

**Board for the Blind and Vision Impaired**  
**Tuesday, April 17, 2007**  
**DRAFT MINUTES**

Ms. Bruce called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.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; Mr. Jim Taylor, chief deputy commissioner; Mr. Bob Burton, deputy commissioner for services; Mrs. Eva Ampey, special assistant; Mrs. Maryann Belcher, human resource director; and Mrs. Kathy Proffitt, board recorder

**Staff Absent:** Mrs. Squig Moore, assistant attorney general

**Guest:** Melody Lindsey, rehabilitation center director

**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 to approve the January 9, 2007 minutes as distributed.

**Public Comments:** None

**Commissioner's Report:** Mr. Bowman welcomed the members to the meeting and thanked them for their attendance. He informed the members of the recent death Mr. Al Smith, former board member who passed away in March. Mr. Bowman recognized Mr. Smith for his contributions to the board during his two terms as a member of the board.

Mrs. Bruce recommended that a letter commending Mr. Smith's tenure as a member of the board be sent to his wife. All members agreed.

Mr. Bowman recommended a moment of silence in recognition of the tragedy at Virginia Tech on Monday, April 16.

Mr. Bowman introduced Eva Ampey as the new special assistant to the commissioner who replaced Bill Pega. Mrs. Ampey will also serve as board liaison. He noted that Mrs. Ampey was a previous employee of DBVI. Mr. Bowman also introduced Melody Lindsey as the new rehabilitation center director. Ms. Lindsey provided a description of her previous work experience and also updated the members on changes she has initiated at the center during her first six months of employment. She also answered questions from the board members.

Mr. Bowman invited board members to attend the Statewide Staff meeting being held at the Library and Resource Center beginning at 1:00 p.m.

Mr. Bowman noted that the General Assembly concluded the 2007 session on time this year. Seven new rehabilitation teaching positions were included in the budget for the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired. The positions will become available July 1, 2007.

Mr. Bowman stated that the proposed DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation regulations had been withdrawn and are being redeveloped. The Vocational Rehabilitation program is required by federal regulations to complete comprehensive needs assessment every three years. The purpose of the assessment is to determine what the public, recipients of services and others perceive of services provided by the agency and how to improve those services. DBVI contracted with the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Blindness and Low Vision at Mississippi State University (MSU) to develop a survey for consumers of services and former consumers to complete. The completed surveys have been received and MSU is preparing their final report. Mr. Taylor is also working on a summary to share with staff. Mr. Bowman noted that some very good information was received from the surveys results to improve services to blind consumers. He also mentioned that the vocational rehabilitation program is currently open to all categories of services and hopes to continue for the remainder of the year.

Mr. Bowman provided an update on braille and large print textbooks. The National Instructional Materials Accessibility Standards (NIMAS) was passed as part of the reauthorization of IDEA and is in effect for new textbooks. Textbook publishers are now required to provide electronic media for all new textbooks to a clearinghouse at the American Printing House for the Blind in Louisville, Kentucky. Authorized users in states will have access to the electronic files in a format that states can take the file and more easily convert the textbook to alternative media such as braille, digital text and large print. This new process to be phased in over several years is expected to speed up the process tremendously. The main objective is to make the textbooks available to the students on time at the beginning of each school year.

Mr. Bowman mentioned that the Randolph Sheppard Program is facing many challenges. The U.S. General Accountability Office (GAO) apparently has some concerns about Randolph Sheppard blind vendors' roles in managing military troop dining contracts. A blind Randolph Sheppard vendor in the DBVI program manages the Fort Lee troop dining contract. Mr. Bowman noted there is a national effort by agencies and other advocates for the program to form an alliance to educate legislators on the program and military dining contracts managed by blind vendors in the program. He mentioned that the JWOD program has sine similar challenges.

Mr. Bowman provided an update on the dormitory renovation. He stated the project will be put up for bid in the near future, and hopefully the bids will come in within the amount of available funds and construction could begin in the fall. He noted another challenge facing the center will be providing housing for the trainees during the renovation phase.

