

**Board for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Quarterly Board Meeting
Richmond, Virginia
Friday, October 5, 2007
DRAFT MINUTES**

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

Members Present: Mr. Joe DePhillips, Ms. Althea Pittman, and Mrs. Judy Spears, Mr. Ashleigh Moody and Mr. Desmond Savill

Members Absent: Ms. Liza Bruce, Mrs. Evelyn Cabrera-Heatwole

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

Guests Present: Scott Grimes, human resources services

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 June 22, 2007 meeting be approved as distributed.

Commissioner's Report: Mr. Bowman welcomed members to the meeting and thanked them for changing the meeting date to Friday. He also thanked the members for the action taken at the previous meeting to approve additional funds to keep the dorm renovation project on schedule.

Mr. Bowman noted that the Governor Kaine had announced budget reductions to meet the shortfall in State revenues in the amount of \$641 million short of forecast. The Governor's proposed budget reductions totaled over \$300 million which was a five percent budget reduction for

all state agencies. For DBVI, the reduction will be approximately \$346,000 which will be the loss of six of the seven new positions the agency had received in the last budget. Mr. Bowman stated that the agency had not recovered from the previous 15 percent reduction received in the Warner administration and prior to that a four percent reduction. However, he noted on the positive side, the agency had gained one new position without laying off any staff. He noted the agency has restrictions on state hiring and in-state and out-of-state travel. Specifically, all out-of-state and in-state travel has to be approved by the cabinet secretary. All requests for filling vacant positions have to be approved by the cabinet secretary.

In addition to the hit at the agency level, the agency will not be able to pursue previous initiatives which include state support for job placement specialists in the regional offices to assist blind persons to find work, state support for additional orientation and mobility specialist positions at the center, state support to improve library inventory system which would benefit patrons of that facility. None of the proposals will go forward due to the fiscal situation. One issue that will be proposed is transferring responsibility for state support for special education teachers of visually impaired employed by local school divisions. Currently, DBVI provides the state support and wants to transfer the responsibility to the Department of Education so they can include it in the Standards of Quality funding formula which would mean more state support to localities. The justification for the transfer is that teachers of the visually impaired are the only category of special education teachers that is not included in the standards of quality. This is a negative for the localities in providing an adequate level of financial support.

Mr. Bowman noted that the dormitory renovation is in process. He thanked the board for their support to keep the project on task. He noted that if the board had not allocated up to an additional \$500,000 for the project, the renovation would not be moving forward. Mr. Bowman stated that Ms. Ampey has been heavily involved in the project and will provide an update during her report. He also recognized Mr. Burton and Ms. Lindsey for their involvement during the transition period.

Commissioner Bowman updated the members on new initiatives that are developing with how the Library and Resource Center will produce braille and large print textbooks. One of the initiatives in the federal

Individuals with Disability Education Act included a provision to make electronic files for textbooks available to states to do a better job of providing braille and alternative media needs to kids on time. Unfortunately, due to legal language in the agreement between the national entity that was set up to administer this program called NIMAC, Virginia is unable to sign. Therefore, it does not appear that DBVI will be participating in the national program at this time. However, Virginia Department of Education is partnering with George Mason University to set up an alternative instructional center. Glen Slonneger and Barbara McCarthy have worked with DOE staff and will be meeting with George Mason University staff to further develop the Virginia system.

Mr. Bowman noted that the agency had partnered with Virginia Correctional Enterprises (VCE) to train inmates to help produce braille textbooks. VCE is the state agency that provides products and services to state agencies using prison inmate labor. Other states have trained inmates to transcribe textbooks into braille. DBVI staff have contacted VCE staff and should have a training class begin in the fall at the Fluvanna Correctional Center for Women. Mr. Bowman stated this will be a long term project but should benefit DBVI in providing textbooks in braille. He also noted one of the important projects at the Fluvanna Correctional Center will be producing tactile graphics. Tactile graphics will assist in producing maps, graphs, pictures, etc. to allow a blind student access to the same information as their sighted peers.

Mr. Bowman mentioned that one of the initiatives to be delayed due to budget restrictions was the need to upgrade the Library Patron Inventory system. The project would have cost of \$400,000. He stated that he may come before the board later to request board funding for this project.

Prior to submitting the proposals for the next biennial budget, base budgets will be level funding. Base budget submittals are due to the Department of Planning and Budget by October 15. Any new requests are due by the end of October. DBVI's one request will be to transfer the teachers' salaries support from DBVI to the Department of Education.

