

Board for the Blind and Vision Impaired
Quarterly Board Meeting
Richmond, Virginia
Friday, June 22, 2007
Draft Minutes

Ms. Bruce called the meeting to order at 12:58 p.m. She asked board members, staff and guests to introduce themselves.

Members Present: Mrs. Althea Pittman, Ms. Liza Bruce, Mr. Joe DePhillips, Mr. Ashleigh Moody, and Ms. Althea Pittman

Member Absent: Mr. Evelyn Cabrera-Heatwole, Mr. Desmond Savill, Mrs. Judy Spears

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

Guests Present: Mrs. Squig Moore, assistant attorney general, Mrs. Maryann Belcher, human resources director

Adoption of Agenda: It was moved, seconded and passed by unanimous vote to adopt the April 17th agenda as distributed.

Action on Minutes of Previous Meeting: It was decided to table the vote until Ms. Proffitt reviewed the tape of the April meeting regarding a motion made at the beginning of the April 17 meeting.

Public Comments: None

Commissioner's Report: Mr. Bowman thanked members for being flexible to attend the meeting in June rather than in July. He noted the purpose of the meeting was to approve additional funding for the dorm renovation project at the rehabilitation center.

The commissioner provided an update on the issues impacting the agency on a national level which included the Talking book program. The House Appropriations bill reduced funding for the program from \$19,000,000 to \$7,500,000. He stated the Senate did not fully fund the talking book program and included only \$12,500,000 for the digital talking book program. There are currently 9,300 users of the program in the Commonwealth.

He updated the members on the Instructional Materials Accessibility portion of IDEA which established the National Instructional Materials Accessibility Center (NIMAC) whereby states are able to access textbook publishers' files electronically. Mr. Bowman stated that he had talked with staff at the Department of Education which is the entity that will sign the agreement and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired will be an authorized user of the agreement. The Library and Resource Center currently downloads files from the American Printing House. States are required to sign a standard agreement which includes an indemnification clause that the Commonwealth of Virginia would hold NIMAC harmless.

He provided an update on the General Accountability Office (GAO) study of the Randolph Sheppard Vending Program nationally. Particular interest is in the military troop dining contracts. An agreement was met by a consortium of organizations know as the Blind Entrepreneur Alliance (BEA). National Council of State Agencies for the Blind, Blind Merchants Association, National Federation of the Blind, American Council of the Blind, and the Randolph Sheppard Vendors of America program formed an alliance to address mutual concerns.

Mr. Bowman stated no action has occurred on the Reauthorization of the Rehabilitation Act. Mr. Bowman noted that the agency conducted a comprehensive needs assessment for the vocational rehabilitation program which is required at least every three years. DBVI contracted with the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Low Vision at Mississippi State University to assist in the completion of the comprehensive needs assessment. He provided highlights of the study. A print copy or electronic copy was made available to the members.

During the summer and fall, agency heads will be providing input to the Secretary's and Governor's office on the development of the next biennial budget. Any requests must include justification in terms of performance outcomes. He stated that one of the issues the agency has tried to do within the past the 10 years, is to transfer funding for the state reimbursement to local school divisions for a portion of the salary for special education teachers for visually impaired children. Other issues to discuss with the secretary is a new library tracking system for the Library and Resource Center and job placement specialist positions in the regional offices.

Commissioner Bowman mentioned that the Department of Education conducted public meetings in Hampton and Staunton to inform the public of the status of consolidating the Virginia Schools for the Deaf and Blind. The meeting in Hampton was held on June 18 and Staunton meeting was held on June 19.

Mrs. Bruce suggested to the board members a letter be sent to U.S. representatives in Washington, DC in support of the new talking book program. Members discussed the

issue and were in favor of sending a letter. Approximately, 9,300 Virginians use the talking book program.

MOTION: Mr. DePhillips made a motion that a letter be written on behalf of the board to the Virginia Delegation in support of increased funding for the talking book program. Ms. Pittman seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, it was passed by unanimous vote.

Virginia Industries for the Blind Report: Mr. Berrang reported that the law for minimum wage has increased and becomes effective July 24. However, the law has no impact on VIB at this time but VIB has restructured their wage scale to cover the full three year impact of the law. VIB currently has 102 blind employees with 11 open requests for additional positions. The breakdown shows one in services, one in the plants and nine in the stores. The plants employ 54 of the 102 which is 53 percent of the total employees who are blind; headquarters has a purchasing clerk who is blind, in the stores have 20 employees or 20 percent of the total of 102; in services 27 or 27 percent. He stated that the May year-to-date sales were approximately \$19,000,000, plants \$4,000,000 or about 24 percent of sales; stores \$13,000,000 or about 70 percent of the sales, and services \$1,000,000 which represented only six percent of the sales but accounted for 27 percent of the very good jobs. He noted new opportunities which included moving forward to place a base supply store at the Defense Supply Center in Richmond and at Fort Belvoir. He reported that the Pentagon store will be relocated for the third time due to renovation of the building. The area designated in the Pentagon is in the worst part of the building to serve customers. Mr. Berrang stated that staff is currently trying to find someone who likes the area to be able to make a trade.

