

**Board for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Richmond, Virginia Quarterly Board Meeting**

**Tuesday, January 8, 2008
APPROVED MINUTES**

Ms. Bruce called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. She asked board members, staff and guests to introduce themselves.

Members Present: Ms. Liza Bruce, Mrs. Evelyn Cabrera-Heatwole, Mr. Joe DePhillips, Mr. Ashleigh Moody, Ms. Althea Pittman, Mr. Desmond Savill, and Mrs. Judy Spears

Members Absent: None

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

Guests Present: Mrs. Squig Moore, assistant attorney general; Mrs. Maryann Belcher, human resource director

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: It was moved, seconded and passed by unanimous vote that the minutes of the October 5, 2007 meeting be approved as distributed.

Commissioner's Report: Mr. Bowman welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. He provided an update on the Governor's budget and legislative priorities. He noted the General Assembly will begin on January 9, and will be a long session concluding on March 8. The Governor's priorities include Pre-K expansion, K-12 Standards of Quality fully funded, Higher Education bond package for new construction and renovation projects primarily focused on workforce

development, retaining students, research and providing facilities for areas with demonstrated needs, such as education, engineering, nursing, and business. He also noted the Governor's emphasis on expansion of Health Care Access for the uninsured to improve accessibility and quality of care for at-risk Virginians, including the affordable health care pilot project to provide a state health insurance subsidy of up to \$75 per month for eligible individuals to be matched by the individual and the employer. Commissioner Bowman further noted the Governor's budget priority for improving community emergency mental health services and the additional resources he included in the proposed budget for Community Services Boards expansion and additional case managers and clinicians to improve access to outpatient mental health services and foster care. He noted that the focus on mental health reform was primarily a result of the Virginia Tech tragedy. Mr. Bowman also mentioned the Governor's priority for improving foster care services where Virginia ranks at the bottom of the 50 states for foster care services.

Mr. Bowman stated that the six positions eliminated as a part of the five percent agency budget reduction in 2008 were continued in to the biennial budget. These positions were to expand services for seniors.

Mr. Bowman gave a legislative update and noted that DBVI did not have any agency initiated legislation for this session. He distributed a copy of House Joint Resolution 80 (Del. Marshall) to the members and explained that the resolution was introduced by Delegate Marshall to request that the Governor consolidate DBVI, DRS, and DDHH. The Board reviewed the resolution and discussed it noting that the wording is related to a recommendation from the Governor's Commission on Efficiency and Effectiveness from 2002. He also distributed to the Board copies of a DPB fiscal impact statement from 2005, a summary of the administrative consolidation of the Disability Services Agencies completed in 1995, and a report from the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University completed in 1998. Mr. DePhillips discussed his very serious concern about the potential for degradation of services for blind and visually impaired constituents of the Commonwealth of Virginia if the services offered by DBVI were to be consolidated with other agencies. Mr. DePhillips proposed a resolution for the board's consideration.

Mr. DePhillips noted his concern for the board as well as for blind and visually impaired constituents of the Commonwealth of Virginia. Mr. DePhillips proposed a resolution for the board's consideration.

MOTION: Mr. DePhillips moved that the Board for the Blind and Vision Impaired continue to support quality services for the blind and vision impaired citizens of the Commonwealth – services that are unique and different from those provided to those with other disabilities – and that are provided best by a separate state agency for the blind that focuses on the unique alternate skills that blind people need to acquire in order to be independent. It is further moved that the Board oppose attempts to consolidate the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired with another agency or agencies.

Motion Approved: Mrs. Pittman seconded the motion. The Board discussed the motion. At the conclusion of discussion, the motion passed by unanimous vote.

Mr. DePhillips suggested that the Board send the approved motion to the Governor as well as to Mr. Marshall and appropriate committee members and both consumer groups i.e., ACB and NFB. Ms. Bruce also suggested sending a letter to the DRS and DDHH board chairs.

Mr. Bowman explained the difference in the current resolution versus the bill introduced in 2005. The bill introduced in 2005 actually recommended changes in the code. The current resolution does not make specific changes to the Code of Virginia that authorizes the three agencies – DBVI, DRS, DDHH.

