

# Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired BOARD MINUTES

November 19, 2021 Meeting

## **Call to Order**

Board President Lee Sonnenberg called the full board meeting of the Governing Board for the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to order at 10:15 a.m.

## **Introduction of Board Members and Audience**

Board members present in person were:

Lee Sonnenberg, Mike Hanley, Beth Jones, Elaine Robertson, Ernest Worthington, Dan Brown, and Brenda Lee.

Julies Prause and Maghan Gautney did not attend.

Audience members present were:

Emily Coleman, Superintendent; Veronica Keating, Executive Assistant; Cyrenna Villegas, Procurement Director; Barbara Knighton; Amy Potts; Dan Hampton, Information Resources Director; Cheryl Williams, Human Resources Director; Sara Merritt, Principal; Miles Fain, Principal; Kate Borg, Outreach Director; Alex Arguello, Head of Community Engagement; Pam Darden, CFO; Josh Splinter, Accounting Director; Brian McDonald, Operations Director; Brian Hudson, Safety and Security Supervisor; Bryan Maffett; and Susan Houghtling; Planning and Evaluation Coordinator.

## **Report from Family Lynx Program**

Ms. Potts shared photos of a very happy student and a photo of people that were at the Family Lynx meeting. The Family Lynx has been showing gratitude to departments and their staff.

She stated that at the last meeting there was a request to put out more information about the School and using video. She said that there are four video testimonials ready for use with potential families/students, donors, and the community.

She stated there were people from all over the state and alumni from the 1970's. She stated that Family Lynx provided their first Wildcat Welcome Wagon for prospective families. Patty Bushland was able to introduce a current student to the incoming student and parents. Mr. Sonnenberg stated his appreciation for the Boards aPaws from Family Lynx.

## **Report from Wells Fargo on the Bert E. Broday Trust Fund**

The item Report from Wells Fargo on the Bert E. Broday Trust Fund was tabled until the February 4, 2021 meeting.

## **Public Comments/Open Forum**

There were no public comments.

## **Consideration of Approval of Minutes of the September 30 and October 1, 2021 Board Meetings**

Mr. Hanley motioned to approve the minutes from the September 30 and October 1, 2021 board meeting. Mr. Brown seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to approve the minutes.

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

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

Mr. Sonnenberg reported that the Audit, Compliance and Management Review Committee reviewed the Public Funds Investment Act Audit and said that the School was in compliance. The audit identified some areas for growth for the School.

### **Consideration of approval of the 2021 Public Funds Investment Act Audit**

Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the recommendation came from the Audit, Compliance and Management Review Committee, therefore, no second was needed. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

## **Report from the Personnel Committee**

### **a. Consideration of hiring an internal auditor employee for TSBVI**

Ms. Robertson reported that the Personnel Committee discussed the hiring of an internal auditor for TSBVI. She said that the Committee would like for the appropriate TSBVI staff to gather information about the topic so they may make an informed decision. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that they would discuss it further at the February 4, 2022 board meeting.

## **Report from the Finance Committee**

### **a. Introduction to TSBVI's new Safety and Security Supervisor**

Mr. Brown reported that they met Brian Hudson, TSBVI's newly hired Safety and Security Supervisor. Mr. Hudson stepped forward and introduced himself to the Board.

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

Mr. Brown stated that the Finance Committee recommended the approval of policy CDA. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the motion came from the Finance Committee, therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted in favor and the motion passed.

### **c. Consideration of adoption of a resolution to appoint TSBVI's primary and alternate Investment Officers**

Mr. Brown stated that the Finance Committee recommended the adoption of a resolution to appoint TSBVI's primary Investment Officer to continue to be Pamela Darden as the Investment Officer for the School and the alternate Investment Officer be Joshua Splinter for the School. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the Finance Committee recommended the adoption, therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

### **d. Consideration of approval of renewal of Nolan County farm contract**

Mr. Brown reported that this was the annual farm contract renewal for Mr. Richard Osborne. The Finance Committee recommended approval of the renewal of the farm contract. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the Finance Committee recommended the renewal of Nolan County farm contract, therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

**e. Report on maintenance, annual inspection, and recommendations for maintenance and repair of the campus residence**

Mr. Brown reported that the Superintendent's residence budget/expenditure report for the 12-month period ending August 31, 2021 was \$24,757. He added that as a result of the annual inspection there were some recommendations for maintenance and repair. They were the installation of a French drain system with sump-pump to address standing water issues surrounding the outdoor HVAC area adjacent to the house, replacement of central HVAC system and ductwork, outdoor compressors and electrical utilities, relocation of the rooftop drainage system and down spouts to negate the additional rain water and run off into HVAC area of the residence.