Mr. Bowman updated members on the Transition Forum held in Norfolk in March. Glen Slonneger, education services program director and Susan Payne, vocational rehabilitation program director, participated in planning of the forum. Regional office staff as well as rehab center staff attended the forum and were also presenters.

Mr. Bowman mentioned that the agency is currently planning an update to the DBVI website. He encouraged members to take a look at the website and particularly the agency strategic plan. He discussed agency's performance measures contained in the strategic plan and how the agency is graded on the measures. He also suggested to members to visit the website at [www.vaperforms.virginia.gov](http://www.vaperforms.virginia.gov) to view the agency's performance.

Mr. Bowman announced that Bob Berrang received a check on behalf of the Virginia Industries for the Blind in the amount of \$16,216 from the National Industries for the Blind. Mr. Bowman read a letter that was sent from NIB along with the check. The NIB Board of directors nominated VIB for the Employment Retention/Growth/Upward Mobility Reward Program. This program recognizes agencies who promote employment opportunities for people who are blind at NIB associated agencies. The funds will be used to further VIB's employment programs.

**Virginia Industries for the Blind Report:** Mr. Berrang reported that two blind employees died in April. Mr. Robert Williams had been with the Charlottesville plant for over thirty years and Ms. Sharon Epps was a store associate at the Pentagon since September of 2002.

He reported that VIB currently employs 102 blind individuals. The industries is currently advertising for two blind positions at Oceana, one for Shipping and Receiving and the other for a Store Associate, one position at Ft. Lee as a Store Associate, one position at the Pentagon as a Store Associate and one trainee on-site at the Norfolk Naval Base. Once these openings are filled, it will increase the blind staff in these well compensated positions by five. An undetermined number of Tax Department Court Debt Collection positions may open-up this spring. Cyndi Haskins recently filled the purchasing clerk position and Ms. Deborah Anderson has filled the open Accounts Payable clerk position.

He noted that the U.S. Department of Labor Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs Selected Virginia Industries for the Blind for a Federal Compliance Audit. VIB has several contracts with the Federal Government through NIB that have initiated the compliance requirements. VIB was asked to show compliance to 41 CFR (Code of Federal Requirements) Chapter 60 Equal Employment Opportunity, (41 CFR is over 600 pages long).

The Department of Labor estimated it should take VIB 4 & ½ hours to compile the requested information. In actuality it took a combined estimated 80 hours to gather, analyze and report the requested information. Mr. Berrang thanked the Human Resources staff for organizing the input from his staff. The resultant Compliance Review Response and thirteen attachments totaled 75 pages in length and was returned on time by certified mail.

Mr. Berrang stated that within the past three months, VIB had three safety audits performed by different agencies at our Charlottesville plant. Two of the three were at VIB's request. A few minor needs were identified and corrected immediately. Sharon Van Nam was assigned to follow up on all three and is doing so issuing reports to the various agencies on completion.

Mr. Berrang reported that VIB staff have met with UVA's housing and purchasing staff on February 23 to discuss new mattress styles, upcoming federal fire retardant specification changes, lead times and a number of other areas of interest. Following that meeting Jim Meehan provided them with other requested information on toxicity and reference contacts at universities already using new designs of various types. This was a very informative session for both UVA and VIB. Mr. Meehan and his staff have been continuing marketing efforts by meeting with college Residence Hall & Housing Directors and Correctional Center warehouse supervisors to spur orders and gain feedback on VIB mattresses.

Mr. Meehan met with the purchasing officer and assistant warden from Green Rock Correctional Center to discuss the mattress program for outfitting this new Center. He also contacted the new Center at the Pocahontas Correctional Center. As a result VIB received orders from both for 1,100 mattresses each.

Mr. Berrang reported that C.W. Hurt Contractors and VDOT have evaluated and approved the new reflective vest. VIB staff will be starting production on several varieties in the near future. The Division of Purchases and Supply will put VIB on contract as a mandated source when they are in full production. They try not to press the mandate advantage but it does provide the major benefit of letting shoppers know they have a viable quality product for them. By supplying quality product at a fair price, VIB can then establish itself as their vendor of choice. Purchasing from VIB is to the taxpayers' advantage since the employee workers who come off subsidies then become tax payers instead, a win-win for sure.