Mr. Bowman informed the board of the vocational rehabilitation public meetings that were conducted in the fall in Virginia Beach, Arlington, Bristol, Richmond and Roanoke. The purpose of the meetings is to collect information, ideas and suggestions from consumers regarding the VR program and the agency's state plan for vocational rehabilitation services.

The Commissioner reported on the "Family Day" event at the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired conducted. Approximately 50 students and their family members participated in the event.

Mr. Bowman updated the members on the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Center (NIMAC) and that a major obstacle preventing Virginia from accessing NIMAC files for the production of textbooks in alternate media had been removed. He expressed hope that Virginia will be able to now access the files which will improve the agency's ability to make sure that blind students receive their Braille textbooks on time. Because of the previous obstacle in accessing NIMAC files, the Department of Education, George Mason University and DBVI had collaborated to establish the Virginia Assistive Instructional Materials system. Gaining access to the NIMAC files will complement the Virginia system.

He reported the agency had begun a braille production unit in conjunction with the Department of Correctional Enterprises. In November, thirteen women at the Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women began taking a class in Braille transcription which will lead to certification for those successfully completing the course and will improve braille services in Virginia. In addition to improving Braille transcription services in Virginia, the braille production unit will provide the women with a productive skill they can use to generate income upon their release from prison.

Mr. Bowman recently received three resolutions from National Federation of the Blind of Virginia which resulted from their fall meeting. The resolutions encouraged the department to restore the six positions eliminated as a result of the agency's budget reduction plan, timeliness of services and the future of the Randolph Sheppard Vending Program. He noted that Department staff are working to address the timeliness of service and the Randolph-Sheppard Vending Program concerns that NFB raised.

Virginia Industries for the Blind Report: Mr. Berrang reported since the last meeting the President's Committee for Purchase from the People who are Blind had added the VIB base supply store at Fort Belvoir and Defense Supply Center in Richmond to the procurement list. VIB is currently negotiating a contract with Fort Belvoir with the assistance of Squig Moore.

Mr. Berrang noted that he is currently working with the National Industries for the Blind and hope to get a new product called the "ready tag". The ready tag is used on documents to indicate where signatures are required. NIB is willing to give the contract to VIB if the procurement is placed on the federal procurement list. The production of the ready tag will create more jobs for visually impaired individuals.

Mr. Berrang reported that the Pentagon store will be moving again and will be in a new location within the next two weeks. Mr. Meehan is currently at the Pentagon finalizing the store's renovation. The staff have received excellent cooperation from the Pentagon and NIB personnel. Mr. Berrang noted that Theresa Kirkdoffer, fiscal director resigned effective January 11th. He noted the agency is currently searching for a site to move the Richmond plant during the upcoming renovation. Mr. Berrang circulated three documents for the members' review depicting the layout of the rented space for the Richmond plant.

Division for Services Report: Mr. Burton provided an update on personnel actions around the state. The Bristol office had an orientation and mobility specialist position begin November 26, 2007. The person hired for the position has over 30 years of experience. The individual worked for the rehabilitation center from 1974 - 76. Currently have an opening for a rehabilitation teacher in the Roanoke office. The incumbent in that position left to take a position as a teacher of the visually impaired in a local school division. In Staunton a new rehabilitation teacher began in November, 2007. She had previous experience as a rehabilitation teacher at the Syracuse Association for the Blind. In the Fairfax office, Julie Allen, VR counselor resigned in November. In the Richmond regional office there are no openings however, there two rehabilitation teachers who are currently out on short term disability. One was involved in a very serious automobile accident and the other individual had major surgery and will be out for period of time. He also noted that the Richmond office is getting assistance from the Fairfax and Roanoke offices to pick up some of the outlining territories served by that office. This action will enable the agency to maintain the delivery of services to the customers in those areas. The Norfolk manager has hired two new vocational rehabilitation counselors. One individual began in November, 2007. She is visually impaired and comes from California. Mr. Burton noted that the agency is recruiting heavily around the country. The second new counselor will begin later in January. He is a blind individual who attended the Louisiana School for the Blind. He has been involved in a number positions, including a mobility instructor at the Colorado Center for the Blind in Denver, and is currently finishing his degree in rehabilitation counseling from the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. There is still a vacant orientation and mobility position in Norfolk. The manager has completed interviews and has offered the position to an individual currently employed in Florida. Mr. Burton

