

TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
BOARD GENERAL MEETING MINUTES
February 6, 2026

Call to Order

Lee Sonnenberg, Board President called the February 6, 2026 Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Board of Trustees meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.

Pledge of Allegiance and Texas Pledge

TSBVI students led the recital of the pledge of allegiance and the Texas pledge.

Introduction of Board Members and Audience

Board members present were Lee Sonnenberg, Julie Prause, Brenda Lee, Belinda Rudinger, Beth Jones, Ernest Worthington, and Hillary Rogriguez. Dan Brown was present via Zoom.

Audience members present were Emily Coleman, Superintendent; Miles Fain, Principal; Alex Arguello, Head of Community Engagement; Angela Wolf, Curriculum Director; Matt Schultz, Residential Director; Laura Wofford, Assistant Residential Director; Jenny Wells, General Counsel; Marlo Kibbler, HR Director; Erica Towell, EXIT Program; G'Nell Price, Assistant Principal; Scott Brackett, IR Director; Tad Doezema, Assistant Principal; Erica Cairns, Outreach Director; Saffron Burnett, Teacher; Ann Du, CFO; Jenelle Racher, Weekends Home; Antronette Little, Behavior Specialist; Dany Casey, Staff ASL Interpreter, Rebecca Kirsch, EXIT Program Teacher; Eliana Morales, Residential; Robert Woodruff, EXIT Program; Valerie Perwein, Special Ed Director; Hunter Gage, Residential; Brian Sobeck, Outreach; Rachel Collins, Outreach; Dr. Eden Hagelman, Short-Term Program Principal; Melanie Schacht, Outreach; and Lena Powell, Teacher.

Audience members present via Zoom were Rachel Cooper, Susan Houghtling, Mary Shore, Miriam Miramontes, Edgenie Bellah, Courtney Forman, and the Outreach Media Team.

Recognition of TSBVI School Board Members

Ms. Coleman recognized the School's Board of Trustees for their unwavering support and dedication to TSBVI's students, families and staff. The Board was presented with student art and shirts embroidered with the school's logo.

Recognition of the 2026 TSBVI Outstanding Direct Care and Outreach Staff Members

TSBVI staff members Saffron Burnet, Rebecca Kirsch, Eliana Morales, Robert Woodruff, Antronette Little, Dr. Donna Clemens and Dany Casey were recognized for their outstanding direct care and outreach work.

Public Comments/Open Forum

There was no one who signed up for public comments.

Report from the Audit, Compliance and Management Review Committee

Ernest Worthington gave a report from the Audit, Compliance and Management Review Committee meeting.

a. Report from Garza/Gonzalez and Associates

➤ **Consideration of approval of Public Funds Investment Act Audit**

The recommendation for approval of the Public Funds Investment Act audit came from the Audit, Compliance and Management Review Committee, therefore; a second was not required. All members present voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Consideration of Approval of Minutes of December 4, 2025 Board Meeting

Brenda Lee motioned to approve the minutes of December 4, 2025 board meeting. Ernest Worthington seconded the motion. All members present voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Report from the Finance Committee

Julie Prause gave a report from the Finance Committee.

a. Consideration of approval of Investment Report

The recommendation for approval of the Investment Report came from the Finance Committee, therefore; a second was not required. All members present voted unanimously to pass the motion.

b. Consideration of approval of receipt of gifts and donations of over \$500

There were no gifts or donations of over \$500.

c. Consideration of approval of request for expenditure of gifts and donations

There were no requests for expenditure of gifts and donations.

d. Review of budget reports

➤ **Operating Budget Expenditure Report**

The benchmark for percentage of the budget expended as of December 31, 2025 was 33%. The total percentages of the budget expended were classroom instruction 36%; residential program 34%; summer and short-term programs 24%; related and support services 32%; technical assistance 34%; teacher preparation 3%; educational professional salary increases 0%; central administrative 32%; other support services 21% with the total budgets in State Treasury expended at 31%.

