

APPROVED MINUTES

Virginia Board for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Quarterly Board Meeting
DBVI Headquarters
397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond VA 23227
June 27, 2023

Board Attendees

Bonnie Atwood, Robert Bartolotta, Mazen Basrawi, Paul D'Addario, Deborah Helms (attended virtually from Roanoke, VA, due to medical reason), Ken Jessup

Guests Attending Virtually

Bryce Lee, The Optimal Service Group
David Ward, Goodwill Industries of the Valleys
Donna Cox, DBVI, LRC
Neely Oplinger, Metropolitan Washington Ear Inc.
Nora Hart, Metropolitan Washington Ear Inc.
Olu Rosanwo, The Optimal Service Group
Sandy Halverson, National Federation of the Blind of Virginia
Tracy Soforenko, National Federation of the Blind of Virginia

Guests Attending in Person

Jeff Rakes, The Optimal Service Group
Karen Logan, The Optimal Service Group
Yvonne Mastromano, Virginia Voice

Members of the Public Attending Virtually

Matt Reed
Max Berckmueller
Talisa Thomas-Hall
Vinetta Freeman

Members of the Public Attending in Person

Gary Besosa

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

Call to Order & Welcome

Vice Chair D'Addario called the meeting to order and welcomed the members in attendance. A quorum was met.

Business Items

Introductions

A roundtable of introductions was conducted.

Consent of Agenda

Mr. D'Addario moved to approve the agenda as presented, and the motion passed unanimously.

Consent of December 13, 2022, and March 21, 2023, Minutes

The Minutes were approved without objection. 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

Grant Proposal Presentations & Reports

New Vision

This application is for a total of \$20,000 to be allocated as follows: \$10,000 to develop a YouTube Channel, \$1,250 for Amazon Echoes for the Radio Reading Service, \$4,780 for Echo Tips podcast and monthly newsletter production, and a \$2,670 new Podcast. Discussion took place around the application submitted by New Vision. Mr. Jessup moved to approve \$10,000 of the application from New Vision, not to be used for the development of a YouTube Channel; motion passed.

Metropolitan Washington Ear

This application is for a total of \$64,524 for programming expenses. Discussion took place around the application submitted by the Metropolitan Washington Ear. Ms. Helms moved to approve the application from Metropolitan Washington Ear; motion passed.

National Federation of the Blind (NFB)

This application is for a total of \$100,000 for the Silver BELLS program. Discussion took place around the application submitted by the National Federation of the Blind. Mr. Jessup moved to approve the application from NFB for the Silver BELLS program supplementing the grant NFB receives from the State; motion passed.

Super Summer Camp

This application is for a total of \$53,727 for the Super Summer Camp FY25 program. Discussion took place around the application submitted by the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI). Mr. Bartolotta moved to approve the application from DBVI for the Super Summer Camp program for FY25; motion passed.

Virginia Voice

This application is for a total of \$50,000 for programmatic expenses, Discussion took place around the application submitted by Virginia Voice which was submitted past submission deadline due to a misunderstanding of the proposal process. Mr. D'Addario moved to accept the late submission

with the understanding that this acceptance is an exception and will not be permitted in the future. The motion was passed, with some reluctance from the Board, to accept the late submission so as not to keep this programming from the organization's listeners. Mr. D'Addario moved to approve the application from Virginia Voice; motion passed by majority vote.

Agency Reports

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

Commissioner Mitchell reported that the Secretary's Office hopes to finalize the new Board seat appointments soon. Ms. Helms' term on the Board will expire June 29, 2023.

Senator Ghazala F. Hashmi visited DBVI June 26. Commissioner Mitchell and the three Deputy Commissioner's provided an overview of the Agency's mission and how it is accomplished within the three divisions. Senator Hashmi had the opportunity to see firsthand DBVI's Leap into Linux and Cyber Security Academy. She also spoke with several of the students.

DBVI recently had two employees retire. Norton Richman retired with 50 years of service, and Jim Vest retired with 49 years of service. The end of June, employee Dennis Helms will be retiring with 40 years of service.

Deputy Commissioner Gaines reported on the upcoming legislative session and the requests that have been submitted.

