

**NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING**  
**MEETING MINUTES**  
**FEBRUARY 23, 2024**

**The meeting was called to order at 9:33 a.m.**

**Roll Call:** Present in person: Lutz, Arch, Moore, Monheiser, Zohner, Pulverenti.  
Absent excused: Leckband, Volnek, Lambert.

**Announcements:**

Chairperson Lutz made the following announcements:

The notice of this regularly scheduled meeting of the Commission on Problem Gambling was posted publicly on February 9, 2024 on the state events calendar, and on the website of the Gamblers Assistance Program. 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 since the date when the notice was posted publicly.

This meeting of the Commission on Problem Gambling is conducted in compliance with the requirements of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act. A copy of the Open Meetings Act is posted on the door to this room.

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.

I want to also note that the sequence of our discussion of agenda items and the timing of discussion are tentative and subject to ruling by the chair as this meeting goes on.

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 meetings:**

Chairperson Lutz called for amendments or corrections to the minutes of the meeting of November 17,2023. Hearing none, Commissioner Arch moved for approval of the minutes as distributed, seconded by Commissioner Pulverenti. The Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Lutz, Arch, Moore, Monheiser, Zohner, Pulverenti. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

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

**Budget Status:** The Director’s report detailed revenue and expenditures for the fiscal year-to-date; status of new casino gambling in Nebraska; other staff activities this fiscal year.

**Finance Reports:** Three 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, 2023-January 31, 2024. The Commission reviewed two internal spread sheets that itemize contractor performance and measure counseling utilization on average and in detail by vendor and categories of service.

**Pending gambling legislation:** Pending bills of interest include enhanced regulation, restriction and taxation of “skill” games; gubernatorial control of the position of executive director of the Racing & Gaming Commission; possible amendment of timetables affecting westward expansion of casino gambling.

**Other topics reported by the director are summarized in the written narrative report attached to these minutes.**

**Agenda Item 6: Approve terms of RFP for marketing to be issued March 1.**

Commissioners reviewed scope of work and other documents included in the Request for Proposals for a multimedia message and marketing campaign to be published on March 1. Basic terms include a projected budget of \$500,000 per year for each of the first two years of a contract. Commissioner Moore moved for approval of the terms of the RFP document. Commissioner Pulverenti seconded the motion. After discussion, the Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Lutz, Arch, Moore, Monheiser, Zohner, Pulverenti. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

**Agenda Item 7: Report on Public Awareness Campaign**

Anne McCollister gave a report on the development of the program website and the content and results of the multimedia campaign by Agent Brand and MediaSpark. Commissioners reviewed a written report detailing the scope and results of the digital messages that are presented through various internet companies.

### **Agenda Item 8: Report on telephone helpline service**

Justin Antons, contract vendor for the program's helpline service, gave a report showing the results of the service provided since July 1, 2023. Call and text volumes continue to increase.

### **Agenda Item 9: Report on counseling service data**

Juan Paulo Ramirez, contract vendor for data analysis, presented a report summarizing data collected from new clients between July 1, 2023 and December 31, 2023. In a second report he presented an analysis of data comparing characteristics of persons admitted into therapy in the program to the population of the state as a whole. Program clients with addiction to gambling tend to have less education and lower income than the state's population as a whole; fewer of them are married, and a greater share are unemployed when compared to the rest of the state.

### **Agenda Item 10: Issue four counselor certificates**

The Commission reviewed applications for certification by four counselors, each of whom had completed training, passed the program's knowledge test, and been approved for certification by the program Certification Advisory Board. They are:

1. Shannon Crellin. Shannon has completed the required hours of supervised practice since receiving her provisional certificate, and now seeks approval of her application to be a Certified Disordered Gambling Counselor. Commissioner Monheiser moved for approval of her application. Commissioner Arch seconded the motion. After discussion, the chair called for a vote on her application. Voting yes: Lutz, Arch, Moore, Monheiser, Zohner, Pulverenti. Voting no: None. Motion carried.
2. Amanda Longmore. Amanda has completed training and passed the program knowledge test. She plans to enter practice as a provisional counselor under supervision, working with Rayla Cooper in North Platte. Amanda now seeks approval of her application to become a Provisional Certified Disordered Gambling Counselor. Commissioner Moore moved for approval of her application. Commissioner Pulverenti seconded the motion. After discussion the chair called for a vote on her application. Voting yes: Lutz, Arch, Moore, Monheiser, Zohner, Pulverenti. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

