Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired
BOARD MINUTES
for May 30, 2025 Meeting

Call to Order

Lee Sonnenberg, Board President called the Texas School for the Blind and Visually Impaired Board of Trustees May 30, 2025 board meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.

Introduction of Board Members and Audience

Board members present were Julie Prause, Elaine Robertson, Dan Brown, Brenda Lee, Maghan Gautney, Ernest Worthington, Hillary Rodriguez and Dan Brown.

Audience members present were Emily Coleman, Superintendent; Eden Hagelman, STP Principal; Joanne Rodgers, STP Teacher; Katie Barnes, O&M; Carolina Gonzalez, O&M; Chrissy Cowan, Outreach; Rona Pogrund, Outreach Texas Tech Liaison; Scott Brackett, IR Director; Ann Du, CFO; Suzanne Becker, Outreach; Miles Fain, Principal; Cheryl Williams, HR Director; Erica Cairns, Outreach Director; Melanie Schact, Outreach; Brian Sobeck, Outreach; Nichelle White, STP; Jenny Wells, General Council; Susan Houghtling, Planning and Evaluation Coordinator; Alex Arguello, Community Engagement; Suzanne Slade, Outreach; and Veronica Keating, Executive Assistant.

Present via Zoom was Colin Higginbotham, Outreach; David Hook, Outreach; Angela Wolf, Curriculum Director; Cyral Miller, Outreach; Miriam Miramontes, Outreach; Cecilia Robinson and Lynne McAlister, Outreach.

Administration of Oaths of Office to New and Reappointed Board Members

Julie Prause administered the Oaths of Office to reappointed board members Lee Sonnenberg and Beth Jones as well as newly appointed board member Belinda Rudinger.

Recognition of Retiring TSBVI Staff Members

Mr. Sonnenberg and the Board recognized Joann Rodgers, Carolina Gonzalez, and Chrissy Cowan for their service and dedication to the School. The following retirees were not present at the board meeting: Paula Wilson, Stephen Hannaman and Lyn Robertson. The Board congratulated the retirees and shared their gratitude for the staff members and their service.

Public Comments/Open Forum

There was no one signed up for public comment.

Consideration of Approval of Minutes of April 4, 2025 Board Meeting

Julie Pause motioned to approve the minutes of the April 4, 2025 board meeting. Dan Brown seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Report on Texas Tech University Teacher Preparation Program

Dr. Rona Progrund reported on the Texas Tech University Teacher Preparation Program. There were 98 students in the TVI program, 89 were from Texas and the remainder were from other states. In the O&M program there were 55 students and 47 of them were from Texas. She stated that, through grants the program received, they accepted 18 new students for summer. There were 13 TSVI's accepted and five O&M specialists. She stated that their university cohort is different than Stephen F. Austin State University in that students can go at their own pace.

She stated that the total completion since 2020 was 120 TSVI and 55 O&M Specialists. She thanked Miles Fain for his help with the programs students and interns.

Report from the Finance Committee

a. Consideration of approval of Investment Report

Ms. Prause reported that, for the eight month period ending April 30, 2025, earnings totaled $33,054. The Finance Committee recommended the approval of the Investment Report presented at the May 30, 2025 meeting; 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 donation of over $500 for the eight month period ending April 30, 2025; 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. No action was taken.

d. Review of budget reports

- **Operating Budget Expenditure Report**

The benchmark for the percentage of the budget used was 66%. The total percentages of the budget used were: classroom instruction – 66%; residential program – 67%; summer and short-term programs – 45%; total related and support services was 63%; technical assistance – 60%; teacher preparation 55%, educational professional salary increases – 0%; central administrative – 63%; other support services – 64%; with the total budgets in state treasury at 63%.

- **Legacy Revenue Budget Report**

The benchmark for the eight month period ending on April 30, 2025 was 66%. The total percent of revenues received was 82%.

- **Legacy Operating Expenditure Budget Report**

The benchmark for expenditure of budget used as of April 30, 2025 was 66%. The total percentage of revenues used was 55%.

Ms. Prause asked Ann Du to report out information she shared in the Finance Committee meeting. Ms. Du stated that the State Senate Finance and House Appropriations Committee released the appropriations for the School. The request for salary and shift differentials were not approved. However, the School will explore merit options. She added that the School was awarded $800,000 for the biennium to hire three full time employees to grow the Outreach program. The School's supplemental request was approved for $1,000,394 to recover the SHARS deficit. There was funding in the amount of $690,000 to update fleet vehicles. The Information Resources department received funding to update equipment and technology within the School. Ms. Coleman stated that those items were all beneficial to the School and was appreciative of them. Ms. Du stated that the proposed bill to remove the TEA language that limits the Superintendent's salary did not receive a vote in the House Committee, therefore, it did not move forward.

Ms. Prause asked Scott Brackett about the silent panic alert buttons that are required to be in classrooms. Mr. Brackett stated that the School will address the requirement by using a feature within the phone systems. If there were an intruder or dangerous person on campus staff would

use a button on the phone to initiate the panic alert system. The button will be made tactilely accessible.

Report from the Program Committee

a. **Report from School Health Advisory Council, Nancy Fitch**
   - **Report on TSBVI's School Health Advisory Council's activities and recommendations**

Brenda Lee reported that Nancy Fitch reported out the activities and recommendations from the SHAC Committee. She expressed the importance of the group. They meet four times a year and usually in the evening. She said that council members included staff, parents, and faculty and are working to increase the Committee numbers. They focused on physical activity and offer many events to students throughout the year. She added that they also focused on staff mental and emotional wellbeing and diabetic and prediabetes care.

