

**APPROVED MINUTES**  
**Virginia Board for the Blind and Vision Impaired**  
**Quarterly Board Meeting**  
**401 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, VA**  
**June 24, 2025**  
**11:00 am – 2:00 pm**

**Board Members in Attendance**

Joseph Ashley-Vice Chair, Robert Bartolotta-Secretary, Paul D’Addario-Chair, Michael Kasey, Mazen Basrawi, Kathryn Campbell, Tina Egge

**Public in Attendance**

Antoine Craig, Blind Soccer Nation  
Chris Christie  
Emily Kudron, ENDependence Center of NOVA  
Joe Orozco, NFB  
Laura Kim, ENDependence Center of NOVA  
Louis Boyle, Access Virginia

Nick Farano, Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington  
Sandy Halverson, NFB  
Tara Aziz, Prevention of Blindness Society of Metropolitan Washington  
Tim Fuchs, ENDependence Center of NOVA  
Tracy Soforenko, NFB  
Tracy van Marcke, Virginia Voice

**DBVI Staff Attendance**

Rebecca Askew, Senior Policy Analyst; Donna Cox, Library and Resource Center Director; Wallica Gaines, Deputy Commissioner, Administration; Kathy Malone, Deputy Commissioner for Services; Maggie Mills, Executive Assistant to Commissioner; Rick Mitchell, Commissioner; Elizabeth Spiers, Program Director, DeafBlind Services; Ashley West, Executive Assistant to Deputy Commissioners

**Call to Order & Welcome**

Chair D’Addario called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. A roundtable of introductions was conducted. A quorum was met.

**Business Items**

**Consent of Agenda**

Mr. Kasey moved to adopt the agenda as presented. Dr. Ashley seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

**Consent of June 13, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

Dr. Ashley moved to approve the Minutes as presented. Mr. Kasey seconded the motion. Mr. Bartolotta abstained as he was not present for a good part of the June 13, 2025, Board Meeting. The Minutes were approved with a majority vote.

## **Public Comment**

None

## **Endowment Grant Application Presentations/Q&A**

Chair D'Addario reviewed the grant funding process. The total amount of all grants to be awarded in 2025, based on DBVI Board's spending policy, is \$240,000. The total amount of funding requested by the below entities was \$465,667.63.

The Board invited each entity to give a three-minute presentation on their initiative followed by Q&A.

National Federation of the Blind of Virginia – Silver BELLS  
Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired – Super Summer Camp  
Virginia Association of the DeafBlind – 2025 DeafBlind Camp of Virginia  
Virginia Voice – Integration of Technology with the Human Narrative for Best Practices  
Blind Soccer Nation – Everyone Can Play and Learn Program  
ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia – Digital Inclusion Virginia  
Access Virginia – Arts for All Day Program  
Prevention of Blindness Society of Metro Washington – Low Vision Support Services  
The Community Outreach Coalition – Educational Access

Questions asked to the applicants included, if the Board only granted partial funding of their grant request, where would the applicant receive additional funds, or how would the outcome of their initiative be affected if additional funds were not available?

## **Discussion/Vote Endowment Grant Applications**

*Some Board members questioned why Super Summer Camp and the DeafBlind Camp, both activities of DBVI, are not funded through the normal budget process. Commissioner Mitchell reported that these activities have never been in the budget. They would need to be a line item under the jurisdiction of DBVI. If the Decision Package is not approved, DBVI will not have the funds for the camps next year. It was recommended that this topic be discussed at future Board Meetings.*

*Mr. Bartolotta recommended the grant application be reviewed and clarified by additional instructions and eligibility. It was agreed to discuss this at a future Board Meeting.*

The Board members each proposed funding amounts for each initiative.

Mr. Kasey moved to approve the proposed grant funding. Mr. Basrawi seconded the motion. The motion was passed unanimously, and the grant proposal was officially approved.

The following entities were awarded:

National Federation of the Blind of Virginia – Silver BELLS - \$63,000  
Dept for the Blind and Vision Impaired – Super Summer Camp - \$63,000  
VA Association of the DeafBlind – 2025 DeafBlind Camp of Virginia - \$15,540  
Virginia Voice – Integration of Technology/Human Narrative for Best Practices - \$37,500  
Blind Soccer Nation – Everyone Can Play and Learn Program - \$25,000  
ENDependence Center of Northern Virginia – Digital Inclusion Virginia - \$30,000  
Access Virginia – Arts for All Day Program - \$5,000  
Prevention of Blindness Society/Metro Washington – LV Support Services - \$0.00  
The Community Outreach Coalition – Educational Access - \$0.00

Total amount of grants awarded was \$239,040.

## **New Business**

### **Election of 2025-2026 Board Officers**

Dr. Ashley nominated Paul D’Addario for the position of Board Chair. Mr. D’Addario accepted the nomination. With no further nominations, Mr. Kasey declared Paul D’Addario elected by unanimous consent.

Ms. Egge nominated Dr. Ashley for the position of Board Vice Chair. Dr. Ashley accepted the nomination. With no further nominations, Mr. Kasey declared Dr. Ashley elected by unanimous consent.

Dr. Ashley nominated Rob Bartolotta for the position of Secretary. Mr. Bartolotta accepted the nomination. With no further nominations, Mr. Kasey declared Rob Bartolotta elected by unanimous consent, with the caveat that he has reapplied for reappointment to the Board; however, has not received confirmation of reappointment at this time.

The Chair noted this is the last meeting for Board member Mazen Basrawi, as his term expires June 30, 2025, and thanked him for his eight years of service on the Board, including serving as Chair in past years.

### **Dates for 2025-2026 Board Meetings**

September 23, 2025

December 16, 2025

March 24, 2026

June 23, 2026

## **Other Business**

Commissioner Mitchell shared that federal funding for VR Programs and the Older Blind Grant are on solid ground currently.

Because of changes in the federal landscape, DBVI has made a few changes for individuals in federal employment or working for a federal contractor. DBVI is waiving the cost of participation. This is to help individuals who may need retraining or other services. They can receive services even if they are still employed. The Governor has a website called Virginia Has Jobs as a resource for those who may become unemployed. There are many job opportunities in Virginia.

## **Adjourn**

Mr. Basrawi moved to adjourn. Dr. Ashley seconded the motion. The Chair declared the meeting adjourned hearing no objection