In early March VIB received final approval by the Public Works Department and Fleet Industrial Supply Center contracting for our Basic Supply Center (BSC) store renovation project at Oceana. Mr. Rymer started construction two weeks ago. Once completed this location will be a first rate clean and air conditioned facility versus the existing dirty, hot and dimly light warehouse.

After six years of follow up since receiving the Letter of Intent (LOI) from Fort Belvoir in April of 2001, VIB has been assigned a building in a good location. VIB staff will begin renovation as soon as this location is added to the procurement list. That process is lengthy and estimated to take over four months to complete. VIB is very close to having a building assigned to renovate into a BSC store. Fort Belvoir is heading towards 50,000 tenants as a result of BRAC. This should be a huge job opportunity.

Mr. Berrang stated that Mr. Don Rymer is planning to retire as early as October, 2007. Mr. Rymer has been a key staff member during his nineteen years with VIB contributing to both plants. Since 1995, he has been instrumental on renovating and opening eleven BSC stores across the Commonwealth. His background includes construction and he maintains his Class A Building license in Virginia. Mr. Rymer is certified and licensed in security, electrical, HVAC and construction. Mr. Berrang noted that VIB has over 275 years of combined experience in industry both private and public in disciplines that include engineering, manufacturing, quality assurance, marketing, production control, factory supervision, industry management, purchasing, accounting and general management.

Mr. Berrang reported through the first eight months of the state fiscal year, VIB's revenue stands slightly over fifteen million which if annualized would be slightly under twenty-one million. Expenses are running nicely under budget with 32 percent of the budgeted dollars remaining versus 25 percent required by the expense budget.

VIB staff are beta testing Centralized purchasing at Charlottesville for the Northern Virginia stores at Langley and Ft Eustis and will be testing all five Northern Virginia stores. When successful, this will free up the BSC managers to address maximizing customer service as well as reaching out to market new customers.

We are continuing to send many of our blind and sighted store employees to training classes on Supervisory skills, Customer Service skills and Writing & Grammar improvement. We plan this to be ongoing to increase their skills for future upward mobility inside or outside of VIB's operations. In addition to Belvoir, VIB was assigned a building at the Defense Supply Center-Richmond. We have been working this one since July of 2001.

We expect to shift DOD E-Mall on-line order processing from Oceana to Charlottesville as soon as our Purchasing Department is ready. This will allow drop shipping these orders directly to the internet customer thus avoiding the need for pick up or delivery from our store.

Ms. Bruce thanked Mr. Berrang for his thorough report and initiated a discussion of the summer work program. She asked if members knew of any employers that would be interested in hiring students participating in the two-week summer Transition program scheduled at the rehabilitation center. The dates of the program are August 6, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, and 16<sup>th</sup>. Members were asked to contact Ms. Bruce or Ms. Linda Broady-Myers at the Library and Resource Center, if they were interested in participating in the program.

Mrs. Bruce asked members for suggestions to provide assistance to Virginia Tech due to the tragedy that took place on April 16.

**Division for Services Report:** Mr. Burton reported on personnel actions around the state. The regional manager in the Bristol office is recruiting for an orientation & mobility specialist, Staunton manager is currently recruiting for a rehabilitation teacher and Fairfax manager is recruiting for a vocational rehabilitation counselor. A new O&M specialist has been hired in Roanoke and will begin employment in June. The recent O&M specialist hired in Richmond came from Alaska. The new pay incentive was a major reason she took the position in Richmond. Mr. Burton noted that the seven new

rehabilitation teacher positions will be deployed throughout the state in a process that best meet the needs of the agency.

**Endowment Fund Receipts and Expenditures:** Mrs. Ampey reported for the quarter ending March 31, the Department accepted on behalf of the Board, endowment donations totaling \$3,072.95. Endowment fund expenditures for the quarter ended March 31, 2007 totaled \$216,502.28. Expenditures year-to-date totaled \$311,680.45.