3. Albert Sparks. Albert has completed training and passed the program knowledge test. He applies for Provisional Certified Disordered Gambling Counselor certificate. His previous status as an LIMHP licensed by the Nebraska DHHS entitles him to be fully certified after he participates in one year of new counselor mentoring, conducted through the program's Third Friday Mentoring project. Commissioner Monheiser moved for approval of his request for certification. Commissioner Pulverenti seconded the motion. After discussion the chair called for a vote on his application. Voting yes: Lutz, Arch, Moore, Monheiser, Zohner, Pulverenti. Voting no: None. Motion carried.
4. LaRhonda Flowers. LaRhonda has completed training and passed the program knowledge test. She applies for Provisional Certified Disordered Gambling Counselor certificate. Her previous status as an LIMHP licensed by the Nebraska DHHS entitles her to be fully certified after she participates in one year of new counselor mentoring, conducted through the program's Third Friday Mentoring project. Commissioner Arch moved for approval of her request for certification. Commissioner Zohner seconded the motion. After discussion the chair called for a vote on his application. Voting yes: Lutz, Arch, Moore, Monheiser, Zohner, Pulverenti. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

### **Agenda Item 11: Approve new counselor contracts**

This agenda item encompassed recommendations to approve two new contracts, one for a new counseling office and the other for clinical supervision of a new counselor; and also approval of increases to the previous contract awards for nine counseling services as listed in the meeting materials.

1. Restore Rebuild Reconnect Counseling Center, Omaha. The director recommended a contract award for this new counseling agency for the amount of \$25,000, to begin effective February 23, 2024, on the standard terms for such contracts. Commissioner Moore moved approval of the proposed contract. Commissioner Pulverenti seconded the motion. After discussion, the Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Lutz, Arch, Moore, Monheiser, Zohner, Pulverenti. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

2. Contract with Ronald Felton to supervise new provisional counselor Amanda Longmore of North Platte. The proposed contract would required close supervision of Amanda including face-to-face contacts at her location in North Platte; travel to North Platte from Lincoln and return; hourly compensation for supervision hours, all terms as provided in meeting materials distributed to the Commission. Commissioner Arch moved approval of the proposed contract. Commissioner Moore seconded the motion. After discussion, the Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Lutz, Arch, Moore, Monheiser, Zohner, Pulverenti. Voting no: None. Motion carried.
3. The meeting materials for this agenda item included a list of nine current counseling contracts for which award increases are recommended to assure available payment to the end of the contract year. Commissioner Monheiser moved approval of the proposed increases. Commissioner Moore seconded the motion. After discussion, the Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Lutz, Arch, Moore, Monheiser, Zohner, Pulverenti. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

**Agenda Item 12: Sponsorship of the Midwest Conference on Problem Gambling and Substance Abuse**

The Director reported that five states in the region – Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Iowa and Missouri, joined 20 years ago to form the Midwest Consortium on Problem Gambling and Substance Abuse. The primary function of the Consortium is organizing and presenting the annual Midwest conference, this year to be held in Kansas City in June. The other four states have each contributed sponsorship funds to assist presentation of the program, but Nebraska has not for several years. The Director recommended a sponsorship contribution up to \$5,000 this year, after exact terms of the funding are clarified. Commissioner Pulverenti moved for approval of the proposal. Commissioner Moore seconded the motion. Commissioner Moore moved approval of the proposed contract. Commissioner Pulverenti seconded the motion. After discussion, the Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Lutz, Arch, Moore, Monheiser, Zohner, Pulverenti. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

**Agenda Item 13: Approve sponsorship for the Nebraska Counseling Association spring conference**

The Director recommended paying \$250 to sponsor the Nebraska Counseling Association spring conference in Bellevue in April. This will be the third time the Commission has approved this sponsorship, which presents an opportunity to network with counselors and generate interest in the Program. Commissioner Pulverenti moved approval of the sponsorship proposal. After discussion, the Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Lutz, Arch, Moore, Monheiser, Zohner, Pulverenti. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

**Agenda Item 14: Approve financial support for counselors to attend the Midwest Conference**

The Director presented a proposal to support counselor attendance at the Midwest Conference in the amount of \$500, to be used for registration and other expenses. Commissioner Moore moved for approval of the proposal. Commissioner Arch seconded the motion. After discussion, the Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Moore, Arch. Voting no: Lutz, Zohner, Monheiser, Pulverenti. Motion failed.