**f. Consideration of approval of Investment Report**

Mr. Brown reported the Finance Committee recommended the approval of the Investment Report. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the Finance Committee recommended the approval of the Investment Report, therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

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

Mr. Brown stated that there was no action taken.

**h. Consideration of approval of request for expenditure of gifts and donation**

Mr. Brown reported that last year's totals for undesignated donations was \$3,719.13. He said that it was requested to be approved by the Board to use the funds to purchase two iron benches to place outside in the quad near the Health Center. Students will use them to sit while waiting for staff.

The recommendation to approve the request for expenditure of gifts and donations came from the Finance Committee, therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

**i. Review of budget reports**

**Operating Budget Expenditure Reports**

Mr. Brown stated that the benchmark as of September 30, 2021 for the percent of the budget used was eight percent.

**Legacy Revenue Budget Report**

Mr. Brown stated that the benchmark as of September 30, 2021 for the percent of the budget used was eight percent.

**Legacy Operating Expenditure Budget Reports**

Mr. Brown stated that the benchmark as of September 30, 2021 for the percent of the budget used was eight percent.

**10. Report from the Program Committee**

**a. Report from Comprehensive Program Principal, Miles Fain**

**Consideration of approval of Safe and Supportive Schools Team and procedure**

Ms. Lee reported that Brian Hudson, TSBVI's Safety and Security Supervisor, has been added to the Safe and Supportive Schools Team. The Program Committee approved the addition of Brian Hudson and procedures for the Team. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the motion came from the

Program Committee, therefore a second was needed. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

**Consideration of approval of a TEA waiver to use an alternate reading diagnostic instrument**

Ms. Lee reported that the Program Committee recommended approval of the TEA waiver to use an alternate reading diagnostic instrument. The alternate reading diagnostics are Jerry Johns Basic Reading Inventory to assess passage comprehension, listening comprehension, and word identification as well as the Kilpatrick Phonological Assessment to address phonological awareness.

Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the motion came from the Program Committee, therefore a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

**Career education update**

Ms. Lee stated that the career education program was partnering with the Lighthouse and HEB. Students had to go through the application and interview process. There were 13 students that participated in the program.

**b. Report from Curriculum Department Director  
Curriculum Department projects**

Ms. Lee stated that TSBVI teachers were using more of the curriculum from the School. She said that the data being tracked was good and the department was doing great things for the School and for the State.

**Report on Curriculum sales**

Ms. Lee reported that curriculum sales were \$279,098.44 for the time period September 2020 to August 2021.

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

Ms. Merritt stated they were still having difficulty hiring dorm staff.

**Update on Summer 2022 programs**

Ms. Lee reported the School plans to serve over 200 students.

**d. Report from Outreach Director  
Outreach Program update**

Ms. Lee reported there were over 300 attendees at SWOMA. Outreach was offering several seminars online.

**e. Consideration of approval of board policies:**

Ms. Lee stated that the approval of the amendment to board policy DH-E was recommended for approval by the Program Committee.

**DH-E Employee Standards of Conduct**

Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the motion to approve the amendment to policy DH-E came from the Program Committee, therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

**f. Consideration of ratification of MOU between Dell Medical School at UT Austin and TSBVI for provision of pediatric and adolescent behavioral health services via telehealth**

Ms. Lee reported that in an effort to help students regarding mental health, TSBVI partnered with Dell Medical School at UT Austin. They will provide telehealth consultations free of charge for our at-risk students through the Telemedicine (TCHAT) initiative of the Texas Children's mental Health Care Consortium.

Ms. Lee stated that the recommendation to ratify the MOU between Dell Medical School at UT Austin and TSBVI came from the Program Committee. Mr. Sonnenberg stated the motion came from the Program Committee, therefore a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously and the motioned passed.

**g. Consideration of ratification of MOUs between Region 11 Education Service Center and TSBVI**

Ms. Lee reported that there were three MOUs between Region 11 Education Service Center and TSBVI.

**Southwest Orientation and Mobility Association (SWOMA) Conference**

The MOU for SWOMA would establish keynote speakers and accessible content for the SWOMA conference.

