

**Board for the Blind and Vision Impaired**  
**Quarterly Board Meeting**  
**Tuesday, April 12, 2011**  
**DBVI Headquarters Building**

**Call to Order:** Newly Appointed Chairperson Bob Dendy called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. He asked Board members and staff for introductions.

**Members Present:** Bob Dendy, Chairperson; Marc Johnson, Liza Bruce, Marsha Hester, Althea Pittman

**Staff Present:** Ray Hopkins, Commissioner (teleconference); Bob Burton, Deputy Commissioner for Services; Eva Ampey, Special Assistant to the Commissioner; and Henry Street, Administrative Staff Assistant to the Commissioner, Recorder

**Guest to include:**

Ms. Rachel Baer, Assistant Attorney General, DBVI  
Representative

Mr. Nick Morgan, Executive Director, Virginia Voice

Ms. Rebecca Emmett, Program Director, Virginia Voice

Mr. Dave Thompson, Chair of the Development Committee,  
Virginia Voice

**Comments from Ms. Baer:**

Ms. Baer was present to address two questions posed to her by Commissioner Hopkins:

- 1.) Does the Board have the ability to actively solicit funds?

The Board is granted the statute of the ability to have an institution that is allowed to accept funds. This language differs from other institutions funds throughout the code, which says that they may apply for and accept funds. In looking at this it could imply a

power to apply for grants but it is not strictly within the statute, therefore we have provided the advice that in a strict reading of the authority to apply for or to solicit funds.

2.) Does the Board have the ability to continue to give funds to non-profit or charitable organizations?

After reviewing the constitutional provision and considering the recent release from the Attorney General's office, it is the opinion that it was directed at General Assembly funds, it stated that General Assembly (GA) funds could not be directed toward purely charitable purposes. Since the Board's Institutional Funds does not contain GA funds that constitutional revision does not strictly apply. The Board is empowered to use the funds to improve services to the blind and vision impaired of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

**Agenda:** Mr. Dendy called for approval of the agenda. After discussion Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve the agenda with the addition of item *11.5 Budget*, per Eva Ampey; Mr. Johnson seconded; there was no further discussion. The motion was passed unanimously.

**Minutes:** Mr. Dendy called for approval of the minutes. After discussion Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve the minutes from the February meeting; Ms. Pittman seconded; there was no further discussion. The motion was passed unanimously.

**Comments from the Chair:**

Mr. Dendy wanted to know if there was an update on the SWAM movement to include blind and people with disabilities in this business tax status or to be included as a primary target for public organization to contract with?

The Commissioner responded to his understanding that the Department of Minority Enterprises can consider someone as a SWAM vendor based on disability. Even though there are other conditions that must be met, there have been no regulations promulgated on this issue.

Mr. Dendy asked if the Board could be kept informed of the progress of the regulation.

**ACTION ITEM:**

Eva Ampey is to remind the Commissioner to investigate any proposed regulations.

**Commissioner's Report:** The proposed increase in General Funds for our Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program that the Governor included in his budget did not survive the session. The house appropriations committee decided that that was not in order and decided to remove that funding increase. The Senate Finance Bill did not include the increase funding for FY2011 which ends June 30, 2011, but did include it for FY2012. House provision prevails, no reductions in funds and no cuts this year. The only notable change to our budget from last year is the addition of 120k for reading services. This was included in the appropriation to the Secretary of Education. This was previously lumped with funding for public broadcasting; advocates felt that it should be moved in case the General Funds to support public broadcasting were to be removed. These funds were added to DBVI budget and that we will accept it without difficulty. So it does appear that we have an increase of funding for the Library and Resource Center (LRC) and will go to radio reading services and will not impact any services going to the LRC. This is the same amount as in the previous years it just simply moved from the Secretary of Education to DBVI. This will be used for services across the state.

DBVI has received the Monitoring Report from the Rehabilitation Services Administration, and have been asked to put together a document with highlights identifying places where we might have input or involvement. That document is forthcoming.

We have provided stipends to students who were involved in summer work experiences and other work experiences but that is no longer allowed. We are encouraged to use work experiences. Research has indicated that is probably the single most significant factor in whether a person with a disability will achieve a positive employment outcome. A lot of young people who are blind are denied or not given the opportunities to gain the experience as do their peers. We are looking at other ways of addressing that. We are reassessing and working with other states to see how they are addressing that within the limits of the law.

Amendments to Individual Plans for Employment. We are clarifying that and making sure that it agrees with the code of Virginia. The question is what constitutes substantial change and what does not? Only substantial changes will require signature. On the other hand changes that are not considered substantial will require the clients consent, but not signature.

If a person is working exclusively under our Vocational Rehabilitation Grant there must be a semi- annual certification in writing that 100% of that individuals time is spent working on that grant.

The Commissioner would like to work with the Board on the monitoring cycle, and the issue of outreach. A significant recommendation from RSA was that an effort be made to reach un-served and underserved populations. We must make sure that all Virginians who need our services know about our services.

