

**TEXAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED**  
**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**April 4, 2025**

**Call to Order**

Lee Sonnenberg, Board President called the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Board of Trustees April 4, 2025 board meeting to order at 10:16 a.m.

TSBVI students recited the Pledge of Allegiance and Texas Pledge.

**Introduction of Board Members and Audience**

Members present were Lee Sonnenberg, Julie Prause, Elaine Robertson, Maghan Gautney, Ernest Worthington, Brenda Lee, and Beth Jones

Members present via Zoom were Hillary Rodriguez and Dan Brown.

Audience members included Emily Coleman, Superintendent, Alex Arguella, Community Engagement Coordinator; Erica Cairns, Outreach Director, Dr. Eden Hagelman, Short-Term Programs Principal, Miles Fain, Comprehensive Programs Principal; Ann Du, CFO; Cheryl Williams, Human Resources Director; Scott Brackett, Information Resources Director; Angela Wolf, Curriculum Director; Barbara Knighton, Family Lynx Coordinator; Jenny Wells, School Counsel; and Susan Houghtling, Planning and Evaluation Coordinator.

Audience members present via Zoom were Amy Potts, Family Lynx Program Coordinator and Kendra Dorty, Outreach Audio/Visual Coordinator.

Ms. Coleman presented board member Elaine Robertson with a vase made by a student with deafblindness filled with flowers. Ms. Robertson was attending her last meeting as an official board member.

**Report from Family Lynx Program**

Amy Potts provided a report about the Family Lynx projects. She stated that prom has changed and now encompasses family participation.

The Board thanked Barbara Knighton for her work and dedication to the School as she leaves her role as Family Lynx Coordinator.

**Public Comments/Open Forum**

No one signed up for public comments.

**Consideration of Approval of Minutes of January 31, 2025 Board Meeting**

Julie Prause motioned to approve the minutes of the January 31, 2025 board meeting as presented in the packet. Elaine Robertson 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 2025 Annual Audit Plan**

Ernest Worthington stated that the Audit, Compliance and Management Review Committee recommended the approval of the 2025 Annual 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 investment earnings for the six-month period ending on February 28, 2025 was \$25,625. 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 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 expenditures of gifts or donations.

d. **Review of budget reports**

➤ **Operating Budget Expenditure Report**

Mr. Worthington reported that the benchmarks for percentages used as of February 28, 2025 were: classroom instruction – 50%; residential program – 50%; summer and short-term programs – 34%; technical assistance – 44%; teacher preparation 27%; educational professional salary increases – 0%; central administrative – 47%; and other support services – 49% with the total all budgets in state treasury at 46%.

➤ **Legacy Revenue Budget Report**

The benchmark for revenues as of February 28, 2025 was 50% and the total of percent of budget received was 53%.

➤ **Legacy Operating Expenditure Budget Report**

The benchmark for the percent of the budget used as of February 28, 2025 was 50%. The total percent of the budget used was 40%.

**Report from the Personnel Committee**

a. **Consideration of approval of the hiring process for internal audit services for TSBVI**

Ms. Robertson stated that the Board chose to renew the original 2020 contract of the Garza & Gonzalez and Associates for three additional one-year periods. The most recent contract ratified on August 4, 2023 was effective September 1, 2023 through August 31, 2024 and included a provision to extend services for an additional six months beyond the August 31, 2024 end date. The contract was extended for two six-month periods and will expire August 31, 2025. The purpose of the six-month extensions was to allow time, if needed, to solicit auditing services.

The Personnel Committee recommended the hiring of an external auditing firm; therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

**Report From The Program Committee**

a. **Consideration of approval of TSBVI's 2025-2026 school calendar and waiver of operational minutes**

Brenda Lee stated that the Program Committee recommended the approval of TSBVI's 2025-2026 school calendar and waiver of operational minutes; therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

**b. Report from Comprehensive Programs Principal**

➤ **Update on Professional Learning Communities**

Ms. Lee stated that Daniel Wheeler shared information regarding professional learning communities. There are 16 groups of teachers to provide support for lesson planning, activity routines, calendar systems, student learning objectives, rubric strategies, help mentor new teachers, and share ideas.