stated there are currently six positions open at the rehabilitation center which include two orientation and mobility instructor positions, two vocational rehabilitation counselors, a vocational evaluator, and assistant director for instruction position. The job description for the orientation and mobility specialist has been updated and we will begin an additional recruitment period for the position. The agency had recruited in the summer and fall of 2007, went through the interview process, and determined that the individuals who applied did not meet the criteria. Mr. Burton mentioned that Susan Payne, program director for vocational rehabilitation services, is currently working two hours a day at the rehabilitation center as a rehabilitation counselor.

Mr. Burton noted that the rehabilitation counselors met in November at the Library and Resource Center. The major focus was on the Randolph Sheppard Vending Program. He mentioned the agency had recently updated policies and procedures for referring, evaluating and training individuals going into the program. Part of the program involved observing three different vending operations in downtown Richmond. The new counselors found the program to be very interesting.

In December, the Education Services program conducted the annual Workshop on Blindness and Visual Impairments which was held at the Holiday Inn Koger Center South in Richmond. There were over 150 attendees; most of which were vision teachers from around the state. The workshop provided an excellent opportunity for the teachers to learn about the latest developments and trends in the area of education. Mr. Burton noted the agency highlighted other DBVI programs by having display tables for the rehabilitation teaching program, vocational rehabilitation program, the rehabilitation center and the rehabilitation engineering program. Staff noted a lot of interest from the vision teachers of what the agency had to offer and also helped to generate future referrals for students.

Mr. Burton mentioned that two regional offices will be moving in the near future. The Staunton office will need to be out of their current space by May 31. He stated that the Virginia Employment Commission office in Fishersville will be losing staff and the Staunton office may be able to move into the vacant space. The Roanoke regional office will be co-locating in the near future but a date when the move will take place has not been established.

Endowment Fund Receipts & Expenditures: Mrs. Ampey reported for the quarter ending December 31, 2007, the department accepted on behalf of the board, endowment funds in the amount of \$ 3,856.63. One donation was made payable to the rehabilitation center in the amount of \$100. Expenditures for the quarter ending December 31, totaled \$56,232.39. Mrs. Ampey noted that the bulk of expenditures were payments made to Easter Seals of Virginia for Super Summer Camp in the amount of \$36,000. As of November 30, the endowment fund account market value was \$7,002,464.20. Mrs. Ampey noted that the Bank of America representatives will be providing a presentation on the endowment fund account at the April meeting.

Dormitory Renovation Update: Mrs. Ampey stated that the dormitory renovations are moving along. The weather had been cooperating and the roof is coming along. She mentioned that during a meeting today items discussed included making keys, interior and exterior doors, keys and locks for doors, furniture, and mattresses from VIB. Melody Lindsey, center director, has decided that the trainees will shop for pots and pans and other small items. She stated the renovation is on schedule and looking to complete the project at the end of July. However, our goal will be the end of August. She stated the agency will need a certificate of occupancy before the move is completed.

Ms. Bruce asked Mr. Burton about the number of position down at the rehabilitation center will the agency be making any adjustments to how many referrals the center can take in. Mr. Burton stated the situation would impact on the number of referrals and previously mentioned about Mrs. Payne providing VR assistance and that one of the orientation and mobility specialist from the Richmond office is also providing services at the center twice a week.

Other Business: Ms. Bruce asked the board to consider providing support to Herb Patterson. Mr. Patterson, a retired police officer, refurbishes donated computers and makes them accessible for blind and visually impaired individuals. Ms. Bruce stated that he needs JAWS and ZoomText software to load onto the computers. After much discussion it was decided by members that a written proposal was needed prior to board approval. Mr. Moody volunteered to write up a proposal for the board's use and present it at the April meeting.

Adjournment: There being no further business, it was moved, seconded and passed by unanimous vote to adjourn the meeting at 2:30 p.m. The next meeting will be held on April 8, 2008 at 1:00 p.m. at the DBVI headquarters building.

Date Approved: _____

Ms. Liza Bruce
Chair

Mrs. Evelyn Cabrera-Heatwole
Secretary