want to approach with him. Chairman Sparks went on to say the committee wants to narrow it down to three sections and some things stemming from those sections that are affecting the program in negative ways as far as S L A and B E T managers.

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

Mr. Rogers was not there to report on the Vending Sub Committee, Chairman Sparks asked Mr. Travis Warren to give an update on the cashless system. Mr. Warren reported the cashless vending for prisons is set to make a proposal to the S L A. Mr. Warren went on to say he does not know where they are at with the director or going to just one prison. Vending Managers should be seeing the credit card readers

and your Business Consultants should have already reached out to you. Mr. Warren said this will be addressed on the call Tuesday with Ms. Hinojosa.

Chairman Sparks called Mr. Larry Watson to discuss a letter he wrote to Ms. Hinojosa. Mr. Watson wrote a letter to Ms. Hinojosa asking for a contact person with the TDCJ that the E C M could get information from first-hand on what is taking place at the prison units and to find out a protocol on reopening procedures. Mr. Watson went on to say Ms. Hinojosa was receptive to the letter and expressed her commitment to find a contact. Mr. Watson said it has been quite a while since he wrote the letter, so he contacted Brian Collier the director of TDCJ and got in contact with a deputy director, Eddie Guerra. Mr. Watson said Mr. Guerra agreed to be their contact if Mr. Collier approved. Mr. Guerra informed Mr. Watson that the TDCJ facilities starting May 1, 2021, are allowing vendors to start putting products back in the machines only for staff use. Mr. Guerra also agreed to have a meeting with E C M and or the S L A to discuss the cashless system that the E C M is promoting and trying to get established.

Mr. Watson said Mr. Guerra informed him starting May 1<sup>st</sup> they were going to allow an additional person in the building to restock the vending so there would be two people allowed in instead of one at a time. Mr. Watson expressed to Mr. Guerra that the leased or contracted drink machines have been setting there for fourteen months and the distributors are pressuring them to buy product. It would be a real problem if these distributors pulled their drink machines back.

**Chairman Sparks announced that the next E C M meeting and Training Conference will be July 31, 2021. The time and schedules will be sent out at a later date.**

**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.

**Adjournment -**

Motion made to adjourn and seconded.