Mr. Bowman mentioned that once the strategic plan is approved it will be placed on the DBVI website. He also noted that the Workforce Leadership Team is working on a succession plan to include staff development activities and training to help prepare internal staff for job opportunities when they occur. He also noted on the federal funding level, DBVI has been successful in receiving reimbursement from the Social Security Administration in the amount of receiving \$500,000 and \$109,500 from RSA.

Mr. Bowman noted that the rehabilitation center conducted a successful summer transition program for youngsters. Twenty-one students (ranging in ages 15-19) participated in the program. Center staff held a reception for the students, staff and employers who participated in the program.

Mr. Savill expressed disappointment of the loss of the six rehabilitation teacher positions. He asked if the fiscal situation improves would the agency need reauthorization of those funds or would the agency keep the authorization for future use. Mr. Bowman stated that the agency does not keep the authorization and regrets the action.

MOTION: Mr. DePhillips made a motion that the board chair in conjunction with an agency staff person prepare a letter to enhance the board's capabilities of getting funding out of the DBVI venue into Department of Education for positions that warrant funding to come from that agency. Mrs. Spears seconded. There being no further discussion, it was passed by unanimous vote.

Virginia Industries for the Blind Report: Mr. Berrang informed the board members of the significant number of satisfied customers who commented on the excellent performance on quality and delivery performance of fulfilling housing needs at our universities. Mr. Byrd of Symbol mattress visited Charlottesville and complimented VIB staff on the excellent quality of VIB's mattress line. Mr. Boyd was accompanied by his well known son, Larry Byrd!

VIB currently has 101 blind employees at the plants, stores and service locations. This is expected to increase as VIB moves into 2008 but increases will be somewhat influenced by retirements at the plants.

Mr. Berrang circulated a plaque awarded to VIB from National Industries for the Blind (NIB) for blind upward mobility.

He noted that staff is preparing to move the store at the Pentagon to a new location due to the continuing renovation. The new location is expected to be permanent. Marketing efforts have started to communicate the move to the present customers so that hopefully they will continue to shop the store after the move.

Efforts started in 2001 to open Base Supply Center (BSC) stores at the Defense Supply Center-Richmond and Fort Belvoir are now on a fast track with both expected to open in the first half of 2008.

On August 29 VIB staff held a grand reopening ceremony of the renovated Oceans BSC store; several photos of the day's events and renovated store were circulated.

The three year contract at Fort Eustis ended September 3 and has been renewed to 2020. The service the facility has been well accepted as evidenced by the rare extension beyond three years.

All the Store point-of-sale (POS) equipment has been updated with the exception of the Pentagon. The Pentagon will be updated as they move to the new location in December. The new POS equipment allows for the usage of modified touch screen and speech programs such as Jaws and Zoom Text or combinations of both.

Teresa Kirkdoffer and her fiscal staff have implemented the process to pay invoices under \$5,000 via the credit card.

Fiscal is also pursuing implementing document imaging which will eliminate huge paper files while greatly increasing our capability to retrieve fiscal and purchasing files as needed.

In November, Jim Meehan will be attending the annual NIB training conference where the blind employees of the year (EOY) from their 88

affiliates are honored. This year, Diane Hawks will be present as VIB's EOY along with her companion Patsy Belew.

VIB's new line of reflective vests is being well received by VDOT and private industry and production is expected to ramp up significantly in 2008. The vests will soon be added to the state contracts.

Division for Services Report: Mr. Burton provided an update of personnel actions around the state. In the Bristol office a new rehabilitation teacher was hired. This position was one of the seven positions the agency did not have to give back. The individual is a previous employee of the agency. In the Roanoke office, the O&M position was recently filled by an individual from Missouri. In the Staunton office, a rehabilitation teaching position still remains open since March. The manager is planning to conduct interviews in the near future. Mr. Burton noted the problem that continues is a shallow applicant pool. Mr. Bowman reminded the board members that the sign-on bonus which the board had previously approved has had an impact on attracting individuals who might not otherwise consider employment with DBVI. Mr. Burton noted that in the Fairfax office, a new rehabilitation counselor began employment in September. She has a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from Bowling Green University and this is her first place of employment. She is highly qualified and also totally blind. The manager in the Richmond office recently hired a rehabilitation counselor. The individual was a counselor in the Norfolk office and transferred to Richmond. The manager in Norfolk made an offer to an individual and she will begin employment on November 1 and she is also visually impaired. The individual will be moving from California. The Norfolk manager just posted a rehabilitation counselor position and is still recruiting for an O&M position that has been vacant for five months. Mr. Burton reported on recent resignations at the rehabilitation center. Mrs. Gail Kinder, who has been employed at the center since 1971, will be retiring at the end of November. Commissioner Bowman and Melody Lindsey, center director, will be reviewing the position to determine how the agency can best utilize it. Mr. Burton noted that an orientation & mobility specialist will be leaving in November and will be taking a position at the Veterans Administration (VA). This is the third person that has left DBVI to go to the VA within a couple of years. Mr. Burton

stated that the VA pays \$15,000 more than the state. Mr. Bowman noted that the state is not competitive with the federal government.

