

**Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired**  
**BOARD MINUTES**  
**February 3, 2023 Meeting**

**Call to Order**

Lee Sonnenberg, Board President called the full meeting of the Board of Trustees for the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to order at 10:17 a.m.

**Introduction of Board Members and Audience**

Board members present in person were Lee Sonnenberg, Mike Hanley, and Elaine Robertson. Maghan Gautney, Brenda Lee, Julie Prause, Ernest Worthington, Beth Jones, and Dan Brown participated via Zoom.

Emily Coleman, Superintendent;

Audience members included Emily Coleman, Superintendent; Veronica Keating; Executive Assistant; Nathan Widener, Outreach staff; Kate Borg, Outreach Director; Miriam Miramontes, Outreach staff; David Ondich, public speaker; Melanie Schacht, Outreach staff; Kristen Seljenes, Teacher; Debra Rushing, OT/PT; G'Nell Price, Elementary Assistant Principal; Eden Hagelman, Assistant Principal; Matt Schultz, Residential Director; Edgenie Bellah, Outreach staff; Cheryl Williams, Human Resources Director; Bernie Smith, O&M Specialist; Katie Barnes, O&M Specialist; Angela Wolf, Curriculum Director; Sara Merritt, Short-Term Program Principal; Brian Swegle, Operations Director; Hillary Keys, Outreach staff; Eric Cobble, Residential staff; Craig Edgley, Teacher; Brittney Francis, T/A Coordinator; Jenny Wells, General Counsel; Susan Houghtling, Planning and Evaluation Coordinator, Kendra Dorty, A/V Coordinator; Cecilia Robinson, VI Educational Specialist; Cyrenna Villegas, Procurement Director; Dan Hampton, Information Resources Director; Toni Ericson, Outreach staff; Donna Clemens, Outreach staff; Kathi Garza, Outreach staff; Susan Osterhaus, Outreach staff; and Kaycee Bennett, Outreach staff.

**Recognition of TSBVI School Board Members**

Ms. Coleman recognized and thanked the Board for their dedication to the School and gave each of them a coffee mug inscribed with student artwork. The Board expressed their gratitude to the School.

**Recognition of the 2023 TSBVI Outstanding Direct Care and Outreach Staff Members**

The Board recognized staff members Craig Edgley, Kristine Seljenes, Eric Cobble, Brittany Francis, Bernie Smith, Kaycee Bennett, and Nathan Widener for their outstanding work.

**Public Comments/Open Forum**

David Ondich was signed up for public comment. Mr. Sonnenberg stated there would be a five-minute time limit. Mr. Ondich gave some suggestions as to how to hire and retain more visually impaired employees. The Board thanked him for his comments.

**Consideration of Approval of Minutes of November 17 and 18, 2022 Board Meetings**

Elaine Robertson motioned to approve the minutes of the November 17 and 18, 2022 board meetings. Mike Hanley seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion. The Board voted to pass the motion with one abstention from Ernest Worthington due to technical difficulties in Zoom and the motion passed.

## **Report from the Audit, Compliance, and Management Review Committee**

### **a. Report from the Internal Auditor**

Michael Hanley reported that the areas recommended for internal audit and other functions to be performed for the fiscal year 2023 were as follows:

#### **1. Abuse, Neglect, and Exploitation (ANE) Investigating Procedures Audit**

An audit of this area would be performed to assess whether TSBVI's established policies, procedures, and internal controls were operating effectively to ensure compliance with state laws and rules relating to the investigation and reporting of alleged ANE. The assessment will also determine TSBVI's adherence to such established policies, procedures, and internal controls.

#### **2. Audit of Records Management**

An audit of this area would be performed to assess whether TSBVI has internal controls, policies, procedures, and processes in place that ensure its compliance with state and federal requirements related to records management; and, to determine the School's compliance with its records retention schedule.

#### **3. Follow-up of Prior Year Internal Audits**

Follow-up procedures would be performed to determine the status of prior year comments that were not fully implemented as of the fiscal year ended August 31, 2022, which will result in a determination that the recommendation is (1) Fully Implemented; (2) Substantially Implemented; (3) Incomplete/Ongoing; or, (4) Not Implemented.

#### **4. Preparation of the 2023 Internal Audit Annual Report**

The 2023 Internal Audit Annual Report would be prepared in the form prescribed by the State Auditor's Office and that meets the Texas Internal Auditing Act requirements.