   - **Consideration of approval of supplementary materials for the instruction of Human Sexuality**

Ms. Lee stated that the Program Committee recommended the approval of supplementary materials for the instruction of human sexuality; therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

b. **Report from Curriculum Director**
   - **Consideration of approval of recommendations of the Instructional Materials Committee**

Ms. Lee stated that the Program Committee recommended the approval of recommendations of the Instructional Materials 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**

There were 132 new students served in the Short-Term Programs. There were 243 returning students.

   - **Update on Summer 2025 programs**

Ms. Lee reported that STP was readying themselves for summer programs. She said that there were 221 students attending the summer programs.

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

The deafblind child count numbers increased from 873 to 898. The academic braille numbers were slightly lower from last year, 339 to 327. Mr. Sonnenberg asked where the numbers were reported. Ms. Coleman answered that it was on the student data page of the School's website.

e. **Consideration of approval of Board policies**

EHB (TSBVI)	**Curriculum Design: Special Programs (amend)**
EHBAA (TSBVI)	**Special Education: Identification, Evaluation, and Eligibility (amend)**
FB (TSBVI)	**Equal Educational Opportunity (amend)**
FFAF	**Wellness and Health Services: Care Plans (review)**
FFG (TSBVI)	**Student Welfare: Abuse, Neglect, Exploitation, and Improper Child Care Incidents (amend)**

Ms. Lee stated that the Program committee recommended to amend policies EHB, EHBAA, FB, and FFG; therefore, a second was not required. The Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Ms. Lee stated that Policy FFAF was reviewed. Mr. Sonnenberg stated the minutes should reflect that Policy FFAF was reviewed.

Consideration of Approval of New Contract Staff
Mr. Brown motioned to approve the new contract staff as presented with the addition of staff Kate Villareal, Teacher Probationary; Alicia Cisneros, Occupational Therapist; Savanna Jones, Teacher; and Courtney Forman, Outreach Consultant. The other changes approved previously but resigning, retiring or moving to substitute were Caroline Clark and Victoria Garate.
Ms. Lee seconded the motion. The Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Report on Status of Contracting with External Audit Firm or Individual
Ms. Coleman and the Board discussed the current auditing firm Garza-Gonzalez and Associates.

Review of the 2025-2026 Annual Improvement Plan
The Board reviewed the Annual Improvement Plan. Ms. Coleman stated that an update on the 2024-2025 action plans will be given at the October meeting.

Designation of Business Closure Days Related to Public Information Requests
Ms. Jones motioned to approve the designation of business closure days related to public information requests. Mr. Worthington seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

Report from the Superintendent

a. Legislative activities
Ms. Coleman stated that Ann Du was in close contact with the Legislative Budget Board and kept her apprised of all necessary information.

b. Campus activities
Ms. Coleman shared activities around campus. Texas Education Agency Special Education monitoring representatives were recently on campus. They gave positive feedback and compliments. She added that they monitored the School every three years. In the future it will be monitored every six years. She stated that students participated in dragon boat racing which was a great experience for the students. The spring play – Moana Jr. The Musical was a hit. The Capitol Experience was in April for students in grades 9-12. The Low Vision Conference 2025 was held on May 16, 2025. Outreach continued to hold coffee hour and it has been well attended.

c. Superintendent's activities
Ms. Coleman shared activities she's been participating in. She attended the South Central Association of Schools for the Blind (SCASB) in Muskogee, Oklahoma. She still serves on the Board for the Council of Schools for the Blind (COSB). She is finishing up her spring semester at Texas Tech University. The School hosted the Braille Authority of North America conference. She took part in the beautifying of the cemetery plots owned by TSBVI as well as attended the Dedication Ceremony held by the City of Austin in May.

Personnel Update

Mr. Sonnenberg announced that the Board would 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.

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 12:02 p.m.

It was 12:20 p.m. and Mr. Sonnenberg called the meeting to order.

There was no action taken on the above agenda item.

Appointment of Board Members to Board Committees
Mr. Sonnenberg appointed board members to the Board Committees where they will serve and report back information regarding the specificity of each program. The programs and their assigned members are:

Audit, Compliance and Management Review Committee:
Ernest Worthington – Chairperson;
Brenda Lee – Vice-Chairperson; and
Hillary Rodriguez – Member.

Finance Committee:
Julie Prause – Chairperson;
Dan Brown – Vice-Chairperson;
Lee Sonnenberg – Member

Programs Committee:
Beth Jones – Chairperson;
Maghan Gautney – Vice-Chairperson; and
Belinda Rudinger – Member.

Personnel Committee:
Hillary Rodgriguez – Chairperson;
Julie Prause – Vice-Chairperson;
Maghan Gautney – Member; and
Lee Sonnenberg – Member.

Discussion of Future Board Meeting Topics and Training Date
The Board discussed topics and trainings they'd like to see in future meetings. Mr. Sonnenberg would like to learn more about deafblindness. He enjoyed the commencement speaker Hayley Broadway who spoke at the TSBVI graduation. Ms. Coleman stated that Ms. Broadway holds workshops and that she would look into the subject. The Board added they would like an update regarding safety and security. Ms. Coleman stated that there is a Safety and Security Committee meeting the day before the full Board meeting in December. She said, she would ask Stacy Correa, Security Program Supervisor, to give the Board an update at the December board meeting.

Announcements

Mr. Sonnenberg stated that the Braille Authority of North America (BANA) spring meeting was held at TSBVI. The attendees were impressed with the School and the hospitality they received. He said it was well regarded.

Adjournment
It was 12:27 p.m. and Brenda Lee motioned to adjourn the May 30, 2025 TSBVI Board of Trustees meeting. Beth Jones seconded the motion and the Board voted unanimously to pass the motion.

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