Mr. Burton provided an update on office relocations. The Norfolk office moved effective September 1. Unfortunately, they moved before phones and computer lines were installed, and before the furniture was delivered. Many of the staff members are working from their homes. The furniture is scheduled to be delivered on October 16. The Roanoke and Staunton offices will be in the process of moving in the near future. The Roanoke will be co-locating with several other state agencies. The Staunton office is housed in an old dormitory located at the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind in Staunton. With the consolidation of the two schools in Hampton and Staunton, they have written a letter indicating the need of the dorm space. DBVI has until May 31, 2008 to find another location. DBVI staff are currently working with the Division of Real Estate Services for potential office space for Staunton.

Mr. Burton reported on a positive note, that at the end of the Federal fiscal year, the vocational rehabilitation program's goal for last year was to close 187 customers in employment status. However, the program closed 197 which was five percent over the goal. All indications are that the agency will pass the standards and indicators that are provided by RSA to evaluate our program. Mr. Burton also noted that the agency is less than a year away from implementing the new case management system which will go on-line effective October 1, 2008. Staff are currently working on the training plan, train the trainer program, and finally the one-month pilot study in the Roanoke office. Mr. Burton stated that the new program will be an excellent management tool for field staff.

Endowment Fund Receipts & Expenditures: Ms. Ampey reported for the quarter ending September 30, 2007, the department accepted on behalf of the board endowment funds in the amount of \$ 1,949.25. Expenditures for the quarter ending September 30, totaled \$ 28,444.57. Expenditures for the Rehabilitation Center for the blind and vision Impaired during the same quarters totaled \$1,177.35.

Ms. Ampey reminded the board that Glen Slonneger, program director for education services, will be requesting support for the Super Summer Camp in 2008. She noted that the 2007 camp had 40 campers and two

counselors in training. Mr. Slonneger would like to have this item on the agenda at the next meeting. Mr. Bowman stated in prior years the department has asked the board in the fall if the members intend to support the camp to enable Mr. Slonneger to begin the planning process. The department does not have to funds to pay for camp. The board does intend to fund the camp in 2008.

Dormitory Renovation Update: Mrs. Ampey reported that the demolition of the dormitory building was complete. Currently, the contractor, J M Bell, is in the process of excavating and pouring concrete footings for the new facility. She noted that some unexpected underground wiring issues with Virginia Dominion Power will cause the Azalea Avenue complex to close for a day so that Dominion Virginia Power can cut off power and complete the work. The projected finish date is June 16, 2008.

Mrs. Ampey noted that she is continuing to work out details in transportation and meals for clients at the Extended Stay Deluxe hotel. The accommodations for the students will be very comfortable, providing each student with a sizeable room with a dining area, kitchen, queen size bed, television, phone, computer access and a bathroom for each client. The hotel has on-site laundry facilities, a common lounge area and an outdoor swimming pool and exercise room. There has been positive feedback from the Extended Stay Deluxe Hotel Area Operations Manager.

Mrs. Ampey noted that DBVI has been instructed by Mental Health & Mental Retardation Substance Abuse Services (MHMRSAS) project director to spend down the Virginia Public Building Authority bond funds before we tap into the Endowment Funds that the board has previous approved for the project. The project is expected to be completed by the end of the state fiscal year and the Endowment funds needed should be expended closer to the end of the project. Funds remain in the Bank of America investment account until the board has a need to spend the funds.

Other Business: Ms. Pittman reminded board members of the need to set dates for the upcoming board meetings for 2008. Board members agreed that all board meetings would be held on the second Tuesday of

the first month of each quarter at the DBVI headquarters building commencing at 1:00 p.m. Below are the selected dates:

January 8, 2008
April 8, 2008

July 8, 2008
October 7, 2008

Adjournment: There being no further business, it was moved, seconded and passed by unanimous vote to adjourn the meeting at 2:20 p.m. The next meeting will be held on January 8, 2008, at 1:00 p.m. at the DBVI headquarters building.

Date Approved: _____

Ms. Lisa Bruce
Chair

Ms. Evelyn Heatwole
Secretary