

**Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired**  
**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**April 3, 2023**

**Call to Order**

Lee Sonnenberg, Board President called the meeting of the Board of Trustees for the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to order at 10:18 a.m.

**Introduction of Board Members and Audience**

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

Maghan Gautney was not present.

Audience members present were: Barbara Knighton, Parent; Cheryl Williams, Human Resources Director; Sara Merritt, Short-Term Programs Principal; Ann Du, CFO; Miles Fain, Comp Programs Principal; Dan Hampton, Information Resources Director; Susan Houghtling, Planning and Evaluation Coordinator; Scott Brackett, Information Resources Director; Kate Borg, Outreach Director; Colin Higginbotham, Outreach; Brian Swegle, Operations Director; Emily Coleman, Superintendent; Scott Bracket, Information Resources Director; and Veronica Keating, Executive Assistant.

Attending via Zoom: Cyrenna Villegas, Procurement Director.

**Report from Family Lynx Program**

Barbara Knighton gave an update from the Family Lynx program. She stated Family Lynx was restructured to be more efficient with their time, staff time and school resources. Their goal is to make participation easy for staff and families, hopefully encouraging increased participation. Family Lynx will continue to meet monthly with administration to share ideas and get approval for projects. She reported their website is being transformed to be the go to spot for families regarding resources, events and information about our wonderful school. Their Facebook group is now open to all TSBVI staff, adult students, families and alumni. She stated they would update the board once per semester.

**Public Comments/Open Forum**

There was no one signed up for comments.

**Consideration of Approval of Minutes of February 3, 2023 Board Meeting**

Mr. Worthington stated he had some technical difficulties at the February meeting. He was unable to use audio during his participation via Zoom. Therefore, there should be one abstention noted for every motion made at the February 3, 2023 board meeting.

Dan Brown motioned to approve the minutes from the February 3, 2023 board meeting with the amendment to abstain Ernest Worthington's vote. Brenda Lee seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

**Report from the Finance Committee**

**a. Consideration of approval of Investment Report**

Julie Prause stated that the total investments were \$1,564,253.

The motion to approve the investment report for a six-month period ending February 28, 2023 came from the Finance Committee, therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

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

The Finance Committee recommended the approval of gifts and donations of over \$500, therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

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

The Finance Committee recommended the approval of request for expenditure of gifts and donations, therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

**d. Review of budget reports**

➤ **Operating Budget Expenditure Report**

The benchmark for the percentage used as of February 28, 2023 was 50 percent. The total for all percentages used for budgets in state treasury was 47 percent.

➤ **Legacy Revenue Budget Report**

The benchmark for the six month period ending on February 28, 2023 was 50 percent. The total percentage of budget received for the six month period ending February 28, 2023 was 71 percent.

➤ **Legacy Operating Expenditure Budget Report**

The benchmark of Legacy operating budget used as of February 28, 2023 was 50 percent. The total Legacy operating expenditure budget used was 37 percent.

**Report from the Program Committee**

**a. Consideration of approval of TSBVI's 2023-2024 school calendar**

The Program Committee recommended the approval of TSBVI's 2023-2024 school calendar, therefore; a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

**b. Report on engagement of educators who are blind, visually impaired, and deafblind**

Ms. Lee reported that disability disclosure is not required when applying or hired for a job. Modification requests include 26 employees who requested braille or electronic materials, 13 employees who requested large print and two employees who requested ASL interpretation. That is 10 to 15 percent of the staff population. There are teacher who are blind or visually impaired working towards their certification. There are also more blind and visually impaired staff working in summer programs than previous years.

**c. Report from Comprehensive Programs Principal**

➤ **Update on TSBVI/Austin ISD Dual Enrollment Program**

Ms. Lee stated that Haley Moberg and two students presented on their experience being dually enrolled in the local high school. They have had a wonderful experience.

➤ **Consideration of approval of recommendations of the Instructional Materials Committee**

The Program Committee recommended the approval of recommendations of the instructional materials certification that cover all of the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS), therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

**d. Report from Short-Term Programs Principal**

➤ **Short-Term Program update**

Ms. Lee reported that Sara Merritt gave a great report over the Short-Term Programs available.

➤ **Update on Summer 2023 programs**

She stated that the summer programs were fully staffed. There were 329 applicants and 240 slots. Mr. Hanley asked if there was any way the School could accept more students. Ms. Merritt answered that the School would possibly open more slots if those accepted decline.