**Texas Focus Conference**

The MOU for the Texas Focus Conference would support accessible content for the Texas Focus Conference and registration assistance for professionals and family members with an interest in the education of students with visual impairments.

**Train and support Active Learning coaches and develop and lead book study over CVI Advance Principles**

The MOU for training and supporting active learning coaches and develop and lead book study over Cortical Visual Impairment (CVI) Advanced Principals.

Ms. Lee reported that the Program Committee recommended the ratification of MOUs between Region 11 and TSBVI. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the motion came from the Program Committee, therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

**h. Consideration of ratification of MOU to pay tuition for TSBVI students to attend Austin ISD classes**

Ms. Lee reported that the MOU to pay tuition for TSBVI students to attend AISD for regular education instructional services. The MOU was signed by AISD Board President Geronimo M. Rodrigues, Jr. and by Emily Coleman on October 1, 2021.

The Program Committee recommended ratification of the MOU to pay tuition for TSBVI students to attend Austin ISD classes. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the recommendation came from the Committee, therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

**Report on Achievement of Objectives for 2020-2021 from the Agency Strategic Plan and the Annual Improvement Plan**

Ms. Houghtling stated that as a state agency, the School collaborated with staff of the Legislative Budget Board to develop measurable objectives of progress that the School submitted in our Agency Strategic Plan and Legislative Appropriations Request every two years. These performance measures were tied to the funding the agency received and the School reports our performance to the Legislative Budget Board or LBB in October each year. As required of school districts, the School also developed measurable objectives in the Annual Improvement Plan. Lastly, the Texas Education Agency had set two accreditation standards for the School through an MOU. She reported on achievement of the objectives and the School's standards.

### **Consideration of Approval of TSBVI's Vision, Mission and Philosophy Statements and Long Range Goals**

Ms. Coleman stated that one of the first steps in developing the Agency Strategic Plan was to draft vision, mission and philosophy statements that set the tone for the direction of the School. The statements are also included in the Annual Improvement Plan along with long range goals. This is reviewed by the Superintendent and TSBVI staff every two years. She stated the recommended changes made to TSBVI's Vision, Mission and Philosophy Statements and Long Range Goals. Mr. Brown stated that the explanation in the board packet was straight forward and he appreciated that.

Mr. Hanley made a motion to approve TSBVI's Vision, Mission, and Philosophy Statements and Long Range Goals. Ms. Lee seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to approve the motion.

### **Annual Report on Employee Complaints about Discrimination or Harassment**

Ms. Williams stated that there was nothing to report on the item.

### **Report from the Superintendent**

#### **a. Campus activities**

Ms. Coleman reported White Cane Day in October was not open to the public, however, there was a lot of activities for the students. The Texas Workforce Commission held a virtual White Cane Day celebration for people to watch. The students had a great time at the Halloween social distance dance also held in October. The virtual family day was a success. In November, TSBVI hosted the USABA Goalball Championship on campus. TSBVI's boys and girls placed silver. Looking forward, the SCASB wrestling/cheerleading/performing arts tournament will be in Alabama January 27-29, 2022. Short-Term Programs had a Kitchen Chemistry class. They sent all the materials necessary to participate to students. They taught students food safety, how math is used in cooking, how to organize your kitchen and how to use technology like Alexa while cooking. Outreach hosted the SWOMA Conference. Mentor Center was in person and the Texas Focus Conference is coming up. Coffee hour webinars are still ongoing.

#### **b. Superintendent's activities**

Ms. Coleman attended the Council of Schools for the Blind leadership meeting and the American Printing House for the Blind annual meeting. She co-presented on succession planning. The county updates on COVID are happening weekly. She added that she is trying to attend many of the Superintendent meetings with Region 13 Education Service Center. The California School for the Blind asked her to be a part of an accreditation team, which was three days over Zoom. An upcoming event is travelling to Orlando to participate in the Council for Exceptional Children Conference. Ms. Jones stated she would also be at the conference. Ms. Coleman said she would be attending the South Central Association of Schools for the Blind wrestling, cheerleading, performing arts tournament in Alabama in January.

### **Discussion of the Superintendent's Annual Performance Appraisal Process in January**

Ms. Williams stated she will email an evaluation form in mid-December to the Board for completion. The HR Director will then compile a report with the information received from the Board. She added the Board would meet in closed session to agree on what the Superintendent's rating would be and then meet with Ms. Coleman to go over her appraisal. Finally, Ms. Williams will send out the finalized evaluation for signatures from Ms. Coleman and Mr. Sonnenberg. Mr. Sonnenberg advised the Board to look out for the email from Cheryl Williams and to be aware of the due date.

