TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED
BOARD MEETING MINUTES
January 31, 2025

Call to Order

Lee Sonnenberg, Board President called the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Board of Trustees meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. on Friday January 31, 2025.

Pledge of Allegiance and Texas Pledge

A TSBVI student led the recital of the Pledge of Allegiance and the Texas Pledge for the Board and audience.

Introduction of Board Members and Audience

Board members present were Lee Sonnenberg, Elaine Robertson, Julie Prause and Brenda Lee Present via Zoom were Beth Jones and Hillary Rodriguez. Maghan Gautney, Dan Brown and Ernest Worthington were unable to attend the meeting.

Audience members present via Zoom were Kendra Dorty, Outreach; Dany Casey, Cecilia Robinson, Outreach; Chrissy Cowan, Outreach; Heather Withrow and Collin Higginbotham, Outreach.

Audience members present were:
Emily Coleman, Superintendent; Veronica Keating, Executive Assistant; Alex Arguello, Head of Community Engagement; Eden Hagelman, Short-Term Program Principal; Angela Wolf, Curriculum Director; Rachel Collins, Outreach; Edgenie Bellah, Outreach; Mark Ramirez, EXIT Program; Erin Syler, EXIT Program; Steven Landry, Outreach; David Hook, Outreach; Matt Schultz, Residential Director; Jenny Wells, General Counsel; Courtney Canady, Information Resources; Denise Lehe, Information Resources; Barbara Knighton, Parent; Miles Fain, Principal; Casey Bigman, Retired; Jim Allan, Retired; Cheryl, Williams, Human Resources Director; Ann Du, Chief Financial Officer; G'Nell Price, Assistant Principal; Scott Bracket, Information Resources Director; Daniel Figuerido, Information Resources; Claire Broadway, Information Resources; Yamal Said, Comprehensive Programs; Erica Cairns, Outreach Director; and Susan Houghtling, Planning and Evaluation Coordinator.

Recognition of TSBVI School Board Members

Emily Coleman recognized the Board and presented them with a gift made by the Career Education Embroidery Class. They embroidered grey fleece blankets with the School's star logo, the member's name and the year "2025" on them.

The Board expressed their gratitude to the students and school.

Recognition of the 2025 TSBVI Outstanding Direct Care and Outreach Staff Members

Tad Doezema introduced and recognized Erin Syler as Outstanding Teacher of Students with Visual and Multiple Impairments and Aaron Mason Outstanding Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments. Matt Schultz introduced and recognized James Fain for his accomplishments as the 2025 Outstanding Residential Instructor. G'Nell Price introduced and recognized Yamal Said

for his accomplishments as 2025 Outstanding Paraprofessional. Erica Cairns introduced and recognized Rachel Collins as Outstanding Outreach Professional and David Hook as the 2025 Outstanding Outreach Staff.

The Board congratulated them for their dedication and commitment to the Students across the State.

Recognition of Retiring Employees

Scott Brackett and the Board recognized Jim Allan for his dedication and 38 years of service to TSBVI and students around the State. The Board wished him well in his retirement.

Public Comments/Open Forum

There was no one signed up for public comments.

Consideration of Approval of Minutes of November 21 and 22, 2024 Board Meetings

Julie Prause motioned to approve the minutes of November 21 and 22, 2024 board meetings. Elaine Robertson seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Report from the Finance Committee

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

Julie Prause reported that the earnings for the four months ending on December 31, 2024 was $12,155 and the value was $1,199,082. The Finance Committee recommended the approval of the Investment Report; therefore a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

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

The Finance Committee recommended approval of receipt of gifts and donation of over $500; therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

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 benchmarks for the percentages used as of December 31, 2024 were: classroom instruction – 38%, residential program – 35%, summer and short-term programs – 26%, related and support services – 34%, technical assistance (outreach) 36%, teacher preparation (outreach) – 12%, educational professional salary increases – 0%, central administrative strategy – 32%, other support services – 34% with the total for all budget expenditures at 34%.

- **Legacy Revenue Budget Report**

The benchmark for the four months ending December 31, 2024 for revenues was 33%. The total percentage of the budget received was 22%.

