

**Nebraska Commission on Problem Gambling  
February 11, 2022  
700 South 16<sup>th</sup> Street  
Lincoln Nebraska**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**The meeting was called to order at 9:35 a.m.**

**Roll Call:** Present in person: Lutz, Arch, Patterson, Moore, Zohner, Volnek and Canada. Absent excused: Lambert, Leckband.

**Announcements:**

Chairperson Lutz made the following announcements:

The notice of this meeting was posted publicly on January 28, 2022 on the state events calendar and on January 31, 2022 on the program's website. The notice of meeting with the agenda has been available continuously here in the office of the Gamblers Assistance Program in the Ferguson House, 700 South 16<sup>th</sup> street, Lincoln, Nebraska.

This meeting of the Commission on Problem Gambling is conducted according to the requirements of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is available on the table in the lobby.

Copies of other printed materials that may be considered by the Commission during the meeting are also available to the public on the table in the lobby.

Public comments on issues presented during this meeting will be allowed by the chair from time to time during the meeting and may also be requested by any member of the commission at any time.

Let us now pause for a moment of reflection before we move on to the next item on the agenda.

**Approval of minutes of previous meeting:** Chairperson Lutz called for amendments or corrections to the minutes of the meeting of November 19, 2021, and hearing none, Commissioner Canada moved approval, seconded by Commissioner Patterson. The motion was adopted by unanimous vote.

**The written Director's narrative report was distributed and is attached to these minutes.**

**Legislation:** The director reported on the status of the new casino initiative and other bills pending in the Legislature.

**Finance:** Several financial reports from the Department of Administrative Services Accounting Division were distributed and reviewed with the Commission. These are referred to in the written report.

**Summary of Fiscal Year-to-Date Operations:** The director's report summarizes the results of operations during the period July 1, 2021-December 31, 2021. The Commission reviewed a spread sheet that itemizes contractor performance and overall cost of services.

**Affirm Executive Committee action: Agent contract increase**

The Commission reviewed and discussed the minutes of the executive committee dated November 19, 2021 authorizing an increase in the amount of \$40,000 in the contract with Agent Brand. The increase accumulates into one contract a list of separate activities by different vendors that had been approved at the November 11 meeting. Commissioner Canada moved approval of the action of the executive committee, seconded by Commissioner Arch. After discussion the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

**Increase Three Pillars contract amount**

The Commission reviewed proposals by Three Pillars Media to add a total of \$19,512 to the contract award to pay for production of videos featuring counselors and the program director to be posted on the program website. Commissioner Moore moved approval of the proposal, seconded by Commissioner Canada. After discussion the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

**Increase Agent Brand contract amount**

The Commission reviewed proposals by Agent Brand to increase the contract award by the amount of \$12,418 to pay for creation and addition of an automatic slide feature on the program's website landing page and conducting and editing interviews to be added to the website. Commissioner Moore moved approval of the proposal, seconded by Commissioner Canada. After discussion the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

**Agent Brand quarterly update**

A report on the performance of the Agent Brand/Media Spark digital media campaign for the period October-December 2021 was presented and discussed. The campaign continues to attract increased numbers of users, sessions, page views and time on site.

### **Helpline report**

Staff reported on the performance of the program's helpline service operated by contract with Justin Antons since December 2021. Calls for help were received at volumes higher than any other months in the previous calendar year.

### **New counselor certification**

The Commission reviewed the application by Whitney Antons for a provisional counselor certificate. Whitney has completed training, passed the commission approved test, and plans to begin counseling practice under supervision by Deb Hammond. Commissioner Canada moved approval of the certificate, seconded by Commissioner Moore. After discussion the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

### **Award contract to Thentia**

Staff presented a proposal by Thentia to enter a contract for web-based credential files. The contract would establish a database with certified counselor information that would replace the current paper files. Commissioner Arch moved approval of the contract proposal, seconded by Commissioner Moore. After discussion the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

### **NAADGS dues**

The Director submitted a request for permission to pay dues to the NAADGS, formerly APGSA, a national organization of disordered gambler service programs. The payment would be in the amount of \$1,000 for one-half of the year. Commissioner Canada moved approval of the request, seconded by Commissioner Moore. After discussion the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

### **Counselor contract increases**

The Director presented a list of five counselor contracts to increase to provide payment for their services for the remainder of the contract year. Commissioner Canada moved approval of the increases, seconded by

Commissioner Moore. Commissioner Lutz offered a friendly amendment to expand the increase proposal to increase all counselor hourly rates from the current \$120 per hour to \$155 per hour. Commissioners Canada and Moore accepted the amendment. After discussion the individual contract increases were approved in the proposed amounts, and all counselor contract hourly counseling rates were increased to \$155 per hour effective March 1, 2022, by unanimous vote.

