

**Board for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Quarterly Board Meeting
Richmond, Virginia
Friday, October 17, 2008
APPROVED MINUTES**

The date of the board meeting was changed to October 17, to allow board members the opportunity to attend the grand opening of the newly renovated dormitory building. The members were provided a tour of the facility and lunch prior to the regularly scheduled board meeting.

Ms. Bruce called the meeting to order at 12:20 p.m. She asked board members, staff and guests to introduce themselves.

Ms. Bruce stated that the dorm ceremony went extremely well and was very appreciative of Secretary Tavenner's, Delegate Morrissey's, and Mr. Bowman's gracious remarks.

Members Present: Ms. Liza Bruce, Mr. Joe DePhillips, Mrs. Judy Spears, Mr. Ashleigh Moody and Mr. Desmond Savill

Members Absence: Ms. Althea Pittman and Mrs. Evelyn Cabrera-Heatwole

Mrs. Bruce noted that Mrs. Cabrera-Heatwole had resigned from the board; however, the resignation has not been made official until the board or agency personnel receive official notification from the Secretary of the Commonwealth's office.

Staff Present: Mr. Ray Hopkins, commissioner; Mr. Bob Berrang, deputy commissioner/general manager VIB; Mr. Bob Burton, deputy commissioner for services; Mr. Jim Taylor, chief deputy commissioner, Mrs. Eva Ampey, special assistant; and Ms. Kathy Proffitt, board recorder

Guests Present: Ms. Seville Allen

Public Comment: None

Adoption of Agenda: It was moved, seconded and passed by unanimous vote to adopt the agenda as distributed.

Action on Minutes of Previous Meeting: In view of the fact that draft minutes of the July meeting were not available, it was decided to mail/email the minutes by October 22 to members for review and edit prior to the January 13, 2009 meeting.

Commissioner's Report: Mr. Hopkins stated he was glad to be at the board meeting today. He noted that he had challenges ahead regarding to budget reductions. Agency heads were asked in September to submit contingency plans for 5, 10, 15 percent reduction. Based on the plans from the various agencies, the Governor in consultation with the secretaries and the Department of Planning and Budget staff, came up with a plan. DBVI was ultimately asked to reduce the General Funds by less than five percent. He also noted that the agency submitted contingency plans and the target for the five percent was just over \$337,000. In the end, the reductions included in the Governor's plan totaled \$237,000. Mr. Hopkins expressed his appreciation to Secretary Tavenner in that she did not extend a flat across the board reduction within Health and Human Resources. He didn't know what will happen as far as the 2010 budget biennium, however, the shortfall is estimated just over \$2.5 billion. Mr. Hopkins stated only a portion was made up in the reduction figure noted for 2009. It is expected that in November the Governor's office will begin looking at proposals for 2010. Mr. Hopkins informed the members that the agency is not finished with this issue yet. He stated that the agency had been able to handle the budget crisis at this time by not filling positions and by shifting general fund costs to other non-general fund sources. He also stated the proposal has minimum impact on services and does not mean any layoff across the board.

Mr. Hopkins stated that the rehabilitation center is treated as a separate entity for budget purposes and they did take the 15 percent cut from the rehab center which was \$28,000. The amount was not a significant figure; however, the funds had to be taken from other areas. The reduction will impact one administrative support position at the center. Mr. Hopkins also stated that overall he considered the agency very fortunate and will continue to carry on. The agency has started the federal fiscal year under a continuing resolution. The agency received

the first award for the current fiscal year; and also received an award for an additional \$171,000 in reallocated funds.

Mr. Hopkins noted that Chief Deputy Jim Taylor is currently looking at the present policies and procedures to assure that DBVI customers and the public at large have access to information in the appropriate medium. Commissioner Hopkins stated that hopefully procedures will be in place by the January 13, 2009 meeting. Mr. Hopkins concluded his report and entertained any questions.

Mr. Savill asked if there was anything forthcoming from the General Assembly. Mr. Hopkins stated the agency staff did not submit any legislative requests at this time. Ms. Bruce asked if there had been any further talk about consolidation. He replied that he had not heard anything at this time.

Mr. Hopkins informed the members that the chief deputy commissioner position will not be filled following Mr. Taylor's retirement and personnel costs for the Low Vision program will be moved to a source other than state general funds. Board members wished Chief Deputy Commissioner Taylor well in his upcoming retirement.

Mr. Taylor thanked the board and updated the members on the public meetings being held across the state. The Roanoke meeting was held on October 15 and 35 individuals were in attendance. The Bristol meeting was held on October 16 and had no attendees. There are currently four additional meetings scheduled in Norfolk, Fredericksburg, Richmond and Arlington.

Mr. Taylor noted that the Statewide Rehabilitation Council is starting a pilot program at the rehabilitation center to mentor students. He stated that additional information will be available in the near future.

Ms. Bruce thanked Mr. Taylor for his update as well as his continued service with the state. Mr. Taylor will be retiring December 1 from the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

Virginia Industries for the Blind Report: Mr. Berrang informed the board that VIB ended the federal fiscal year in September. The 10 stores were working overtime due to the end of the fiscal year to spend all remaining funds. September was a fantastic sales month for VIB.

Mr. Berrang reported that in 2006, NIB initiated a program to reward affiliates who were deserving of an award for promoting upward mobility of blind and visually impaired employees. In both 2007 and 2008, VIB received the prestigious award.

