

TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED BOARD MEETING MINUTES APRIL 3, 2024

Call to Order

Lee Sonnenberg, Board President called the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Board of Trustees board meeting to order at 10:19 a.m.

Introduction of Board Members and Audience

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

Audience members present were: Emily Coleman, Superintendent; Veronica Keating, Executive Assistant; Susan Houghtling, Planning and Evaluation Coordinator; Ann Du, CFO; Sara Merritt, Principal; Chrissy Cowan, Outreach; Nathan Widener, Outreach; Donna Clemens, Outreach; Cecilia Robinson, Outreach; Toni Ericson, Outreach; Melanie Schacht, Outreach; Suzanne Becker, Outreach; Angela Wolf, Curriculum Director; Eden Hagelman, Assistant Principal; Eric Grimmatt, CSR Director; Kate Borg, Outreach Director; Jenny Wells, General Counsel; Miles Fain, Principal; Patrick Healy, Teacher; and Alex Arguello, Head of Community Engagement.

Audience members present via Zoom included: Barbara Knighton, Family Lynx; Cyrenna Villegas, Procurement Director; Christina Hoke, Accounting Director; Cheryl Williams, HR Director; Hillary Keys, Outreach; Sara Kitchen, Outreach; and Samantha Martinez.

Recognition of the 2024 TSBVI Outstanding Outreach Service Provider and the Outstanding Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments

The Board recognized TSBVI staff members Donna Clemens as the 2024 Outstanding Outreach Service Provider and Patrick Healy as the 2024 Outstanding Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments.

Presentation on TSBVI's Mentor Center

Chrissy Cowan explained that TSBVI has had a mentor program for 27 years and she was the coordinator for 17 of those years. The Mentor Program selects and provides vetted mentors with the help of the Education Service Centers and through teacher recommendations. She stated that, in Texas, teachers can work with students with visual impairments while they work on their VI certification. The mentors have had background checks and are experienced professionals who have been teaching for at least four years. Ms. Cowan stated she monitored them and required them to follow activity checklists that they work on with their protégé. The protégé turns in required documentation and then is paid by TSBVI. She stated that the mentorship lasts two years. Outreach holds the Mentor Center Conference three times a year. Protégés travel from all over Texas to attend and visit and observe classrooms. If an instructor is specializing in orientation and mobility, they are paired with an O&M instructor. Ms. Cowart stated that a lot of times they have only had experience with as little as one student with visual impairments. Once the Protégés have participated in the conference, they are exposed to the many different aspects of visual impairments, as well as strategies used for curriculum.

Report from Family Lynx Program

Barbara Knighton provided an update on the activities taking place through the Family Lynx Program. She stated that Family Lynx members are present on student registration day, White Cane Day, Family Day and the prom. She expressed her gratitude to the School and Board for supporting the group. Ernest Worthington stated that he appreciated that the program benefits students and families.

Public Comments/Open Forum

There was no one signed up for public comment.

Consideration of Approval of Minutes of February 2, 2024 Board Meeting

Elaine Robertson motioned to approve the minutes of the February 2, 2024 board meeting. Mr. Worthington seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Report from the Audit, Compliance and Management Review Committee

a. Report from the Internal Auditor Consideration of approval of the 2024 Annual Audit Plan

Ms. Robertson reported the Audit, Compliance and Management Review Committee recommended approval of the 2024 Internal Audit Plan; therefore, a second was not required. 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 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 the approval of receipt of gifts and donations 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 funds.

d. Review of budget reports

□ Operating Budget Expenditure Report

Ms. Prause stated that the target for the Operating Budget expenditure as of February 29, 2024 was 50%. The percentages of the budgets used as of February 29, 2024 were: classroom instruction – 50%, residential program – 51%, summer and short-term programs – 33%, related and support services – 50%, technical assistance (Outreach) – 43%, teacher preparation (Outreach) – 19%, educational professional salary increases – 0%, central administrative – 47% and other support services – 48%. The total expended across all budgets was 47%.

□ Legacy Revenue Budget Report

Ms. Prause reported that the benchmark for the Legacy revenue budget report for the six-month period ending February 29, 2024 was 50% and the revenue received was 63%.

□ Legacy Operating Expenditure Budget Report

The benchmark for the Legacy Operating Budget used as of February 29, 2024 was 50% and the total budget used was 42%.