### **Increase Zoom contract**

The Director presented a request to increase the contract with Zoom to add webinar capability at the rate of \$79 per month. Commissioner Patterson moved approval of the request, seconded by Commissioner Arch. After discussion the motion was approved by unanimous vote.

The next meeting of the Commission will be held on May 20, 2022 beginning at 9:30 a.m. at Ferguson House in Lincoln.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

**NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING  
FEBRUARY 11, 2022  
DIRECTOR'S NARRATIVE REPORT**

**AGENDA ISSUES THAT WILL AFFECT THE BUDGET**

Seven items on today's agenda will increase budgeted spending if approved:

6. Affirm Exec. Committee increase of Agent Brand contract from **\$400,000 to \$440,000**
7. Increase Three Pillars video recording contract from **\$6,000 to \$25,512**
8. Further increase Agent Brand contract by **\$11,885 + 533 = 12,418 added; total \$452,418.**
12. New Thentia proposal for web-based certification record **\$198-264 per year**
13. NAADGS membership dues **\$2,000 per year; \$1,000 to June 30, 2022**
14. Counselor contract award increases totaling **\$150,000**
15. Increase Zoom contract for webinars **\$79/month; \$316 to June 30, 2022; \$948/year**

**LEGISLATION: TAB 3**

**Casinos in Nebraska.** LB 876 introduced by Senator Briese would change the voter initiative law in several ways:

- The license fee for casinos would be increased from \$1 million to \$5 million.
- The duration of a casino license would be shortened from 20 to 5 years.
- Casino license applications would have to include a market assessment and impact studies.
- Geographical limits would be imposed for new casinos.
- Details of the self-exclusion policies would be added to the statute.

The proposed Racing and Gaming Commission regulations were sent to the Attorney General on January 12 for legal review. After the Attorney General signs off, the regulations are sent to the Governor for policy review. The regulations are not in effect until these officials approve. There is no statutory limit on the length of time allowed for these reviews. No casino licenses can be issued until the regulations are in effect.

**Biennial Budget for 2021-2023.** The Legislature's biennial budget for Gamblers Assistance Program includes \$ 1,226,455 from projected casino tax in fiscal year 2022-23. This increases next year budget to \$ 3,176,889.

**LB 1251** introduced by Senator Ben Hansen would divert \$5 million from the state lottery profits to support a new scholarship for special needs students. This is probably unconstitutional since it would change the formula. The bill was referred to the Education Committee. We will follow it closely.

**ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES BUDGET AND FINANCIAL REPORTS: TAB 4**

The Department of Administrative Services Accounting and Budget Division reports behind tab 4 dated **January 31, 2022**, show you the financial condition of the program from three different perspectives:

The **Program Summary** itemizes revenue and spending for the period July 1, 2021-January 31, 2022. Totals so far this year are on the second page of the report: **revenue \$1,350,815, and spending \$1,040,288.** Program revenue is about 5.7% more than the same month last year, while overall spending is up by about 9.9%.

The **Fund Summary by Fund** shows you the status of the Gamblers Assistance Fund, which is the main vehicle for the Program's revenue and spending. On the first page, far right column, on the line **Fund Equity Undesignated** shows cash on hand as of July 1, 2021 was **\$930,364**. Cash on hand on January 31 is shown on the top line, page 1, second column from the right under the heading **Account Balance Debit: \$1,283,410, subject to liabilities of \$42,520**. This is a 37% increase in the program's net cash position compared to the same month a year ago. The July 1 fund balance was 61% more than the year before as the result of higher revenue than projected combined with pandemic-induced spending reductions.

The **Budget Status** Report shows you that 60% of the fiscal year had elapsed as of January 31, and our program had spent just over 47% of our approved budget. We have stayed under budget every year.

#### **INTERNAL OPERATIONS SPREAD SHEETS: TAB 5**

The Excel spreadsheets **Gamblers Assistance Contracts Performance** shows you the itemized results by contractor since July for the major categories of service. Near the bottom of the third page is a set of boxes with monthly overall totals. Here is a comparison to prior years:

- For the period July through December 2021, 101 new clients were admitted into our counseling services. Last year in the same period, there were 106 new client admissions; the year before, 83.
- So far this fiscal year, for the period July through December 2021, an average of 179 admitted clients (not including short-term urgent care) have attended counseling each month.
- So far this year, again for the period July through December 2021, counselors have been paid \$473,139 for counseling services. Last year the amount for the same period was \$500,557. The year before, it was \$569,114.

A second spreadsheet – **Itemized Cost of Counseling Service** - shows quantities and cost of the different items of counseling services at current rates of pay. In the first six months of this fiscal year our counselors have been paid for 4,006 hours of individual counseling; a year ago, the total was 4,735 hours.

Dated February 11, 2022.

David Geier, Program Director