Mr. Berrang passed around the Fort Lee Military newspaper which included an article on VIB's Fort Lee store, highlighting the store manager and the blind store associate.

On October 8, at the Pentagon, the Department of Defense conducted the second annual ceremony on awarding Ability One to various individuals for participating in the Ability One program. Many high ranking defense officials attended the program. Mr. Berrang and Mr. Meehan attended the ceremony. Mr. Berrang passed the program agenda around for the board members to review.

Mr. Berrang reported that on October 22-25, he along with Commissioner Hopkins and Mr. Bohrer will be attending the annual training conference of National Industries for the Blind being held in Houston, Texas. The conference recognizes all the various affiliates' employees of the year. Ms. Liz Barnes, supervisor of the Norfolk Super Serve Mart, will be honored at the conference.

On October 28, VIB staff will have a display at the Defense Supply Center in Richmond for the Ability One Disability Employment Ceremony. It is anticipated 40 agencies around the country will be in attendance.

Division for Services Report: Mr. Burton provided an update on personnel issues. He noted the agency has many openings; however, the agency would not be filling the positions due to the current budget situation. Mr. Burton informed the members of the current vacancies around the state which included:

- Roanoke office - vacant rehabilitation teacher position
- Fairfax office- vacant rehabilitation teacher, orientation & mobility instructor, and education coordinator position
- Norfolk office – vacant orientation & mobility instructor
- Richmond office – vacant rehabilitation teacher
- Headquarters – deaf-blind program director

Mr. Burton noted the agency will experience another vacancy, a rehabilitation counselor position in the Norfolk office. Mr. Edd Conner will be retiring after 36 years of service. The agency will be able to fill the position since it is federally funded. He stated that the rehabilitation center had vacant positions for a braille instructor, currently recruiting; a vocational evaluator/counselor position, orientation & mobility position, licensed practical nurse, and an assistant director position will be posted in the near future.

Mr. Burton reported that a new orientation and mobility specialist began employment at the rehabilitation center on September 25. She received her O&M degree from Louisiana Tech. Ms. Lindsey has hired a new executive secretary who will begin employment on October 27.

Mr. Burton stated that on October 1, the agency implemented a new system called AWARE which is an integrated case management program. The project has been in the development stages for four years under the guidance of Ann Lynn Banton located at headquarters. He explained that the agency essentially moved from three separate systems having to do with caseload management, financial management and documentation. Now the programs are combined into one system. He stated there were no major system failures on the first day of implementation and all staff seem to be catching on to the new system.

Mr. Burton reported that a lease had been recently signed for the new Roanoke regional office. The regional office will be collocating with other state agencies which include Virginia Employment Commission, the Department of Rehabilitative Services and the Department of Social Services. The offices will be located in an old mall in Roanoke which is currently being renovated. The office will be located beside one of the Comprehensive One-Stop locations. The estimated move in date is scheduled for May 1st. The staff is looking forward to the new space.

Mr. Burton mentioned how the budget situation was affecting the agency. He noted when DBVI started in the current fiscal year; the agency was \$800,000 in the hole in the Rehabilitation Teaching/Independent Living budget. The agency had budgeted \$800,000 more than what the General Assembly had appropriated for this program. Mr. Burton is hoping to request additional funds in the 2010 General Assembly session to fill the vacant positions.

Dormitory Renovation Update: Mrs. Ampey reported that the renovation of the dorm is technically completed and open for occupancy. Staff of the Virginia Office of Protection and Advocacy (VOPA) toured the building and only had four minor items sited as accessibility issues. These included lamps located in the handicapped rooms had knobs rather than push buttons; controls on the hood vents over the stoves were not accessible due to being over four feet off the ground; and issues with the width of part of the parking lot beside the handicapped parking. New lines will need to be painted and hand rails installed on the ramp leading down from the cafeteria to the dorm. The VOPA staff said the agency did an excellent job overall.

Mrs. Ampey noted other upcoming projects in the future which included the roof replacements for the VRCBVI AA building, the recreation building, and the cafeteria. There is also a plan for the renovation of the AA building which will not begin for another 15 months. The latest project is the renovation of the VIB-Richmond plant. The plant will have to be moved to a new location during the renovation.

Endowment Fund Receipts & Expenditures: Ms. Ampey reported for the quarter ending September 30, 2008, the department accepted on behalf of the board endowment funds in the amount of \$ 4,561.53. Expenditures for the quarter ending September 30, totaled \$ 68,250.94. Expenditures for the Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired during the same period totaled \$ 50,249.60. The endowment fund investment account interest for the quarter ending September 30 was \$41,114. Current account value is \$5,374,000. Ms. Ampey stated there was a decrease of \$935,983.

Ms. Bruce thanked all the members for attending the open house and thanked Mr. Taylor for his attendance and invited him to attend other meetings after his retirement on December 1, 2008.

Other Business: Ms. Proffitt reminded board members of the need to set dates for the upcoming board meetings for 2009. Board members agreed that all board meetings would be held on the second Tuesday of the first month of each quarter at the DBVI headquarters building commencing at 1:00 p.m. Below are the selected dates:

January 13, 2009
April 14, 2009

July 14, 2009
October 13, 2009

Adjournment: There being no further business, it was moved, seconded and passed by unanimous vote to adjourn the meeting at 1:20 p.m. The next meeting will be held on January 13, 2009, at 1:00 p.m. at the DBVI headquarters building.

Date Approved: _____

Ms. Liza Bruce
Chair

Joseph A. DePhillips
Secretary