**Proposed Budget July 1, 2007- June 30, 2007:** Mrs. Ampey reviewed the proposed endowment fund budget as follows:

<b>Estimated Interest Income</b> (as of Feb. 28, 2007)	<b>\$ 168,873</b>
Proposed Expenses	
Washington Ear	\$ 15,000
Dreamcatchers	5,000
Paid Drivers for Rehabilitation Teachers (Includes a 4% increase)	81,120
Summer Camp	47,500
CapTel Services	<u>10,000</u>
<b>TOTAL PROPOSED BUDGET</b>	<b><u>\$158,620</u></b>
(Over)/ Under Estimated Interest Income	\$ 20,253

**Capital Projects:** Mrs. Ampey reported that the agency has two capital projects as follows:

- Renovation of the Dormitory at VRCBVI - The project will open for bids in the very near future. There is a possibility that the bids will come in over the appropriated amount for the project. Should the bids exceed the projected funds available, then DBVI will have to submit a funding request for the shortfall. A shortfall in funding will most likely delay the beginning of the project.
- Renovation of VIB Richmond Plant, Phase I - This project is in the preliminary stage whereby design plans are approximately 10 percent complete. On March 12, 2007 representatives from the architecture firm, the roofing company, DMHMRSAS, and VIB met to discuss preliminary drawings. Revised working drawings should be turned into MHMRSAS by November 9<sup>th</sup> 2007.

**Replace Roofs on three buildings at VRCBVI:** - Ms. Ampey reported that designs are 10 percent complete. DMHMRSAS capital projects representative for DBVI met with staff to review the Agency's Six Year Capital Project plan for 2008-2014. No new projects were added. Existing order of projects were prioritized by DBVI management.

Mr. DePhillips made the suggestion that in the future, funds for drivers should be included in the DBVI budget as an accommodation for blind rehabilitation teachers. Mr. Bowman stated that DBVI will reexamine the budget very closely to determine if the agency can cover it within their budget. If the agency cannot, we will then submit a budget request at the next opportunity. However, he noted action will be needed for next year.

**MOTION:** Ms. Bruce made a motion to approve funding for the CapTel project (\$10,000), Washington Ear (\$15,000), paid drivers for rehabilitation teachers (\$85,000), Dreamcatchers (\$5,000) and Super Summer Camp (\$42,000). Mr. DePhillips requested to include in the next budget cycle, state funds for drivers of visually impaired rehabilitation teachers. There being no further discussion, it was passed by unanimous vote.

**Presentation on Investments & Endowment Fund Account:** Mrs. Ampey welcomed Mr. Shawn Haney and Mr. Fred Wunderlich of Bank of America's Private Investment Section. Mr. Haney provided an overall review of the market index and distributed a copy of the current investment portfolio. Mr. Wunderlich provided an overview of the board's investments during the period ending March 30, 2007 and then opened the floor for questions.

**Election of Officers for 2005-2006:** Mrs. Bruce opened the floor for nominations for the positions of secretary, vice chair and chair.

**MOTION:** Mr. Moody nominated Mrs. Spears the position of secretary. Hearing no other nomination, closed the floor to nominations. It was moved, seconded and passed by unanimous vote that Mrs. Spears serve as secretary for the upcoming term.

**MOTION:** Mrs. Spears nominated Mrs. Evelyn Cabrera-Heatwole for the position of vice chair. Hearing no other nomination, closed the floor to nominations. It was moved, seconded and passed by unanimous vote that Mrs. Cabrera-Heatwole serve as vice chair for the upcoming term.

**MOTION:** Mrs. Spears nominated Ms. Liza Bruce for the position of chair. Hearing no other nomination, closed the floor to nominations. It was moved, seconded and passed by unanimous vote that Ms. Bruce serve as chair for the upcoming term.

**Adjournment:** There being no further business, it was moved, seconded and passed by unanimous vote to adjourn the meeting at 11:30 a.m. The next meeting will be held on July 10, 2007, at 1:00 p.m. at the DBVI headquarters building.

Date Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

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Ms. Liza Bruce  
*Chair*

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Mrs. Evelyn Cabrera-Heatwole  
*Secretary*