➤ **Legacy Revenue Budget Report**

The benchmark for Legacy Revenue as of December 31, 2025 was 33%. The total percentage of the budget received was 25%.

➤ **Legacy Operating Expenditure Budget Report**

The benchmark for the Operating Budget expended as of December 31, 2025 was 33%. The total percentage of the budget used was 33%.

e. Consideration of approval of board policies:

CDA (TSBVI) Other Revenues: Investments

There was no vote on the above policy as there were no changes made.

Report from the Program Committee

Beth Jones gave a report from the Program Committee.

**a. Consideration of approval of board policies:
FNG (TSBVI) Student Rights and Responsibilities: Student and Parent
Complaints/Grievances**

The recommendation to approve the amendment of Policy FNG (TSBVI) Student Rights and Responsibilities: Student and Parent Complaints/Grievances came from the Program Committee, therefore; a second was not required. All members present voted unanimously to pass the motion.

b. Report from Comprehensive Programs Principal

➤ **Consideration of approval of new library materials**

The recommendation to approve the new library materials came from the Program Committee, therefore; a second was not required. All members present voted unanimously to approve the motion.

➤ **Update on Physical Therapy and Occupational Therapy Services**

Ms. Jones stated that Brittney Wheeler presented the update on Physical Therapy (PT) and Occupational Therapy (OT) services. She stated that both PT and OT are considered related services. The areas of OT services addressed include fine motor skills, writing legibly, self-care, transition, assistive technology and independent living. Areas addressed by PT include fine motor skills, gross motor skills, and mobility which falls in line with orientation and mobility. Belinda Rudinger asked how TSBVI ensures that students do not regress when transitioning back to their district. Ms. Wheeler answered that the school collaborates with districts to ensure students maintain their learned skills. She added that they work with Outreach as well to provide services to districts.

c. Report from Short-Term Programs Principal

➤ **Short-Term Program update**

The program Game of Life was cancelled due to inclement weather. Elementary Access to Academic Skills is scheduled for February 16, 2026 through February 20, 2026. City Travel will be held March 5, 2026 through March 8, 2026. Online individualized instruction is ongoing.

➤ **Update on Summer 2026 programs**

The summer programs application deadline is February 14, 2026. The Health Center had a big involvement in student acceptances and providing good services. The programs hope to get TVI interns. Last summer they had two interns. The expected 2026 summer programs student attendance numbers are expected to be comparative to last year.

d. Report from Outreach Director, Erica Cairns

➤ **Outreach Program update**

The Outreach program's VI registration entry deadline was January 31, 2026. Special education and deafblind numbers have increased. The program held Coffee Hour programs on how to register. They are working on the needs assessment survey. The Texas Deafblind Mentor session one pilot was online. The next mentor session will take place in conjunction with TAER. There are 13 TSBVI staff who will be presenting at TAER in March. There have been 100 Monarch braille devices distributed to different districts.

Consideration of Adoption of a Resolution Regarding the Review of the Investment Policy and Strategies of TSBVI

Julie Prause made a motion to approve the adoption of a resolution regarding the review of the investment policy and strategies of TSBVI. Belinda Rudinger seconded the motion. All members present voted unanimously to approve the motion.

Public Discussion of TSBVI's 2024-2025 Annual Report

TSBVI sends the Annual Report to TSBVI families, student districts and other agencies and organizations. Boards are required to hold a public hearing following dissemination of the report to allow the public to comment. No one from the public spoke at this board meeting. The Board expressed their satisfaction with how well the report is prepared.

Status Report on Action Plans in the 2025-2026 School Improvement Plan

Emily Coleman gave the first status report on the action plans in the 2025-2026 School Improvement Plan. She listed Comprehensive Programs, Curriculum Department, Short-term Programs, Outreach Programs and Administrative and Support Services action plans and their statuses. She stated she was happy to report there were action steps already completed.