### **Consideration of Nominating TSBVI Superintendent Emily Coleman for the Texas Association of School Boards' 2022 Superintendent of the Year Award**

Mr. Sonnenberg stated that last year he wanted to nominate Ms. Coleman but she did not meet some of the requirements. She stated that she completed the necessary requirements. Mr. Brown thanked Ms. Coleman for all her hard work.

Ms. Jones made a motion to nominate Emily Coleman for the Texas Association of School Boards' 2022 Superintendent of the year award. Elaine Robertson seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously and the motion passed.

### **Report of Completion of Board Member Training Requirements for the Past Year**

Ms. Houghtling reported that the following were the training hours received by members of the TSBVI Board:

Dan Brown: Completed the update on Texas Education Code, cybersecurity and the required five hours of continuing education. Needed a team building session.

Michael Hanley: Completed cybersecurity and 1 hour of the required 5 hours of continuing education. Needed team building training and an update on Texas Education Code.

Beth Jones: Met all training requirements including the orientation to Texas Education Code, update on Texas Education Code, team building, contract management, cybersecurity training and 5 of the required 5 hours of continuing education.

Brenda Lee: Completed the update on Texas Education Code, team building, and cybersecurity. Completed 4 of the required 5 hours of continuing education.

Julie Prause: Completed the update on Texas Education Code, team building, cybersecurity and 4 hours of the required 5 hours of continuing education.

Elaine Robertson: Exceeded the requirements by completing the update on Texas Education Code, team building, cybersecurity and an additional 8.5 hours of continuing education.

Lee Sonnenberg: Exceeded training requirements by completing the update on Texas Education Code, team building, cybersecurity, abuse and trafficking and completing 6 of the 5 hours of continuing education including training on the duties of a board president.

She added that new board members Maghan Gautney and Ernest Worthington took their oaths of office in May 2021 and some of their required training were not yet due.

Maghan Gautney completed New Board Member Orientation, Public Funds Investment and Open Meetings Act training, an orientation to Texas Education Code, team building, cybersecurity, and training on abuse and trafficking. Maghan exceeded her required 10 hours of continuing education by completing 16.5 hours. Timelines for future training include an online contract management session.

Ernest Worthington completed New Board Member Orientation, Public Funds Investment and Open Meetings Act training, an orientation to Texas Education Code, team building, contract management, cybersecurity, and training on abuse and trafficking. Ernest completed 7.5 hours of the required 10 hours of training within the first year of service.

The Board thanked Ms. Houghtling for her help keeping them all on track.

### **Discussion of Scheduling Board Training for the Next Year Based on the Framework for School Board Development**

Ms. Robertson stated it would be helpful to have an in depth budget training. Ms. Robertson stated that she would like to learn more about TSBVI's curriculum and how it works with Comprehensive Programs.

Mr. Sonnenberg stated that he liked the Night at the ER team building when it was held for the Board. He stated that he would like to see how the Legislative update changes impact the School. Ms. Coleman asked if the Board would like that same team building session and board members said they would like something that would help the Board interact with TSBVI staff. Mr. Hanley asked for the training to be held at the September meeting and the Board agreed.

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

Mr. Sonnenberg as well as Mr. Hanley requested a presentation on the Broday Trust with the following details: who is Mr. Broday; why did Mr. Broday choose to give the money to the School; when does TSBVI get the income; what could the School do with it; and how to keep funds safely retained at TSBVI?

### **Announcements**

Mr. Brown stated that he took accessibility training at Pearson and received a certification. Mr. Worthington's daughter was inducted into the National Honors Society at her university. Mr. Sonnenberg stated that his daughter would be in the Macy's parade. Ms. Jones stated that Region 10's Reach Magazine featured her son. They visited their family's farm and took pictures of their color coded tools and technology used at the farm. She said both of her children would be showing in Oklahoma at the Cattlemen's Congress.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Hanley motioned to adjourn the board meeting. Mr. Brown seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously to adjourn the meeting at 12:29 p.m.

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Lee Sonnenberg, Board President

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Date

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Dan Brown, Board Secretary

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Date

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Veronica Keating, Recording Secretary

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Date