**Agenda Item 15: Approve expenses to move office to second floor of Ferguson House**

The director proposed spending up to \$2,500 for added rent and furniture occasioned by the move of the program office to space on the second floor of Ferguson House. Commissioner Monheiser moved approval of the proposal. Commissioner Pulverenti seconded the motion. After discussion, the Chair called for a vote. Voting yes: Lutz, Arch, Moore, Monheiser, Zohner, Pulverenti. Voting no: None. Motion carried.

**The next meeting date will be on a Friday in May, at Ferguson House, date to be determined.**

**Meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.**

ATTEST:

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Todd Zohner, Secretary

**NEBRASKA COMMISSION ON PROBLEM GAMBLING  
FEBRUARY 23, 2024  
DIRECTOR'S NARRATIVE REPORT**

**SPENDING ITEMS ON TODAY'S AGENDA**

**11. New counselor contracts:**

- Restore Rebuild Reconnect Counseling Center, Omaha, **\$25,000**.
- Ron Felton, supervisor for new counselor Amanda Longmore, North Platte, **\$8,000**.

**11. Increases to current counselor contract awards, total increases: \$180,000.**

**12. Sponsor Midwest Conference: \$5,000.**

**13. Sponsor Nebraska Counseling Association spring conference: \$250.**

**14. Support counselor attendance at Midwest Conference: \$7,500.**

**15. Rent increase, purchase furniture for move to second floor: \$2,500.**

**BUDGET STATUS: FY2023-24**

The Commission's May 19 budget for FY2023-24 projected revenue **\$2,365,000** and spending **\$2,887,083**. The projected deficit **\$522,083** would reduce the year-end cash balance to **\$486,405**.

**Attached is a copy of the budget adopted by the Commission on May 19, 2023.**

Revisions to the budget to bring it up-to-date project **revenue increase to \$2,525,000** and **spending increase \$3,039,650**. The increases in both revenue and spending result in a projected cash fund balance of **\$527,280**.

**Attached is a copy of the revised 2023-24 budget.**

Our legislative appropriation for the year is **\$3,192,346**.

The two new spending proposals for counseling (Items 11 above) are within the projected budget for counseling services, so they do not increase the projected total spending.

Items 12-15 would increase projected spending by **\$15,250**. With these added to the total our projected spending would be **\$3,054,900**, which is about \$137,000 less than our total appropriation.

As usual we face two unknowns: revenue totals from gambling activities, and counseling demand. Here is the current situation:

- Last year our total transfers from the State Lottery were \$1,437,258; the year before the total was \$1,302,878. The revised budget projects total lottery revenue this fiscal year at \$1,350,000, a bit below the average of the two prior years.
- Casino tax proceeds are still below early projections, but added games including sports betting now in three locations indicate that the revenue this year will be about 500,000 as we projected last May.
- Counseling demand this fiscal year is projected at 10,000 hours total, including 300 new client admissions. These projections are based on the current pace of admissions and counseling service. This is an 18% increase in counseling hours and a 34% increase in new client assessments over last fiscal year.

Budget management is a continuous process in state government. The two-year budget is finalized in the odd-numbered year. The process to develop the next two-year budget begins in

the summer of the even-numbered year. The Commission will review an outline of a projected two-year budget at the annual budget meeting in May.

### **STATUS OF CASINOS**

The casinos in Lincoln, Grand Island and Columbus are operating about 1,000 slot machines – this number changes occasionally. Table games are in operation in Grand Island and Columbus. Sports betting is open in Omaha, Lincoln and Grand Island.

Nebraska casino gambling is consistent with other states – last year 96% of casino revenue resulted from slot machine gambling. And consistent with our program’s history for many years, the slot machine (together with its imitation “skill” game) account for the majority of problems among our clients.

Construction on permanent facilities is underway at all four casinos. These are large projects with expected completion in late 2024.

Casino tax revenue for Gamblers Assistance is averaging about \$38,000 per month, which would produce \$456,000 for the year. For budget purposes this fiscal year, our revenue from the casino tax is projected at **\$500,000**. This is still a feasible projection, assuming continued changes at the casinos.