➤ **Response to Board questions on TVI referrals to Short-Term Programs**

Ms. Lee stated that Ms. Merritt presented information as to how TVI referrals are attained. Ms. Merritt stated there is information sent out to Education Service Center. The Program keeps constant communication with the community.

**e. Report from Outreach Director**

➤ **VI Registry/Deafblind Child Count Report**

All requirements have been turned in for the VI registry/Deafblind child count report. The total was 10,911 students across the state of Texas. The number of children in the age group zero to three years of age has decreased. The deafblind student count has increased.

➤ **Outreach Program update**

Ms. Lee gave a report on the various programs. The Mentor Center was held on February 5-7, 2023. The Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education was held in Round Rock, TX. The TAER conference was held on March 23-25, 2023.

**Consideration of Approval of a Waiver Request to the Texas Education Agency for Missed School Day on February 1 Due to Ice Storm**

Ms. Coleman explained that the inclement weather on February 1, 2023 affected staff attendance, therefore, the School was not able to operate. Brenda Lee motioned to approve the waiver request to the Texas Education Agency for a missed school day on February 1, 2023 due to the ice storm. Julie Prause seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

**Consideration of Approval of Proposed Renewals and Non-renewals of Staff Contracts**

Ms. Coleman stated that there were some changes to the renewals and non-renewals of staff contracts. There were three resignations including Pam Moscato, Camille Jones and Chris Tabb. There were four new hires they were: Carla Wright, Laurel Taylor, Erin Shadwick and John Oberman.

Mr. Hanley motioned to approve the proposed renewals and non-renewals of staff contracts as amended by Ms. Coleman. Mr. Brown seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously and the motioned passed.

**Review of Needs Assessments and Proposed Action Plans and Consideration of Approval of Proposed Objectives for the 2023-2024 Annual Improvement Plan**

Ms. Coleman reported on the review of needs assessments and proposed action plans. She sought the Boards approval of proposed objectives for the 2023-2024 Annual Improvement Plan.

Mr. Brown motioned to approve proposed objectives for the 2023-2024 Annual Improvement Plan. Mr. Worthington seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously and the motioned passed.

## **Report from the Superintendent**

### **a. Legislative activities**

Ms. Coleman stated that she and Ann Du went to the House and Senate budget meetings to testify. The School sent out the website link to watch the session to all of TSBVI's staff.

### **b. Campus activities**

Ms. Coleman stated that the Hollywood Nights Prom will be held on Wednesday April 5, 2023. TSBVI will be hosting the SCASB Track, Field, and Goalball Tournament on April 20-22, 2023. The Capitol Experience class will take place April 14-18, 2023. TSBVI's graduation ceremony is scheduled on May 26, 2023.

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

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

## **Lunch with Student Council**

The Board recessed at 11:30 a.m. to have lunch with the School's Student Council.

## **Consideration of Superintendent's Annual Performance Appraisal**

Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the Board would recess the open session and convene in a closed meeting to discuss the following item listed under agenda item #15 – 'Consideration of Superintendent's Annual Performance Appraisal; in conformance with Texas Government Code Section 551.074 – Personnel Matters.

He stated 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 12:19 p.m.

At 1:13 p.m. the Board reconvened in open session. No further action was taken on this agenda item.

## **Consideration of Approval of Board Meetings and Training Dates for Summer 2023 and the 2023-2024 School Year**

The Board reviewed proposed meeting dates for the next year. The Board suggested moving the April 8, 2024 meeting to Wednesday April 3, 2024. The Board agreed to change the date to April 3, 2024.

Brenda Lee motioned to approve the board meeting and training dates for summer and the 2023-2024 school year with the change. Dan Brown seconded the motion. Mr. Hanley opposed the motion. The Board members voted and the motion passed five to one.

## **Discussion of Future Board Meeting Topics**

Ms. Coleman brought up the Board's interest in campus tours. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that doing the tours between committee meetings and the full board meeting would be ideal. He said having a start and end time would help structure the committee meetings to allow time for the tours to take place.

## **Consideration of Board Committee Appointments**

Mr. Sonnenberg appointed Elaine Robertson the Chair and himself Vice Chair of the Audit, Compliance, Review and Management Committee.

**Announcements**

Mike Hanley stated the April 3, 2023 board meeting would be the last meeting he attends.

**Adjournment**

Mr. Hanley moved to adjourn the April 3, 2023 board meeting for the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Dan Brown seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed. The meeting adjourned at 1:33 p.m.

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