

APPROVED MINUTES
Virginia Board for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Quarterly Board Meeting
September 24, 2024
11:00 am – 2:00 pm

Location: Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)
397 Azalea Avenue
Richmond, VA 23227

Board Members in Attendance

Joseph Ashley-Vice Chair, Robert Bartolotta-Secretary, Paul D’Addario-Chair, Kathryn Campbell, Tina Egge, Michael Kasey
Mazen Basrawi, attended virtually in Arlington, VA, due to distance.

Guests in Attendance

Bryce Lee, The Optimal Service Group, Wells Fargo
Karen Logan, The Optimal Service Group, Wells Fargo
Olu Rosanwo, The Optimal Service Group, Wells Fargo (virtually)

Public in Attendance

D.E. Andrews (virtually)
Becky Keller (virtually)
Yinka (virtually)

DBVI Staff to the Board in Attendance

Matt Koch, Deputy Commissioner of Enterprises; Kathy Malone, Acting Deputy Commissioner for Services (virtually); Maggie Mills, Executive Assistant to the Commissioner; Rick Mitchell, Commissioner; Ashley West, Executive Assistant to the Deputy Commissioners

Call to Order & Welcome

Introduction of New Board Members

Chair D’Addario called the meeting to order and welcomed the members in attendance. Two new Board appointees were in attendance: Tina Egge and Kathryn Campbell. A quorum was met. A roundtable of introductions was conducted.

Business Items

Consent of Agenda

Mr. Kasey moved to approve the agenda as presented, and Dr. Ashley seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Consent of June 25, 2024, Minutes

The Minutes were approved without objection. Minutes were accepted for filing.

Public Comment

None

Optimal Services Group

Introduction to Wells Fargo/Endowment Account

Ms. Logan provided a background on the Endowment Fund which started in July of 2021. Prior to investing with Wells Fargo, the funds were invested in an LGIP. Because the Agency wished to see growth in these funds, it decided to work with Wells Fargo Optimal Services Group.

Update on Markets & Portfolio/Board's Investment Policy Statement

Mr. Rosanwo provided a report on the July portfolio. With the recent rate cut by the Federal government, Wells Fargo did some rebalancing on the Endowment account.

The account with Wells Fargo started at \$5.7M. The account has grown by \$341,000 while all the while disbursing funds for grants. As of August 31, 2024, the Endowment Fund balance was \$6,211,112.

The Board recently developed a Spending Statement to calculate the amount of funds that would be available for grants each year. Prior to this development, there was no limit on how much would be granted. Wells Fargo was procured via the State's procurement process.

Mr. Lee reviewed the recommended revisions to the Statement of Investment Policy and Guidelines document. In addition to the recommended revisions, the Board requested the term Finance Committee be replaced with the Board, as there is no longer a Finance Committee within the Board.

Mr. Bartolotta moved to adopt the policy with the recommended changes. Dr. Ashley seconded. All were in favor.

Agency Reports

Commissioner Mitchell reported that the Deputy Commissioner for Services position has been vacant since February. Recruiting has not been successful. Kathy Malone, DBVI Senior Regional Manager, accepted the role of Acting Deputy Commissioner for Services in June.

Deputy Commissioner Malone reported on some of the many events it led and participated in since the last Board Meeting including:

Cyber Space, June 2024, students learned how networks and web servers operate, how to protect from hackers, network & cyber security, and learned about careers in cyber space. Instructors included staff from Palo Alto.

Launching Point, July 2024, a college emersion program at JMU, students explored the campus, met students and professors, participated in many confidence building activities.

Pre-ETS staff presented at the American Foundation for the Blind Leadership Conference in Minnesota, September 2024.

Education Coordinators participated in Creating Connections for Shining Stars, July 2024, which provides support and services/early intervention for infants and toddlers with developmental delays and disabilities and their families.

Super Summer Camp, July – August 2024, at Camp Easterseals, students had the opportunity to take part in a camp experience/swimming, canoeing, horseback riding, wall climbing and more.

DeafBlind Services hosted a DeafBlind Awareness Day on June 28.

