Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
New Board Member Orientation Session Minutes
August 8, 2024

Call to Order

Lee Sonnenberg, Board President called to order the orientation session for a new Board member of the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired at 11:01 a.m.

Introduction of Board Members and TSBVI Staff

Board members present were: Lee Sonnenberg, Board President; Julie Prause, Board Vice-President, Board Member Ernest Worthington and New Board Member Hillary Rodriguez.

TSBVI staff members present were: Emily Coleman, Superintendent; Susan Houghtling, Planning and Evaluation Coordinator; Ann Du, CFO; Jenny Wells, General Counsel; and Raksha Bode; Travel Coordinator.

New Board member Hillary Rodriguez received an orientation to Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired by Board President Lee Sonnenberg and the five TSBVI staff members present.

Ms. Coleman welcomed the Board. She stated the Board served 11, 000 students statewide and the many programs TSBVI had. She gave the Board the schedule for meetings and discussed examples of topics that may be considered.

Mr. Sonnenberg gave an overview of preparing for and participating in board meetings including; voting and placing items on the board agenda. He also discussed expressing concerns or complaints about school staff, programs or operations.

Ms. Houghtling gave an overview of the board orientation manual, board responsibilities, board activity calendar, board governing role vs administration of the School, evaluation of the Superintendent, internal audits and timelines, and board training requirements and opportunities.

Ms. Wells gave an overview of communicating with other board members, implications of open records/open meeting requirements when communicating school topics through personal accounts/services, communicating with the public and with school staff, best practices on board member conduct during public comment periods, the Board's role in handling complaints and grievances, advocacy/lobbying guidelines for board members, and board operating procedures policy development.

Ms. Du discussed how the School is funded – sources of revenue (include Broday trust and timelines for Board decisions on pay-out), the Board's role and timelines in developing budgets and the Legislative Appropriations Request, and current issues with the budget and working with the Legislature.

Ms. Bode gave the Board an overview of the School's travel guidelines while on school business.

Adjournment

Julie Prause moved to adjourn the meeting and Ernest Worthington seconded the motion. Lee Sonnenberg adjourned the meeting at 1:00 p.m.