Mr. Berrang stated that the stores in total are down this year and will not make its sales targets at the end of June. The reason is due to the war in Iraq. The Pentagon has pulled credit cards from many services, particularly at the Army bases. He noted that the renovation of the store at the Oceana Naval Air Station is nearing completion and that Commissioner Bowman recently visited the site. The grand reopening ceremony will be in late August.

Mr. Berrang updated the board on the VIB accounts payable. They process over 950 to 1,000 invoices per month and 99 percent are processed on time. Prompt pay requires 95 percent processed on time. Mr. Berrang also mentioned that his staff is currently working on document imaging which will reduce paper copying.

Mr. Berrang reported that VIB has 13 different mattress designs available at the Charlottesville facility that are produced on a regular basis. He noted that the federal fire standard for retardancy has been significantly strengthened and will become effective across the country on July 1. All of VIB's mattress designs have been certified and the

fire marshal stated that VIB is way ahead of anyone else in the Commonwealth on meeting the fire retardancy requirement.

He noted that the reflective vests which were recently shown to board members, is moving forward. VIB board member, Bill Mustang, CEO of CW Ernest Construction in Charlottesville and his safety staff have evaluated the vest and recently placed the first orders.

Mr. Berrang announced that Mike Hughes will begin employment at VIB-Richmond on July 2 as a supervisor. Rick Bohrer is scheduled for surgery in three months and Mr. Hughes will be of great assistance during his absence.

Mr. Berrang requested board approval for reappointment of Maryann Belcher, Liza Bruce, Charlie Peters and Cookie Scott to the VIB Board.

MOTION: Mr. DePhillips made a motion to reappoint the above-mentioned members to the Virginia Industries for the Blind Board. Ms. Althea Pittman seconded. There being no further discussion, it was passed by unanimous vote.

Division for Services Report: Mr. Burton updated the board on recent personnel issues around the state. Currently have seven rehabilitation teacher positions for the older blind grant. One position each located in Richmond, Roanoke and Staunton; and two in Bristol. The position in Staunton will serve deafblind individuals. Currently recruiting these positions effective July 1, 2007. Mr. Burton also noted that the applicant pool for trained rehabilitation teachers is small. Bristol manager interviewed for an O&M position; an individual was selected and will begin employment in the fall. The individual has over 30 years of experience. Roanoke office will have new O&M specialist starting on July 2. The individual is from Missouri. Staunton office has a vacant rehabilitation teacher position since February. Fairfax is conducting second interviews for a rehabilitation counselor position open since October, 2006. Tim Brown, regional manager, has been serving as counselor and his office is leading in 26 closures this year. Richmond office VR counselor left and took a position with the Veteran Administration. Rich Sorey, manager in Norfolk offered a VR counselor position to a visually impaired female from Winston-Salem. Currently there are two vacant positions at the rehabilitation center for a counselor and orientation and mobility instructor. Mr. Burton noted that the agency is currently looking for new space for the Norfolk and Roanoke offices. The agency has been looking since March, 2006 for office space for Norfolk. The new location offers an open floor plan. Roanoke office will co-locate with other state offices. He noted that the VR program had 22 additional successful closures from last year. The integrated case management (ICM) system is scheduled to do a pilot program in Roanoke in 2008 and all offices will be on by October, 2008.

Endowment Fund Receipts & Expenditures: Ms. Ampey reported for the quarter ending June 30, 2007, the department accepted on behalf of the board, donations in the amount of \$ 1,608.25. Endowment fund expenditures as of June 30, 2007, were \$17,505.97. Ms. Ampey also provided an update on the dorm renovations, parking lot at DBVI headquarters building, and duct cleaning. She also stated that the 2008-2010 Capital Outlay write up was submitted to the Department of Planning and Budget. She provided an update on the renovation of VRCBVI Administration & Activities Building as well as the June 11th site plan meeting with Wiley & Wilson regarding the renovations project for the VIB-Richmond facility.

Update on VRCBVI Dorm Renovations: Ms. Ampey reviewed the cost reduction summary and noted that a letter had recently been submitted to the Bureau of Capital Outlay Management (BCOM) requesting authority to negotiate.

Ms. Ampey stated that the bids for the dorm renovation project had exceeded funds authorized for the project. She had attended a meeting with the MHMRSAS representative, architect and builder regarding the cost reduction of \$192,400 from the actual bid. Mr. Bowman also provided a background summary of the dorm renovation project.

MOTION: Mr. DePhillips made a motion for approval to invade the principle of the endowment fund of up to \$500,000 for the dorm renovation project. Mrs. Pittman seconded the motion. There being no further discussion, it was passed by unanimous vote.

Adjournment: There being no further business, it was moved, seconded and passed by unanimous vote to adjourn the meeting at 2:45 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Friday, October 5, 2007, at 1:00 p.m. at the DBVI headquarters building.

Date Approved: _____

Ms. Liza Bruce
Chair

Mrs. Evelyn Cabrera-Heatwole
Secretary