Deputy Commissioner Koch reported that DBVI was awarded a full food service contract at Ft. Gregg-Adams (previously named Ft. Lee) near Petersburg. This comes after several years and two arbitration cases against the Army for not following federal law in procuring these services in the recent past. The five-year, \$136 million contract will allow a private citizen and certified Vendor who is blind to manage these operations under the auspices of the Virginia Enterprises for the Blind (VEB) program. The operations cover five cafeterias serving up to 4 meals a day for all uniformed personnel on Ft. Gregg-Adams

Virginia Industries for the Blind (VIB) signed the short-term contract with the Defense Logistics Agency (DLA) for the manufacture and delivery of 6,180 Shipboard Innerspring Mattresses.

Deputy Commissioner Cato reported on the Leap into Linux program that is occurring this week which is a partnership with CYBER.ORG and Palo Alto Networks. Several other programs are scheduled over the summer months. Ms. Cato reported on the NICE conference that staff attended in Seattle, WA, in June. This year's conference Theme "Resetting Expectations: Creating Accessible Cybersecurity Career Pathways" was about reimagining what it takes to be a cybersecurity professional. By resetting the expectations, cybersecurity will be an accessible career path through various, nontraditional avenues. Much networking was done.

New Business

FOIA Amendment – Vote

Deputy Commissioner Gaines reviewed the FOIA amendment regarding Meeting Participation by Electronic Means. ****The Board requested that DBVI's attorney review the**

proposed policy regarding meeting participation by electronic means. Previously, the Board amended its By-laws on March 22, 2022, to include Section 4: Member Participation by Electronic Means in Article VI: Conduct of Business. This change to the By-laws was made to allow electronic participation as permitted in [§ 2.2-3708.2](#) of the Code of Virginia. At that time this section required the body to adopt a written policy allowing for and governing participation of its members by electronic means. The Board amended the By-laws to establish the policy. Since that time the Code of Virginia has changed regarding electronic participation in meetings. Instead of changing the By-laws this time, the Board wishes to adopt a policy outside of its By-laws. Since the Board meets only 4 times a year, making these changes through policy instead of updating the By-laws will allow the board to enact changes quicker and be better aligned with the Code of Virginia.

2023-2024 Board Officers

Mazen Basrawi nominated Paul D’Addario for Chairman; Mr. Jessup seconded, and the motion passed. Mr. D’Addario nominated Ken Jessup for Vice-Chairman; Mr. Basrawi seconded, and motion passed. Mr. D’Addario nominated Bonnie Atwood for Secretary; Mr. Jessup seconded, and motion passed.

Parliamentary Procedure

Ms. Atwood reviewed the role of the Chair and reminded Board that Chair is not to vote unless there is a tie. She stated that quorum is the majority of all members.

Bylaws Committee

The Board agreed that a Bylaws Committee is not needed at this time.

Dates for 2023-2024 Board Meetings

September 26, 2023	March 26, 2024
December 12, 2023	June 25, 2024

Unfinished Business

Status of Reestablishment of Finance

The Board agreed this Committee is not needed at this time as Wells Fargo provides an overview of the Endowment fund each meeting.

Location of September 2023 Meeting

By September the Charlottesville location will have had new video equipment installed. ***The Board agreed to have the September 26 Quarterly Board Meeting at that location.*

Legislative Event

Mr. Jessup recommended the name of Champion of Virginia’s Blind Award in recognition of those Legislative members who support the citizens of the Commonwealth of Virginia who are blind and vision impaired. He envisions inviting Legislative guests to the Azalea campus. The logistics of these Legislative visits will be discussed at the next Quarterly Board Meeting which will include an outline of

costs for plaques and reception. ***Mr. Jessup and Ms. Atwood will create budget proposal to be voted on at the next Board Meeting.*

Closed Session

A motion to hold a Closed Session regarding discussion of a Vote of Confidence on Commissioner Mitchell's behalf was made by Mr. Basrawi; motion passed.

Open Session

Ms. Atwood certified that during the Board's Closed Session nothing else was discussed other than the discussion of a Vote of Confidence on Commissioner Mitchell's behalf which was a personal matter, and no action was taken; Mr. Jessup seconded. All were in favor, and the motion was passed.

Adjournment

Mr. Basrawi motioned to adjourn the meeting; motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: September 26, 2023.