Discussion of Strategic Planning Initiatives Summary

Ms. Coleman explained that the priorities identified during strategic planning were recruitment and retention, growing Short-term Programs, growing support for statewide testing and assistive technology, early childhood/family engagement, a statewide braille production program, furniture replacement, vehicle replacement, a technology refresh, and covering subscription costs and growing utility costs.

Report from the Superintendent

a. Campus activities

Ms. Coleman reported on campus activities. She stated that the South Central Association of Schools for the Blind (SCASB) Wrestling, Cheerleading and Performing Arts tournament at Louisiana School for the Visually Impaired in Baton Rouge was cancelled due to inclement weather. There will be a student ski trip on February 26, 2026 through March 3, 2026.

b. Superintendent's activities

Ms. Coleman stated she was still serving as the President Elect of the Council of Schools for the Blind (COSB). She will attend the Texas Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired (TAER) conference. Ms. Coleman continues to work on her dissertation.

Consideration of Resolution Pursuant to Senate Bill 11

Julie Prause made a motion not to make a resolution pursuant to Senate Bill 11 and as provided by Texas Education Code 25.0823. Ernest Worthington seconded the motion. All members present voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Confidential Information Regarding Personnel and Student/Family Issue

Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the Board would recess the open session and convene in a closed meeting to discuss agenda item #17 – 'Confidential Information Regarding Personnel and

Student/Family Issue' in conformance with Texas Government Code Section 551.071 – Consultation with School Attorney, Section 551.074 – Personnel Matters, and Section 551.0821 - Matter Involving a Student in Which Personally Identifiable Information will be Discussed.

Consideration of Superintendent's Annual Performance Appraisal

Mr. Sonnenberg added that, in closed meeting, the Board would also discuss agenda item #18 – 'Consideration of Superintendent's Annual Performance Appraisal' in conformance with Texas Government Code Section 551.074 – Personnel Matters.

No voting would take place in the closed meeting. Any action the Board wished to take as a result of discussions in closed meeting would take place after the Board reconvened in the open meeting. It was 11:58 a.m.

At 2:21 p.m., Mr. Sonnenberg called the meeting back into open session.

There was no action taken on agenda items #17 and #18.

Election of Board Officers

Beth Jones nominated Lee Sonnenberg for Board President. All members present voted to pass the motion. Brenda Lee nominated Julie Prause for Vice-President. All members present voted to pass the motion. Brenda Lee nominated Dan Brown as Board Secretary. All member present voted to pass the motion.

Consideration of Approval of Incoming Board President's Recommendations Concerning Board Committees and Appointment of Board Committee Members, Chairpersons and Vice-Chairpersons

Mr. Sonnenberg appointed the following board members to the Audit, Compliance, Management and Review, Finance, Personnel and Programs Committees.

Audit, Compliance, Management and Review Committee:

Ernest Worthington, Chair;
Brenda Lee, Vice Chair; and
Hillary Rodriguez, Member.

Finance Committee:

Julie Prause, Chair;
Dan Brown Vice Chair; and
Lee Sonnenberg, Member.

Personnel Committee:

Hillary Rodriguez, Chair;
Julie Prause, Vice Chair;
Lee Sonnenberg, Member; and
Belinda Rudinger, Member.

Program Committee:

Beth Jones, Chair;
Hillary Rodriguez, Vice Chair; and
Belinda Rudinger, Member.

Discussion of Future Board Meeting Topics

Mr. Sonnenberg requested discussion of protactile use in the deafblind community. Ms. Coleman stated the topic could possibly be placed on the spring agenda.

Announcements

Mr. Sonnenberg stated that international AER conference registration would open on Monday February 9, 2026.

Adjournment

Julie Prause made a motion to adjourn the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired February 6, 2026 Board of Trustees meeting. Brenda Lee seconded the motion. All board members present voted unanimously to pass the motion. It was 2:31 p.m.

Lee Sonnenberg, Board President

Date

Dan Brown, Board Secretary

Date

Veronica Keating, Recording Secretary

Date