

Minutes
Virginia Board for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Virtual
September 22, 2020 at 12:00 PM

Board Attendees

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

Members Absent

None.

Members of the Public

Deborah Collard.

DBVI Staff to the Board

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

Call to Order & Welcome

Chairman Basrawi called the regular meeting to order and welcomed the members in attendance.

Program Spotlight: DBVI Communications

Jessica Collette

Ms. Jessica Collette spoke about the work that has been completed regarding communications for DBVI. Discussion took place about GovDelivery and the in-bound recorded informational system.

Business Items

Introductions

Chairman Basrawi commenced the roll call.

Consent of Agenda

Paul D’Addario moved to approve agenda; motion passed unanimously.

Consent of Minutes

Barbara McCarthy moved to approve minutes from June 2020; motion passed unanimously.

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Public Comment

None.

Agency Reports

Commissioner Hopkins presented an update regarding the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

Chairman Basrawi asked for an update regarding funding for DBVI from the Commonwealth. At this time, the extra funding has been removed from the proposed budget, and we would be operating at the same level as before.

Barbara McCarthy requested information regarding personnel. The Commonwealth has not only a hiring freeze, but also a freeze on any personnel action relating to pay. There is one exception as it refers to federal funds. Positions that are federally funded are able to be filled. In addition, a directive was sent regarding agencies to review all discretionary spending and use only what is necessary.

Accessible Voting – Commissioner Hopkins

The Commissioner spoke regarding accessible voting and information from the Department of Elections. More information can be found here: <https://www.elections.virginia.gov/casting-a-ballot/accessible-voting/>

This information will be posted on the DBVI website and the DBVI Facebook page.

Finance Committee Update – Dr. Leo Kim & Barbara McCarthy

Dr. Leo Kim and Barbara McCarthy have been communicating with Wallica Gaines and Matt Koch regarding a line of credit for VIB.

Commissioner Hopkins shared that a meeting took place with the finance committee and discussion surrounded terms of the line of credit and the legal perspective of the Board. However, DBVI's OAG Counsel retired at the end of August and this item was still unresolved. Nevertheless, the decision was made to move forward with the terms that the finance committee and DBVI penned. This will be submitted to the Office of Attorney General for their final sign off. Dr. Leo Kim shared the latest terms that have been discussed. Dr. Leo Kim moved to adopt the term sheet as recommended from the Finance Committee for a line of credit; motion passed unanimously.

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Discussion took place around the type of fund where the endowment fund is held. Currently the endowment fund is being held in a low-return fund. The Board has a couple of options for money managing companies and discussion took place. The Finance Committee will work with Wallica Gaines to go through the procurement process for a financial advising company. The goal is to have a decision for the March 2021 Board Meeting. Ken Jessup will assist the Finance Committee in this effort.

Unfinished Business

Bonnie Atwood asked for an update regarding a memorial resolution for Jim Wark. Ken Jessup reported that this would happen in the 2021 General Assembly session. He knows of one elected official, but would like to have someone from Richmond. This effort is moving forward. Bonnie Atwood and Ken Jessup will continue in conversation for this effort.

New Business

Chairman Basrawi would like to begin future meetings at 12:30 pm.

Meeting Dates

December 15, 2020; March 23, 2021; June 22, 2021.

Adjournment

Ken Jessup moved to adjourn the meeting at 2:29 pm; motion passed unanimously.

Next Meeting: December 15, 2020

Attachment
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Reports

Agency Report – *Commissioner Ray Hopkins*

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows:

Multiple capital outlay projects are going forward. The Stone House renovations are almost fully complete. The Headquarters renovations are continuing and the pandemic did not stall process.

The Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired has reopened to in-person training as of September 14th. Regional Offices are open to the public, but appointments are required. Also, Orientation & Mobility Specialists are teaching in-person, outside with minimal physical contact.

DBVI is watching the budget as additional funding for services has been removed for DBVI in the current proposed Governor's budget. However, funding for renovations for the LRC and different projects on the Azalea Complex are still intact.

Normally a Continuing Resolution (CR) would be submitted for federal funding to get agencies through the next couple of months. The US House has put forth their proposal, but the Senate has announced that it will not entertain the House CR. Without federal funding, operational issues could occur including service operations and personnel.

Earlier this week, a completion began between DBVI employees to create the theme for the 100th year celebration. A group is working now preparing for these activities. There are two focus groups, one on communications efforts and another on engagement. Regarding these efforts, the Commissioner would like a discussion with the Board regarding this year of celebration. In December, the Commissioner would like to kick off this year of celebration. The official date is in early 2022, but due to other events happening, DBVI would like build toward the anniversary. A number of board members are interested in helping with these plans. To ensure we don't have too many board members participating in one single meeting, the Commissioner will speak with the Chairman on how to move forward.