

APPROVED Minutes
Virginia Board for the Blind and Vision Impaired
DBVI Headquarters
397 Azalea Avenue Richmond, VA 23227
December 13, 2022

Board Attendees

Bonnie Atwood; Mazen Basrawi – *Chair*; Ken Jessup
Robert Bartolotta (attended virtually from Falls Church, VA, due to caregiving obligations)
Deborah Helms (attended virtually from Roanoke, VA, due to medical condition)

Members of the Public

Paul D’Addario
Barbara McCarthy

DBVI Staff to the Board

Pam Cato, Deputy Commissioner for Services; Wallica Gaines, Deputy Commissioner for Administration; Matt Koch, Deputy Commissioner of Enterprises; Maggie Mills, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner; Dr. Rick Mitchell, Commissioner

Guests

R. Bryce Lee, Managing Director – Investments – The Optimal Service Group
Karen Logan, Vice President – Investments – The Optimal Service Group
Jeff Rakes - Investments – The Optimal Service Group

Call to Order & Welcome

Chair Basrawi called the meeting to order and welcomed the members in attendance.

Business Items

Introductions

A roundtable of introductions was conducted.

Consent of Agenda

Mr. Bartolotta moved to approve the agenda as presented, and the motion passed unanimously.

Consent of Sept. 27, 2022, Meeting Minutes

The Minutes with Ms. Atwood’s minor amendments were approved without objections. Minutes were accepted for filing.

Investment Report

The Optimal Service Group (OSG) reviewed DBVI’s investment portfolio to date which has been in a long-term asset allocation since December 2021.

Public Comment

None.

Unfinished Business

Appointments to the Board

No announcements have been made yet from the Governor's Office as to Appointments or Reappointments to the Board.

Grant Status

Deputy Commissioner Gaines gave a status on the grant payments. Originally there was not enough funds appropriated to pay the grants, but due to administrative adjustments recently made, the Board was able proceed with making the payments.

Finance Committee Member Discussion

Deputy Commissioner Gaines suggested the Board reestablish a Finance Committee. Chair Basrawi appointed Mr. Jessup as Lead. ***Mr. Jessup will discuss with Deputy Commissioner Gaines and Barbara McCarthy.*

New Business

FOIA for Meetings

Deputy Commissioner Gaines reported on the Amendment to FOIA that became effective September 1, 2022 – Code of Virginia 2.2-3708.3 Meetings held through electronic communication means; situations other than declared states of emergency. ***Ms. Gaines will present a policy regarding this Amendment to be voted on at the next Board Meeting.*

VIB Advisory Board Nomination

Deputy Commissioner Koch presented a request to the Board for nomination of Sharon Ernest to the VIB Advisory Board. Mr. Jessup moved to nominate Ms. Ernest. All were in favor.

Events Involving Members of the Legislature

It was suggested that a reception be planned to take place on Campus possibly in August of 2023 with Legislators to meet VRCBVI students receiving services. ***A subcommittee was created with Mr. Jessup and Ms. Atwood who will bring a proposal of such a reception to the next Board Meeting.*

Alternative Locations Future Meetings

A discussion took place as to holding future Board Meetings at various DBVI locations which would also include a tour of the facilities and meeting of staff. Mr. Bartolotta moved to hold the March 2023 Board Meeting at the Charlottesville facility. All were in favor of holding the March 2023 Board Meeting in Charlottesville.

Working Lunch – Presentation by Enterprise Division

Kent McCurley, Retail Division Manager for VIB, gave a presentation on his relationship with his employees and educating customers about the AbilityOne Program and interacting with individuals who are blind and vision impaired.

Agency Reports

Commissioner Mitchell and the Deputy Commissioners gave a report on highlights in their Divisions.

An offer has been made to a new position, Executive Assistant to the Deputy Commissioners.

A new Capital Project Manager will start in January 2023.

The DBVI campus will be hiring five Classified Security positions in lieu of contracted Security.

The Library Resource Center has experienced mold in the building on books and is working on resolving these issues.

The Charlottesville facility has received funding for renovations and is doing a facility assessment now. The DBVI campus has a GRTC Bus Station on site which wears down the Campus asphalt. DBVI has received funding to renovate the roads on Campus, as well as to create an outdoor Pavilion and ventilation upgrades.

October was National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and DBVI offices were involved in many events. The theme was Disability: Part of the Equity Equation.

The Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired hosted its annual Family and Friends Day event using the theme, *What If THIS Actually Works* on October 15.

November 18-20 saw a new pilot, Careers in Action-Bridge to Success, take place in Natural Bridge, Virginia. Twenty-one students, their parents and DBVI staff all came together for an incredible weekend of growth where they learned about various employment opportunities at the Natural Bridge Safari and Hotel and Conference Center. The speaker at the event was Kendal Swartzentruber, who is the state Co-Coordinator of VDOE's I'm Determined Program and the Region 5 Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC) Coordinator. Plan to replicate this event in other parts of the state.

The many DBVI vacancies were reviewed, and a status of recruitment was given.

Deputy Commissioner Koch reported that Enterprise Division staff count has decreased to 150 from 188 a few years ago due to pandemic and employees being hired by the Federal Government. Enterprise is exploring new recruitment avenues such as NSITE, VSDB and Virginia Voice.

The Enterprise Division is doing strong financially but has fallen short in getting vendors paid in a timely manner due to the increase in invoices and staff shortages.

The Enterprise Division is planning a Strategic Planning Meeting early 2023 to revisit expanding operations in Southeast, VA.

Adjournment

Ms. Atwood moved to adjourn the Board Meeting. All were in favor.

Next Meeting

March 21, 2023