Before ending his comments Commissioner Hopkins thanked Ms. Althea Pittman for her dedication and commitment to the Board. This meeting is the last official meeting for Ms. Pittman. She has served two consecutive terms totaling eight years. Also, the Board would like to reserve the right to seek her input on future Board endeavors.

And lastly Commissioner Hopkins will get with Mr. Dendy to discuss plans for bringing together representatives and stakeholder groups from the community to talk about things that we need to be doing from DBVI related to blindness services. And to also discuss, as we go into the next biennium, what do people expect, like, dislike, need, and gaps and how do we find our niche.

Mr. Dendy wants to put on the agenda for a future meeting that there is a brainstorming session on how to get the word out about DBVI.

**Virginia Industries for the Blind:** Jim Meehan – No report.

**Division for Services Report:** Presented by Bob Burton. A fair amount of recruiting is being done for a recently vacant Rehabilitation Counselor position in the Bristol office. Currently there is a part timer in that position for now providing VR services.

The Roanoke Regional Office is recruiting for an Orientation & Mobility Specialist and a Rehabilitation Teacher. Both positions became available because of retirement.

Currently the Staunton and Norfolk Regional Offices are stable and there has been no change in personnel.

The Fairfax office is recruiting for an Orientation and Mobility Specialist. A substantial cost differential is being offered because of location, but no takers on this position yet.

The Richmond Regional Office is recruiting for an Orientation and Mobility Specialist made vacant because previous specialist is getting married and has relocated to Florida.

The Rehabilitation Center we are recruiting for two Orientation and Mobility Specialists and a Vocational Counselor/Evaluator as well. In the interim we have contracted with a part-time O&M Specialist.

Update on the newly approved Board project that was approved in February to hire development/placement specialists. The Secretary's office has signed off on the positions. So on April 1, managers began recruiting for those positions. The manager in the Roanoke office believes that he found someone for that position already and Staunton as well. Hopefully we can bring those folk on within a month or two.

There is a situation at Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) that I would like to bring to your attention. DRS has gone on to a complete order of selection. Essentially with the order of selection that gives the authority to identify the most significantly disabled individuals who are given preference for services when it is anticipated that there are not sufficient funds to serve all eligible individuals. They have closed all of their categories and are not accepting any new clients. As a result of that they have been cutting back on purchased services and cutting back on staff; this has the potential to benefit us by possibly providing us individuals with job development and placement experience who are eager to find employment.

**Endowment Funds:** Presented by Eva Ampey. Ms. Ampey reported on the Endowment Fund donations for the quarter ending March 31, 2011. Total donations equal \$5,480.00; noting the Bernie Carter Foundation's \$1,500.00 donation to the Super Summer Camp.

The expenditures for the quarter equal \$41,871.00

Mr. Dendy asked were we allowed to express our gratitude for donations.

Ms. Ampey confirmed that we are allowed to express gratitude but also wanted to inform the Board of a previous client (Thomas William Boe, who is deceased), when he passed his family placed in his obituary that donations be made to this Agency. To date we have approximately \$500 donated in memory of Mr. Boe. We thank each person who submits a donation as well as keep the family informed of who makes donations.

Mr. Dendy mentioned that he would be more than happy to sign any thank you notes for the larger donations if necessary.

**ACTION ITEM:**

Commissioner Hopkins has recommended that we afford Mr. Dendy the opportunity to sign or counter-sign any expressions of gratitude. And that we will consider the limit amount (\$500.00) that would include his signature.

Summary of Endowment Fund Balances:

March 31, 2011 - \$6,133,276.00

Change in Balance from July 2010: Difference of \$1.1 million.

Estimated annual income per U.S. Trust: \$120,000.00

**Capitol Project Update:** Presented By Eva Ampey.

The Virginia Industries for the Blind, Richmond. May 4 – 16, 2011 is the scheduled time frame for moving back into the facility. We will continue to lease the Sherwood Ave. location until the end of May.

The Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired - The renovations continue to run smoothly and are on schedule.

The Fire Alarm and Sprinkler System installation - The fire alarm system is 90% complete for the recreation building and the cafeteria; and is now in progress at the Library and Resource Center, and has not begun in the Headquarters building.

The roof replacement - Cafeteria roof replacement is in progress. The Headquarters roof is completed, inspected and approved. The work for the roof on the recreation building has not begun, nor for the stone house.

Sidewalk repairs have been completed.

The energy performance contract has been completed by TRANE. The punch list is now being addressed.

**2011-2012 Proposed Budget:** Presented By Eva Ampey.

Washington EAR requesting	\$ 10,000.00
Drivers Salaries	\$ 95,000.00
2012 Super Summer Camp	\$ 55,000.00
CapTel Services	\$ 5,000.00
Job Development Staff	<u>\$125,000.00</u>
Total Proposed Budget	<b>\$290,000.00</b>

Mr. Dendy noted that the proposed budget is equal to approximately 5% of the Endowment fund balance.