### **OTHER STAFF ACTIVITIES**

- University of Nebraska-Lincoln campus activities programs include an office of Alcohol and Drug Education. We have begun collaboration with Jon Gayer, Assistant Director in that office, to add gambling to the topics they focus on.
- Later this spring we will be collaborating with the University faculty who focus on economic education programs in Nebraska high schools. The goal will be to create lesson plans about gambling that will be distributed to high schools for their financial education classes.
- The updated new counselor training program has been completed and is now being converted into the digital format that can be presented on Bellevue University’s website. In the meantime the existing trainings are being offered.
- Last year we entered a contract with Elite Research for a prevalence study of Nebraska gambling behavior. Problematic gambling behavior was measured by two scales – our diagnostic scale based on the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM)* and a scale developed by prominent counselors known as the *Problem and Pathological Gambling Measure (PPGM)*. Results following the DSM scale showed 4.3% of respondents with behavior ranging from mild to severe addiction. The PPGM scale showed that 9.1% of the population could be classified as problem or pathological gamblers. The report on the study is lengthy and complex; discussion of its implications for our program will be on the agenda for the next meeting of the Commission. The study gives us a baseline for future program development, collaboration with the Racing & Gaming Commission, interaction with executive and legislative branch offices, and the public.
- Workforce development is a continuous process. We are gradually increasing the number of counselors who have completed our training and requested certification. We are also actively recruiting new counselors by attending programs presented by the Nebraska Counseling Association (NCA) and the Nebraska Association of Behavioral Health Organizations (NABHO).



David Geier  
Feb. 23, 2024

**GAMBLERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BUDGET FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024**

**REVENUE**

Share of State Lottery profits <i>500,000 + 1%; Constitution Art. III Sec. 24</i>	900,000
5% of State Lottery ad budget <i>Statute Section 9-831</i>	300,000
Share of Charitable Gaming tax <i>Legislative fixed amount appropriation</i>	400,000
Share of Health Care Cash Fund <i>Legislative fixed amount appropriation</i>	250,000
Share of Casino Wagering Tax <i>Racetrack Gaming Act Section 9-1204</i>	500,000
Investment Income <i>Gamblers Assistance Fund earnings</i>	<u>15,000</u>
<b>TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUE</b>	<b><u>2,365,000</u></b>

**EXPENDITURES**

**510000 PERSONAL SERVICES**

511100 PERMANENT SALARIES-WAGES <i>[7% increase by Legislative appropriation]</i> <i>David Geier salary: 87,802 (to be awarded by Commission vote)</i> <i>Anne McCollister salary: 50,570 (set by State pay plan)</i>	
<b>Personal Services Salaries Subtotal</b> <i>Equals limit for salaries set by Legislature</i>	<b>138,372</b>
515100 RETIREMENT PLANS EXPENSE <i>Employer share 7.5%</i>	10,378
515200 FICA EXPENSE <i>Employer share 7.65%</i>	10,585
515500 HEALTH INSURANCE EXPENSE <i>Employer share of premiums</i>	24,000
516500 WORKERS COMP PREMIUMS <i>State assessment</i>	<u>1,000</u>
<b>Personal Services Total</b>	<b>184,335</b>

**520000 OPERATING EXPENSES**

521100 POSTAGE EXPENSE	100
521400 CIO CHARGES <i>State data; communications</i>	15,000
521500 PUBLICATION & PRINT EXPENSE <i>State printing</i>	2,000
522200 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION <i>National Conference</i>	1,000
524600 RENT EXPENSE-BUILDINGS <i>Ferguson House</i>	7,500
531100 OFFICE SUPPLIES EXPENSE	500
534600 EDUCATIONAL SUPPLIES <i>Texts, manuals</i>	1,000
541100 ACCTG & AUDITING SERVICES <i>State Accounting</i>	3,000
541200 PURCHASING ASSESSMENT <i>State procurement</i>	400
554130 VIDEO SERVICES	
<i>Zoom Video</i>	6,948
<i>Three Pillars interviews recording</i>	18,000
554900 OTHER CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	
<i>Data analyst</i>	77,750
<i>New training license fee</i>	20,000
<i>Bellevue Univ. training &amp; testing</i>	10,000