#### **5. Other Tasks**

Other tasks as may be assigned by the Board, Audit Committee, or management during the fiscal year.

### **b. Consideration of Approval of the 2023 Annual Audit Plan**

Mr. Hanley stated that the recommendation for approval of the 2023 Annual Audit Plan came from the Committee; therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted to pass the motion with one abstention from Ernest Worthington due to technical difficulties in Zoom and the motion passed.

## **Report from the Finance Committee**

### **a. Consideration of Approval of Board Policies**

CDA (TSBVI)	Other Revenues: Investments
DIA (TSBVI)	Employee Welfare: Freedom from Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation

Lee Sonnenberg reported that the Finance Committee recommended approval of Policy CDA and Policy DIA with the additional change from "A district" to "The School" under Prohibition of Use of Public Funds in Policy CDA. Since the recommendation came from the Committee, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously to approve the

policies as presented with the additional change to Policy CDA with one abstention from Ernest Worthington due to technical difficulties in Zoom and the motion passed.

**b. Consideration of Approval of Investment Report**

Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the Committee recommended the approval of the Investment Report; therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted to pass the motion with one abstention from Ernest Worthington due to technical difficulties in Zoom and the motion passed.

**c. Consideration of Approval of Receipt of Gifts And Donations of Over \$500**

There was no action taken on this agenda item.

**d. Consideration of Approval of Request for Expenditure of Gifts And Donations**

There was no action taken on this agenda item.

**e. Review of Budget Reports**

➤ **Operating Budget Expenditure Report**

Mr. Sonnenberg reported that the benchmark for the percent of the budget used as of December 31, 2022 was 33 percent. The percentage used for classroom instruction was 35 percent, residential program strategy 30 percent, Summer and Short Term Programs strategy 22 percent, related and support services strategy 34 percent, technical assistance strategy 31 percent, teacher preparation strategy 4 percent, central administrative strategy 29 percent, other support services strategy 29 percent and the total for all budgets in state treasury was 31 percent.

➤ **Legacy Revenue Budget Report**

Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the benchmark for the four-month period ending December 31, 2022 was 33 percent. The actual percentage of the budget received was seven percent.

➤ **Legacy Operating Expenditure Budget Report**

Mr. Sonnenberg reported that the benchmark for the percentage of the Legacy Budget used as of December 31, 2022 was 33 percent and the total percentage of the budget used was 28 percent.

**Report from the Program Committee**

**a. Report from Comprehensive Programs Principal**

➤ **Career Education Program update**

Elaine Robertson stated that the career education department is back to normal since COVID. In the Committee meeting, she learned the difference between career education and the EXIT program. Career education is for all ages of students. The EXIT program is for young adults 18–22 years of age. There are over ten community organizations with which the School has partnerships. Two of them are HEB Grocery and Austin Lighthouse for the Blind.

➤ **Consideration of Approval of The *My Rights, My Life* Curriculum**

Ms. Robertson reported that the Program Committee recommended the approval of the *My Rights, My Life* curriculum; therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted to pass the motion with one abstention from Ernest Worthington due to technical difficulties in Zoom and the motion passed.

## **b. Report from Short-Term Programs Principal**

### **➤ Short-Term Program update**

Ms. Robertson stated that Sara Merritt gave a wonderful report on the Short-Term programs.

### **➤ Update on Summer 2023 programs**

Ms. Robertson said that 141 applications have been received for the summer 2023 programs and program staff hope to have 240 students.

## **c. Report from Outreach Director**

### **➤ Outreach Program update**

Ms. Robertson stated the deafblind child count was closing and Ms. Borg would share those results with the Board at the next meeting. The Outreach program was working on the Deafblind grant that is updated every five years as well.

### **➤ Family Engagement**

Ms. Robertson said Edgenie Bellah and Yolanda Shah gave a great report on the activities of the family engagement group.

## **d. Consideration of Approval of Board Policies**

### **FD (TSBVI) Admissions**

Ms. Robertson reported that the Committee recommended approval of policy FD with an added change on page six of the policy to state “TSBVI will present two enrollment agreements: one between TSBVI and parent, and another between TSBVI and the LEA, for signatures by all three parties before enrollment can be finalized”. The recommendation to approve the policy with the added change came from the Committee; therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted to pass the motion with one abstention from Ernest Worthington due to technical difficulties in Zoom and the motion passed.