**Virginia Voice Representatives:** Nick Morgan – Executive Director, Dave Thompson – Chair of the Development Committee, Rebecca Emmett – Program Director



Mr. Dendy asked Mr. Johnson to take the lead to pose question to Virginia Voice representatives.

Question from Mr. Johnson: Is the Virginia Voice budget request an annual funding commitment?

Mr. Morgan responded that it would be nice to get into the Board's annual budget, however we will feel fortunate and grateful for just the one time funding. The purpose of the request is to obtain operating money. Some of the operating funds that we obtain from the United Way and the State have been reduced.

Question from Mr. Johnson: Will you please give us an overall preview of what the Virginia Voice does?

Mr. Morgan responded that they are an audio reading and information service for the citizens throughout Central Virginia, and also by way of our sister service in Hampton Roads and Norfolk areas, which are blind or vision impaired or have other disabilities that are unable to read conventional print for themselves. Historically this has been done by closed circuit radio using the frequency of the public radio station WCVE in Richmond and WHRO out of Norfolk. We also broadcast by way of the internet. We have always operated on a shoe string budget, and using the frequencies of these stations has been a tremendous savings. Also our service is provided through the Washington Ear which is a telephone dial up system. We use volunteers for reading (at least 100 per week) from a pool of approximately 170 volunteers.

Mr. Thompson added that Virginia Voice reaches about 1500 individuals in Central Virginia and about 1000 in the Hampton Roads/ Norfolk area. From the stand point of the development committee an annual commitment would be wonderful.

Mr. Dendy asked them how much their budget was for the upcoming years.

This year's budget is about \$350,000.00. Our funding sources have been from Corporations, Foundations, individuals, the State and the United Way; so there are a variety of resources; it is up to the Virginia Voice to raise its funds. Mr. Morgan expressed that they are grateful that this department has cooperated with their efforts during the recent General Assembly session to get the funding (\$29,000.00 ±) for the reading program moved under DBVI

for the first time. The funds were tied in with public broadcasting funds, which can be up for grabs and this way our funding is protected.

Question from Mr. Dendy: How many years has the Virginia Voice existed?

The Virginia Voice was founded in 1978 and started providing services in Roanoke before starting in Richmond because there was no outlet. We worked hard to get support from the Union Theological Seminary on Brook Road to gain access to what was then public radio station WRFK.

Currently the internet service cost for internet and streaming at minimum, cost \$20-25.00 per month. Comcast service is costly because they have to have a lot of band width for what they do.

As far as funding, we have to take charge because we are seeing support dwindling.

Mr. Morgan stated that Virginia Voice would be happy to promote the Board on its broadcasting.

Mr. Johnson thanked the Virginia Voice representatives for attending the meeting and entertaining the Board's questions. The representatives left the meeting.

The Board continued their discussion surrounding providing funding to the Virginia Voice.

The Board concluding that funding for Virginia Voice this year will be plausible; but they will not commit to annual funding support. Any continuing support would come after seeing a strong proposal and strategies in moving forward.

If we agree on a number we can include it in the budget. They have requested **\$25,000.000** which would be added to next year's budget which will place the Board's budget at **\$315,000.000**. Mr. Dendy is requesting if the Board agrees to support the Virginia Voice that we send correspondence of the expectations of the Board for any consideration for support next year or in the future. This should challenge them to continue to develop additional resources and funding streams.

**ACTION ITEM:**

Once agreed upon, Mr. Johnson will initiate the conversation with Virginia Voice of the Boards expectations.

Ms. Ampey made a point of clarification that the proposed budget will now include the Virginia Voice's request of \$25,000.000 which increases the total budget to \$315,000.00.

The Virginia Voice request will be disbursed as a onetime payment from the Board.

Mr. Johnson made a motion to approve the budget as presented by Ms. Ampey and now to include the additional figure for Virginia Voice; Ms. Bruce seconded; there was no further discussion. The motion was passed unanimously.

**ACTION ITEM:**

Mr. Johnson made a suggestion that we look at how we except proposals in the future, and take into consideration how that affects withdrawing monies from the Endowment Fund; something to consider for an **agenda item** at the next meeting.

Mr. Dendy called for other business. There was none.

In conclusion Mr. Dendy presented a Certificate of Appreciation to Althea Pittman for her outstanding performance and dedication to the Board.

Mr. Dendy shared with the Board that Alice Malbone is resigning due to health reasons.

There is a new online application nomination process for Board members. This is handled through the HHR website.

**ACTION ITEM:**

Ms. Ampey to send out nomination information to all Board members to distribute to any nominees.

With no further discussion Mr. Dendy called for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Bruce made a motion to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Johnson seconded; there was no discussion. The motion was passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:04 P.M.

**Next Quarterly meeting is July 12, 2011 at 1:00 P.M.**