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

➤ **Short-Term Program update**

Short-Term Programs is gearing up for the Capitol Experience class, where students visit the state Capitol. There are five programs remaining in the school year.

➤ **Update on Summer 2025 programs**

Ms. Lee stated that there were 262 applicants for Summer 2025 programs with 229 being accepted and 122 applicants on the wait list. The SWEAT (Summer Work Experience in Austin, Texas) and the WALIC (Working and Living in the Community) programs are full and have wait lists.

**d. Report from Outreach Director**

➤ **Outreach Program update**

Ms. Lee stated that the Outreach Deafblind Symposium just completed. There were 267 attendees.

➤ **Statewide VI Registry and Deafblind Child Count**

The Deafblind child count was 898 across the state this year. There was not a number for the VI registry.

**Lunch with Student Council**

The Board recessed for lunch with the Student Council at 11:30 a.m.

**Consideration of Approval of New Contract Staff**

Emily Coleman stated that the following individuals have or would be contracted to fill teacher or other contract vacancies for the 2024-2025 school year:

Comprehensive Programs

Andrew Bernet – O&M Instructor – Probationary

Avery James – Classroom Teacher – Probationary

Allison Biles – Lead Teacher Curriculum – Probationary

Elaine Robertson motioned to approve the new contract staff as presented. Brenda Lee seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

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

Ms. Coleman reviewed a list of proposed renewals of contract staff and stated that the following individuals should be removed from the list as they will be retiring or resigning: Mary Godman, Paula Willson, Helen Benton and Joanne Rodgers. No non-renewals were proposed.

Brenda Lee motioned to approve the proposed renewals and issue probationary contracts to those employees listed who have not completed their probationary terms. Julies 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 2025-2026 Annual Improvement Plan**

Ms. Coleman reported on the proposed objectives for the 2025-2026 Annual Improvement Plan and made note of the needs assessments and action plans for the coming year.

Beth Jones motioned to approve the proposed objectives for the 2025-2026 Annual Improvement Plan. Maghan Gautney seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

### **Report from the Superintendent**

#### **a. Legislative activities**

Ms. Coleman stated that she dropped off information about the School to different representatives offices recently. She stated that she testified at the House Appropriations Committee about the School's Appropriations Request on February 24, 2025.

#### **b. Campus activities**

Ms. Coleman shared that she attended the SCASB (South Central Association of Schools for the Blind) tournament at the Alabama School for the Blind. The upcoming student spring play will be Moana Jr., The Musical. Graduation is set for 1:00 p.m. on May 29, 2025.

#### **c. Activities of the TSBVI Safety and Security Committee**

The TSBVI Safety and Security Committee met on Thursday, April 3, 2025 and reviewed the fire captains training responsibilities, campus project updates and the Emergency Operating Plan (EOP).

#### **d. Superintendent's activities**

Ms. Coleman stated that she was following the Legislature closely. She continues to work on her doctoral program and is still serving on several boards.

### **Personnel Update**

Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the Board would recess the open session and convene in a closed meeting to discuss agenda item #16 – 'Personnel Update' in conformance with Texas Government Code Section 551.071 – Consultation with School Attorney and Texas Government Code Section 551.074 – Personnel Matters. He announced that no voting will take place in the closed meeting. Any action the Board wished to take as a result of discussions in closed meeting will take place after the board reconvenes in the open meeting. It was 12:25 p.m.

At 12:38 p.m. the Board convened in open session. No action was taken on the agenda item.

### **Consideration of Approval of Board Meeting and Training Dates for Summer 2025 and the 2025-2026 School Year**

Julie Prause motioned to approve the board meeting and training dates for summer 2025 and the 2025-2026 school year as presented. Elaine Robertson seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

**Discussion of Future Board Meeting Topics**

Beth Jones requested that, when reporting on STAAR testing, that a chart be included to show how long each student has attended TSBVI.

**Announcements**

Mr. Sonnenberg stated all three of his children are graduating college. Ms. Jones shared that her son was competing for a top spot in an agriculture program at A&M University. Ms. Rodriguez shared that her daughter was receiving her letterman jacket and participated in a choir competition. They won the top choir award and received two large trophies.

**Adjournment**

Elaine Robertson motioned to adjourn the April 4, 2025 meeting. Ms. Prause seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion at 12:58 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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date