Report from the Program Committee

a. Recognition of the 2024 TSBVI Outstanding Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments

Beth Jones stated that the item was tabled due to the recognition taking place in the full board meeting.

b. Consideration of approval of TSBVI's 2024-2025 school calendar and waiver of instructional minutes

Ms. Jones reported that the Program Committee recommended the approval of TSBVI's 2024-2025 school calendar and submission of waiver request to the Texas Education Agency to reduce the number of required instructional minutes for staff development purposes. Because the recommendation came from Committee, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

c. Report from Comprehensive Programs Principal

□ Orientation and Mobility Program Update

Ms. Jones reported that two students provided information to the Committee about their O&M instruction. The students explained they were gaining independent skills, social skills, confidence, and time management skills. One student described that one of her tests was to navigate from a bus stop to their destination without using any technology. She added that it was impressive.

d. Consideration of approval of recommendations of the Instructional Materials Committee

The Program Committee recommended the approval of the Instructional Materials Committee's recommendations for instructional materials as presented in the Board's packet; therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

e. Report from Short-Term Programs Principal

□ Short-Term Program update

Ms. Jones reported on Short-Term Program class offerings and stated that there are six Short-Term Program courses scheduled for the remainder of the school year.

□ Update on Summer 2024 programs

TSBVI hoped to offer 252 spots for the summer programs and 240 were accepted. PE and art courses credit courses will be offered this summer.

f. Report from Outreach Director, Kate Borg

□ Outreach Program update

Ms. Jones stated that the Committee received a report on events associated with the Outreach Programs. Their Coffee Hour online programs are still well attended and Outreach has several training sessions scheduled in the near future.

□ Statewide VI Registry and Deafblind Child Count

Ms. Jones stated that there were 10,930 students in this year's VI registry and Deafblind child count which is an increase from last year's number of 10,911. She added that there are 8,369

children who will be eligible for APH (American Printing House for the Blind) materials, which has doubled.

Lunch with Student Council

Mr. Sonnenberg recessed the meeting at 11:30 a.m. for board members to have lunch with TSBVI's Student Council. Mr. Sonnenberg called the meeting back to order at 12:20 p.m.

Consideration of Approval of New Contract Staff

Emily Coleman stated that Mary Godman has been contracted to fill an Occupational Therapist position for the 2023-2024 year.

Ms. Prause motioned to approve the new contract staff as stated. Ms. Robertson seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

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

Elaine Robertson motioned to approve the proposed renewals and non-renewals of staff contracts as presented in the Board's agenda packet with changes in Eden Hagelman's and Paul Carlson's position titles. Mr. Worthington seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Consideration of Approval of Agency Strategic Plan Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Performance Measures

Ms. Robertson motioned to approve the TSBVI Agency Strategic Plan goals, objectives, strategies and performance measures for submission to the Legislative Budget Board. Ms. Prause seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Review of Needs Assessments and Proposed Action Plans and Consideration of Approval of Proposed Objectives for the 2024-2025 Annual Improvement Plan

Ms. Robertson motioned to approve the proposed objectives for the 2024-2025 annual improvement plan. Ms. Prause seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion. The entire final Annual Improvement Plan that includes complete Action Plans for 2024-2025 will be presented to the Board at their May meeting.

Report from the Superintendent

a. Campus activities and visitors

Ms. Coleman reported on some of the campus activities since the last board meeting and upcoming events.

b. Superintendent's activities

Ms. Coleman reported she attended a conference in Lubbock, TX where TSBVI also held a job fair. She attended the Braille Authority of North America Conference in Louisville. She is still working on her doctorate at Texas Tech University.

c. Activities of the TSBVI Safety and Security Committee

Ms. Coleman stated that the Safety and Security Committee discussed at their meeting yesterday an update to the Emergency Operations Plan, campus projects and the Austin Police Department's collaboration with the School.

Update on Personnel Matters and Legal Obligations

Mr. Sonnenberg announced the Board would recess the open session and convene in a closed meeting to discuss the following items listed under agenda item #17 - 'Update on Personnel Matters and Legal Obligations' in conformance with Texas Government Code Sections 551.071 – Consultation with Attorney Regarding Pending or Contemplative Litigation, Section 551.074 – Personnel Matters, and Section 551.0821 - Personally Identifiable Information about a Public School Student.

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 12:46 p.m.

Mr. Sonnenberg announced it was 1:16 p.m. and the Board would convene in open session. No action was taken on this agenda item.

Election of Education Service Center 13 Place 4 Board Candidate

The Board placed their individual votes for the election of Education Service Center Region 13's Place 4 position Board candidate.

Consideration of Approval of Board Meeting and Training Dates for Summer 2024 and the 2024-2025 School Year

Ms. Robertson motioned to approve the board meeting and training dates for summer 2024 and the 2024-2025 school year. Mr. Worthington seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Discussion of Future Board Meeting Topics

The Board discussed touring the School's Maker's Space area at a later time.

Announcements

There were no announcements

Adjournment

Ms. Prause motioned to adjourn the meeting and Ms. Jones seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously to pass the motion and the meeting was adjourned at 1:32 p.m.

Lee Sonnenberg, Board President

Date

Dan Brown, Board Secretary

Date

Veronica Keating, Recording Secretary

Date _____