

Minutes
Virginia Board for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Virginia Library & Resource Center
395 Azalea Avenue, Richmond VA 23227
January 8, 2019 at 12:00 PM

Board Attendees

Ms. Bonnie Atwood; Mr. Mazen Basrawi; Mr. Paul D'Addario; Ms. Deborah Helms; Mr. Ken Jessup, *Chair*; Dr. Leo Kim; Ms. Barbara McCarthy.

Members Absent

None.

Members of the Public

None.

DBVI Staff to the Board

Ms. Jessica Collette, Staff Assistant, DBVI; Ms. Wallica Gaines, Deputy Commissioner for Administration, DBVI; Mr. Matt Koch, Deputy Commissioner for Enterprises, DBVI; Dr. Rick Mitchell, Deputy Commissioner for Services, DBVI.

Call to Order & Introductions (*Action Item*)

Chairman Ken Jessup called the meeting to order and members introduced themselves.

Working Lunch & Program Spotlight: Business and Corporate Initiatives

Cindy Roberts, Director of Business and Corporate Initiatives

Ms. Cindy Roberts informed the Board about the services provided to businesses and clients through the Business and Corporate Initiatives area of DBVI. She spoke of the services offered and gave numerous examples of successful clients and their journey to employment. Board members had the opportunity to ask questions and enter into a dialog to understand more about this service.

Consent Agenda & Minutes

Adoption of Agenda (*Action Item*)

Ms. Barbara McCarthy moved to adopt agenda as amended; Ms. Debra Helms seconded and motion passed unanimously.

Adoption of Minutes (*Action Item*)

Mr. Mazen Basrawi asked to correct the spelling of his last name in the minutes and on the website. The minutes will be edited and adopted at the next meeting.

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Public Comment

None.

Mr. Basrawi suggested having the capability to live stream the Board meetings. Ms. Wallica Gaines will add this item to the agenda for future discussion.

Ms. Debra Helms passed along a question from a client in her area in regards to the process of how to make a donation to the Agency. Ms. Gaines will discuss later in the meeting, but a document can be sent to Board members with information on how to donate. This information can also be added to the website.

Presentation: Insights into DBVI & Endowment Fund Financial History

Leo Kim, PhD and Wallica Gaines

Dr. Leo Kim began discussing the history of the endowment fund. The purpose of this is to look at historic information and to have more specific information to be able to speak to legislators or others involved in financials. Ms. Gaines mentioned that within the presentation, expenses are related to the Agency and any donations are related to the endowment fund. All of this information is public information and can be accessed online.

The amount of funds given from the Commonwealth has not kept up with needs of DBVI and the endowment fund has offset this need, but past Boards have not looked at how to change this issue through the years. Dr. Kim reviewed numbers of the population of the Commonwealth and the changes occurred during a 10-year period. Examining only the funding contributed from the Commonwealth, the amount has decreased instead of increase to cover inflation. Even with the increase proposed in the Governor's budget this year, the agency is only funded at 2009 levels counting for inflation. In the past, the endowment fund has been sustaining some of the general services and, thus, its balance has stayed at the same level since 2009.

The Chairman suggested at the September Board Meeting, hosting an Open House for Richmond-based legislators to come and tour the facilities of DBVI for them to understand the services offered. This would increase their awareness and understand the need of increased funding. Ms. Barbara McCarthy and Chairman Ken Jessup will work with the Department for the logistics of inviting these individuals.

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Members asked to add information to this presentation in regards to the expenses that the endowment fund has been used for as well as wording in regards to ownership of the report.

Reports

Commissioner's Report – *Commissioner Ray Hopkins*

In the Commissioner's absence, Ms. Gaines asked members if they had any questions about the information that was shared in regards to the Governor's budget. Dr. Kim stated that his understanding was that low vision services were not funded; Ms. Gaines confirmed. She then shared more about the requests the Agency made and which items were included in the Governor's budget.

The Board dialogued about the lack of funding for the low vision program. Mr. Basrawi made a motion that the Board supports the increase of funding for the Agency of \$228,000 for the purpose of funding of low vision services. Ms. Debra Helms seconded; motion passed unanimously. Ms. Bonnie Atwood suggested a personal story to be included with any type of resolution to the legislature.

The agency does have one bill in the GA. This is to change the definition of a "blind person" to align and use the SSA definition instead of the current definition in Code. This bill is being carried by Delegate Paul Krizek.

Endowment Fund Report – *Deputy Commissioner Wallica Gaines*

We currently do not have the December report yet, but as of November there is a \$5.6M balance, however, the account will recognize a loss due to the stock market and a larger loss will be realized in the December statement. Ms. Gaines also spoke about the issue of a fund management provider and several options were discussed as far as how the Board would like the endowment fund managed: open bid, state contract management, state treasury which would include having to sell fixed income accounts, researching more with the VRS to see how they manage funds.

Ms. Gaines addressed a previous question in regards to persons wanting to make a donation. The person can make a donation to the Agency and the Agency would need to spend it within that FY. A person has to specify that they would like to make a donation to the endowment funds, and then those funds are restricted for that purpose. Mr. Basrawi requested a list of the restricted funds under the endowment fund.

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Services Division Report – *Deputy Commissioner Rick Mitchell*

Written report submitted. Additional information follows:

Dr. Mitchell announced that Ms. Jane Ward Solomon, Director of Instruction, will be retiring March 1, 2019. She has worked with the Agency for many years and will be missed.

Enterprise Division Report – *Deputy Commissioner Matt Koch*

Due to time restraints, Mr. Koch was unable to speak about the Enterprise Division, but he will forward his written report to the Board.

Old Business

None.

Future Action Items & New Business

- Organizational Meeting, June 25, 2019, for Officers and Meeting Dates
The Board was reminded that at the June meeting, when officers are elected, the Chair must be a blind or visually impaired member. Also, looking at the month of December, the meeting will be moved to the 2nd Tuesday of that month.

Adjournment

Ms. Debra Helms motion to adjourn and Mr. Mazen Basrawi seconded.

Meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting (s): March 26, 2019
June 25, 2019