<i>McChargue consultations</i>	40,000
<i>Elite Research survey</i>	40,000
<i>Helpline service</i>	25,000
<b>559100 OTHER OPERATING EXPENSE</b>	
<i>NAADGS Membership</i>	3,500
<i>NABHO Conference Sponsorship</i>	2,500
<b>559164 PROBLEM GAMBLING MESSAGES</b>	
<i>Husker athletics</i>	100,000
<i>Agent Brand media</i>	<u>481,800</u>
<b>Operating Expenses Total</b>	<b>855,998</b>
<b>570000 TRAVEL EXPENSES</b>	
571100 BOARD & LODGING <i>Commissioner travel; National Conference hotel</i>	3,500
572100 COMMERCIAL TRANSPORT <i>National Conference air fare</i>	750
573100 STATE-OWNED TRANSPORT <i>.32/mile; 12.50/day</i>	1,000
574500 PERSONAL VEHICLE MILEAGE <i>Commissioner, director travel .655/mile</i>	<u>1,500</u>
<b>Travel Expenses Total</b>	<b>6,750</b>
<b>590000 GOVERNMENT AID</b>	
595100 CONTRACTUAL AID <i>Counseling services</i>	<u>1,840,000</u>
<i>Assumes 9,500 hours counseling @185; 275 admission assessments @300</i>	
<b>TOTAL ALL PROJECTED EXPENDITURES</b>	<b><u>2,887,083</u></b>

**GAMBLERS ASSISTANCE PROGRAM BUDGET FISCAL YEAR 2023-2024  
ADJUSTED TO FEB. 23, 2024**

**REVENUE**

Share of State Lottery profits <i>500,000 + 1%; Constitution Art. III Sec. 24</i>	1,000,000
5% of State Lottery ad budget <i>Statute Section 9-831</i>	350,000
Share of Charitable Gaming tax <i>Legislative fixed amount appropriation</i>	400,000
Share of Health Care Cash Fund <i>Legislative fixed amount appropriation</i>	250,000
Share of Casino Wagering Tax <i>Racetrack Gaming Act Section 9-1204</i>	500,000
Investment Income <i>Gamblers Assistance Fund earnings</i>	<u>25,000</u>
<b>TOTAL PROJECTED REVENUE</b>	<b><u>2,525,000</u></b>

**EXPENDITURES**

**510000 PERSONAL SERVICES**

Personal Services Total	190,000
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**520000 OPERATING EXPENSES**

521100 POSTAGE EXPENSE	150
521400 CIO CHARGES	18,000
521500 PUBLICATION & PRINT EXPENSE	2,000
522200 CONFERENCE REGISTRATION	1,400
524600 RENT EXPENSE-BUILDINGS	7,500
531100 OFFICE SUPPLIES EXPENSE	500
534600 EDUCATIONAL SUPPLIES	1,000
541100 ACCTG & AUDITING SERVICES	5,000
541200 PURCHASING ASSESSMENT	400
554130 VIDEO SERVICES	23,000
554900 OTHER CONTRACTUAL SERVICES	212,750
559100 OTHER OPERATING EXPENSE	6,000
559164 PROBLEM GAMBLING MESSAGES	<u>625,200</u>
<b>Operating Expenses Total</b>	<b>1,092,900</b>

**570000 TRAVEL EXPENSES**

571100 BOARD & LODGING <i>Commissioner travel; National Conference hotel</i>	3,500
572100 COMMERCIAL TRANSPORT <i>National Conference air fare</i>	750
573100 STATE-OWNED TRANSPORT <i>.32/mile; 12.50/day</i>	1,000
574500 PERSONAL VEHICLE MILEAGE <i>Commissioner, director travel .655/mile</i>	<u>1,500</u>
<b>Travel Expenses Total</b>	<b>6,750</b>

**590000 GOVERNMENT AID**

595100 CONTRACTUAL AID <i>Counseling services</i>	1,940,000
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*Assumes 10,000 hours counseling @185; 300 admission assessments @300*

**TOTAL PROJECTED EXPENDITURES** **3,039,650**

**CASH FUND STATUS**

**BALANCE 07/01/23** **1,041,930**

**PLUS PROJECTED REVENUE FYE23-24** **+ 2,525,000**

**TOTAL FUNDS AVAILABLE** **3,566,930**

**MINUS PROJECTED EXPENDITURES** **- 3,039,650**

**PROJECTED BALANCE 06/30/24** **527,280**