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

Mr. Sonnenberg stated that, in compliance with public investment policy, Policy CDA on investments should be reviewed no less than once a year. He added that any changes should be recorded. Mike Hanley motioned to adopt a resolution regarding the review of the investment policy and strategies of TSBVI as presented in the board packet. Elaine Robertson seconded the motion. The Board voted to pass the motion with one abstention from Ernest Worthington due to technical difficulties in Zoom and the motion passed.

Mr. Sonnenberg announced that the meeting would recess for lunch. It was 12:00 p.m.

It was 12:34 p.m. and Mr. Sonnenberg announced that the meeting of the Board of Trustees for the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired would reconvene.

## **Report on Teacher Incentive Allotment Program**

Miles Fain and Sara Merritt reported the process by which they developed the teacher incentive allotment program for approval by TEA. Ms. Merritt said TEA sent a spreadsheet to help analyze the data and put it in the required format. Ms. Merritt said 22 designations were submitted to TEA. If they are approved, the School will receive its TIA designation that will be good for five years.

## **Consideration of Approval of New Contract Staff**

Elaine Robertson motioned to approve new contract staff as listed in the Board's agenda packet. Julie Prause seconded the motion. The Board voted to pass the motion with one abstention from Ernest Worthington due to technical difficulties in Zoom and the motion passed.

## **Public Discussion of TSBVI's 2021–2022 Annual Report**

At the Board meeting, the public is invited to provide comment on the Annual Report that was disseminated in November 2022. No member of the public provided any feedback at the meeting. The Board expressed their endearment of the photo on the cover of the report. Ms. Coleman said one of the teachers took the photo on the cover. Ms. Prause suggested that the Annual Report be distributed at ARD meetings to give parents more information about the School.

## **Status Report on Action Plans in the 2022–2023 School Improvement Plan**

Emily Coleman provided an update on the status of action plans from the 2022–2023 School Improvement Plan.

Lee Sonnenberg asked new Operations Director Brian Swegle about his priorities. Mr. Swegle explained that he is familiarizing himself with the School and its processes. He said there are many projects that were in process when he arrived that are being completed.

## **Report from the Superintendent**

### **a. Legislative activities**

Emily Coleman stated the first Legislative hearing was coming up and she would be in attendance.

### **b. Campus activities**

Ms. Coleman reviewed a list of activities that occurred prior to the board meeting as well as upcoming activities. She stated that she traveled with TSBVI students to the Alabama Institute for the Deaf and Blind as students participated in the SCASB (South Central Association of Schools for the Blind) wrestling/cheerleading/performing arts tournament.

### **c. Superintendent's activities**

Ms. Coleman reported on her activities since the last board meeting.

## **Review of Intruder Audit and Related Security Procedures**

Mr. Sonnenberg stated the Board would recess the open session and convene in a closed meeting to discuss the following item listed under agenda item #16 – 'Review of Intruder Audit and Related Security Procedures' in conformance with Texas Government Code Section 551.076 –

'Deliberation Regarding Security Devices or Security Audits.' Mr. Sonnenberg stated that 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 1:03 p.m.

Mr Sonnenberg stated it was 1:17 p.m. and the Board reconvened in open session. He announced that no action would be taken in regard to the agenda item.

**Discussion of Future Board Meeting Topics**

Mr. Hanley asked the Board their thoughts on discussing the topic brought up within the public comment portion of the meeting regarding hiring of individuals with visual impairments. Ms. Coleman stated that the School could prepare a report on what it is doing to ensure the employment of visually impaired staff. The Board agreed with Ms. Coleman's suggestion.

**Consideration of Superintendent's Annual Performance**

Consideration of the Superintendent's annual performance appraisal was tabled until the April 3, 2023 board meeting.

**Announcements**

There were no announcements.

**Adjournment**

Elaine. Robertson motioned to adjourn the February 3, 2023 meeting of the Board of Trustees for the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired at 1:27 p.m. Beth Jones seconded the motion. The Board voted to adjourn with one abstention from Ernest Worthington due to technical difficulties in Zoom and the motion passed.

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Lee Sonnenberg, Board President

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Date

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Dan Brown, Board Secretary

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

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Veronica Keating, Recording Secretary

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Date