The RT/IL Program Director attended Family Day/Celebrate the Art of Latin America: Brazil at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts as part of the OIB-TAC Intensive goal of working to find ways to increase the numbers of Hispanic and Latino individuals that DBVI serves.

Two successful sessions for Senior Week were held for those over 55 years of age where seniors learn about traveling independently, technology, cooking safely, cleaning effectively, ballroom dancing, card games. August 2024.

The LIFE Program, July-August 2024, students stay at VRCBVI for several weeks, program prepares them to be independent after high school.

October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month, celebrations are planned throughout the State. Celebrating Abilities Award Program is scheduled for October 2 highlighting individuals with disabilities who have attained employment and the businesses that provide those opportunities.

White Cane Awareness Day is October 15. Many events are planned.

October 4-6 is the Career in Action Program at the Delta Hotel in Richmond, where students learn about careers in hospitality.

October 23 is the virtual IT Credential Fair.

Several staff will be attending and presenting at the Association for Education & Rehabilitation of the Blind & Visually Impaired (AER) Conference in October in Virginia Beach.

Several staff will be attending and presenting at the National Federation of the Blind of Virginia (NFBV) State Conference in November.

Friends and Family Day is October 19 at DBVI, many resources/organizations will be on site providing information on how they may help.

A new Pre-ETS position has been created, and the new hire will start October 25.

Deputy Commissioner Koch provided an overview on the Enterprise Division which includes Virginia Industries for the Blind (VIB) and Virginia Enterprises for the Blind (VEB). Additional information can be found on the DBVI website under the Enterprise Division.

He reported on the delivery of mattresses to Liberty University in July. DBVI received a verbal commitment from the University to continue to purchase new mattresses.

VIB is in negotiations with the Navy for the Navy Ships Stores providing supplies and markets to the service men and women. Will begin delivering to the Naval Station in Norfolk in December 2024.

VIB will have a new Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) solution called Odoo. VIB has worked for four years in collaboration with VITA and DSA IT/ISO to solicit and identify a solution and operating environment to replace two aging technology tools into one integrated solution. A cost-effective, latest-generation, and accessible ERP has been identified and tested. Now in final negotiations for an implementer with hopes to start next year.

Commissioner Mitchell reported on the Administration Division in Deputy Commissioner Gaines' absence.

A video project has been underway to produce 18 small videos with information about DBVI services. They can be viewed at this link which is on the DBVI website. <https://www.youtube.com/user/VADBVI> The Commissioner encourages all to sign up for DBVI updates via GovDelivery which can also be accessed via the DBVI website. <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/VADBVI/subscriber/new> For the next eight weeks, two videos a week will be rolled out on DBVI's Facebook page.

A marketing campaign has been initiated with WDBJ7 out of Roanoke with a commercial about DBVI shown within their coverage area. Ads have been produced for Pandora and the internet statewide.

DBVI's Diversity, Opportunity and Inclusion (DOI) Plan has been completed and now in the process of educating the leadership team.

DBVI has been conducting climate surveys with their staff and 93% of staff felt they were contributing to the mission. DBVI has been able to act on some of the statements that were shared.

Unfinished Business

Grant Status

Ms. Mills gave a status on the funds that were granted in June. As of the Board Meeting two of the seven recipients confirmed receipt of funds. ***She will follow up with recipients next week to ensure all funds have been disbursed and received.*

Endowment/Income Tax Check Off/Corporate Charity Update

Chair D'Addario has spoken with Garren Shipley who has pledged to assist with this idea. Chair D'Addario will share any additional information he receives. This would give Virginia taxpayers the opportunity, on their State income tax form, to voluntarily contribute to the Endowment Fund administered by the DBVI Board.

New Business

June 2025 Board Meeting & Grant Process Timeline

A discussion took place regarding the possible need for a Special Meeting ahead of the June 2025 Board Meeting in which grant applications are voted on. ***Chair D'Addario recommended Ms. Mills discuss with Deputy Commissioner Gaines upon her return.*

Adjourn

Dr. Ashley moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Egge seconded. All were in favor, and the meeting was adjourned.