- **Legacy Operating Expenditure Budget Report**

The benchmark for the percentage of the budget used as of December 31, 2024 was 33%. The total percentage of the budget used was 30%.

e. **Consideration of approval of board policies:**
CDA (TSBVI) Other Revenues: Investments

The Finance Committee recommended the review of policy CDA (TSBVI) – Other Revenues: Investments with no recommended changes; therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Report from the Program Committee

a. **Report from Comprehensive Programs Principal**
   - **Calendar and routines**

Brenda Lee stated that Kim Conlin presented several videos regarding calendar and routines for instructional staff. Ms. Lee said she asked how the information can be shared with other Teachers of the Visually Impaired (TVI) and Speech Language Pathologists (SLP). Erica Cairns stated that the School could share out the information.

b. **Report from Curriculum Department Director**
   - **Consideration of adoption of a resolution to convene the TSBVI School Health Advisory Council (SHAC) to recommend curriculum and materials related to human sexuality instruction**

Ms. Lee explained that the consideration of adoption of a resolution to convene the TSBVI School Health Advisory Council to recommend curriculum and materials related to human sexuality instruction came from the Program Committee; therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

c. **Report from Short-Term Programs Principal**
   - **Short-Term Program update**

Ms. Lee reported on the different Short-Term programs taking place in the spring.

   - **Update on Summer 2025 programs**

The deadline for summer program applications is February 14, 2025 and there have been 119 applications submitted as of January 31, 2025. The program aims to serve 229 students.

d. **Report from Outreach Director, Erica Cairns**
   - **Outreach Program update**

The 2025 Texas Symposium on Deafblind Education: Convergence: Embracing New Beginnings with Presence and Connections is scheduled for February 27, 2025 through March 1, 2025.

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

Julie Prause made a motion to adopt the resolution regarding the review of the investment policy and strategies of TSBVI. Brenda Lee seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Public Discussion of TSBVI's 2023-2024 Annual Report

No one from the public was present to speak about the 2023-2024 Annual Report. The Board stated that TSBVI's Annual Report was professional and well put together.

Status Report on Action Plans in the 2024-2025 School Improvement Plan

Ms. Coleman reported on the status of completion of the action plans in the 2024-2025 School Improvement Plan.

Report from the Superintendent

a. **Legislative activities**

Ms. Coleman stated the School's Legislative Appropriations Request is scheduled for February 10th with the Senate Finance Committee. In preparation for TSBVI's testimony and to ensure that they received a list of TSBVI's exceptional items and the Annual Improvement Plan, Ms. Coleman visited the offices of the 15 Senators on the Finance Committee. She stated the School will also mail them the exceptional items list and Annual Improvement Plan along with additional necessary information.

b. **Campus activities**

Ms. Coleman reported the different activities happening across campus. She stated that the USABA Goalball Nationals were in Florida and the students had a great time. The School did well in the competition. The School's holiday Big Show was on December 18th. Students completed at the SCASB (South Central Association of Schools for the Blind) Wrestling, Cheerleading and Performing Arts in Muskogee, Oklahoma in January. Short-Term Programs had several ongoing programs including Elementary Access to Academic Skills, Junior Access to Academic Skills, In the Driver's Seat and City Travel for COMS (Certified Orientation and Mobility Specialists) and their students.

c. **Superintendent's activities**

Ms. Coleman stated the School was planning for inclement winter weather events. She stated she is still working on her doctorate through the Texas Tech University program and has been attending the Region 13 Education Service Center Superintendent meetings. She added that she is still on the COSB (Council of Schools for the Blind) Board and remains on several committees.

Personnel Update

Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the Board will recess the open session and convene in a closed meeting to discuss agenda item #15 – 'Personnel Update' in conformance with Texas Government Code Section 551.071 – Consultation with School Attorney and Texas Government Code Section 551.074 – Personnel Matters and also agenda item #16 – 'Consideration of Superintendent's Annual Performance Appraisal' in conformance with Texas Government Code Section 551.074 – Personnel Matters."

He stated that no voting would take place in the closed meeting and any action the Board wishes to take as a result of discussions in closed meeting will take place after the Board reconvenes in open meeting. It was 12:04 p.m.

Consideration of Superintendent's Annual Performance Appraisal

At 1:45 p.m. Mr. Sonnenberg stated the Board would convene in open session. There was no action taken on either of the two agenda items discussed in closed session.

Discussion of Future Board Meeting Topics

The Board asked if the January 2026 meeting could instead be scheduled to coincide with the Goalball competition at TSBVI in December 2025. Ms. Coleman stated that the School will schedule the meeting so that the Board can attend the competition.

Announcements

Beth Jones stated that her son and her father presented at Education Service Center Region 10 about their educational experiences. She stated that it is a rewarding experience seeing the changes in the education setting for the visually impaired.

Adjournment

Brenda Lee motioned to adjourn the January 31, 2025 board meeting. Elaine Robertson seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously to pass the motion at 1:48 p.m. and the meeting adjourned.

_____	_____
Lee Sonnenberg, Board President	Date
_____	_____
Dan Brown, Board Secretary	Date
_____	_____
Veronica Keating, Recording Secretary	Date