



BOARD OF VISITORS

THE VIRGINIA SCHOOL FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND
P.O. BOX 2069
STAUNTON, VA 24402-2069

Senator Emmett W. Hanger, Jr.
Board Chairman

September 27, 2012
Minutes of Meeting

Senator Hanger called the meeting to order. Senator Favola attended remotely by phone conference from the Westover Branch of the Arlington County Public Library.

Members present: Senator Hanger, Senator Favola, Delegate Bell, Delegate Wilt, Alice Frick, Rachel Bavister, Donna Gateley, Virgil Cook, John Pleasants, Jane McNeil.

Members absent: Diane Sandidge

A quorum is present. Members introduced themselves.

Reading and approval of June 28, 2012 meeting minutes: The Board decided to capitalize all references to the Blind and Deaf Departments. A question was raised about the correct number of students that graduated last year. The minutes reflect what was reported at the meeting, even though the actual numbers were different. John Pleasants MOVED to accept the minutes with amendments. Motion was SECONDED. Motion carried by voice vote.

School reports:

Budget

Janice Rankin presented two grants for approval. Title I, Part A, Improving Basic Programs and Title II, Part A, Teacher Quality. These are part of the No Child Left Behind grants. Delegate Bell MOVED to approve the Title I, Part A, Improving Basic Programs grant. Motion was SECONDED. Motion carried by voice vote. John Pleasants MOVED to approve the Title II, Part A, Teacher Quality grant. Motion was SECONDED. Motion carried by voice vote.

Five decision packages were sent to Laura Fornash, Secretary of Education, for approval. Ms. Fornash approved two decision packages to be submitted to the General Assembly.

Two decision packages that were approved:

1. Request for new bus. VSDB will surplus two old busses and buy one new bus. The new bus will be purchased from the state contract. Cost is \$111,000.
2. Increase teacher salaries to be competitive. Cost is \$41,000. (More information will be provided during the Human Resource report.)

Three decision packages that were not approved:

1. Two additional ground staff to maintain additional landscaping from consolidation.
2. Three additional housekeeping staff to maintain additional buildings from consolidation.

3. Additional public safety personnel. Eight additional positions will allow for two officers per shift while students are on campus. One officer would monitor the security cameras that were installed as part of the consolidation project; one officer would be available to make rounds.

Nancy Armstrong has asked Secretary Fornash if VSDB could still submit the three decision packages even though they were not approved by her office. She is waiting for a reply. VSDB does not know the reason why the three were not approved.

Currently VSDB is 4% over budget. There are two main reasons for this:

- The summer program bill came to \$57,000. The Foundation will reimburse the school once all the bills are received.
- Insurance is usually paid at the end of the fiscal year, last year the insurance payment could not be paid; therefore the payment was made in the first month of the new fiscal year. This amount was \$143,000.

Without the summer school bill or insurance payment the budget would only be 2% over. This year will be a very lean year. The VITA bill has been reduced from \$25,000 to \$4,600 a month. The school is looking to downgrade the current bandwidth to reduce the monthly bill even more.

The school receives some income from Medicaid. An increase in enrollment would help increase the amount of Medicaid. The Department of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH) will rent space in Byrd Hall. VSDB is trying to get the Department of the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) back on campus. No rent is in the budget at this time. The proposed rental income will help make-up budget shortfalls. The school is still paying double for payroll services. This is an ongoing struggle.

Human Resources

Nate McLamb presented a PowerPoint with information on staffing and faculty planning. Candidates per teacher recruitment are going down, from 12.9 per recruitment in 2008 to 3.75 per recruitment in 2012. The turnover rate for teachers with less than ten years experience is increasing. Data from exit interviews show the primary reason for leaving is relocation or the opportunity for a better job. With a high turnover rate our education cost goes up. New teachers need to achieve and maintain dual certifications, one in special education and one in content area. There are also increases in training cost for American Sign Language (ASL) skills and Braille. Until a teacher is proficient in ASL an interpreter must be provided for class room interpreting.

Mr. McLamb met with the Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM) on September 6 to discuss our unique situation. They recommended:

1. Eliminate salary comparisons with Harrisonburg City and Rockingham County and add Waynesboro City. This better represents the local area.

2. Revise our educational assistance to be based on the amount of tuition provided instead of the date the course was taken. Currently a staff member must work one year after receiving tuition assistance.
3. Establish compensation practices for in-band adjustments to teachers during the first three years based on goal achievement.

As recommended by the DHRM, the new salary scale is focused on retention in the under 15 years of experience category. The new salary scale is higher for the first 14 years, then evens out for one year, then is slightly less for the remaining years in comparison to local districts. With this new salary scale VSDB has reduced the requested amount in the decision package from \$80,000 to \$40,836.99 to fund teacher salaries. New salary scale will go into effect for FY14 if funded. This scale is based on current local divisions, if local divisions give a pay increase VSDB will once again be below the local average. The proposed salary scale includes the 2% statewide increase that is proposed for July 2013. If the statewide increase is not approved by the General Assembly, the scale will be adjusted down by 2%.

VSDB has noticed that once teachers receive training here, they take higher paying jobs in other school districts.

According to DHRM, VSDB is not out of compliance with the lower salary scale for our teachers. The General Assembly allows aspirational goals, and will not penalize VSDB if the teacher salary decision package is not funded.

The Board would like to see a comparison of VSDB teacher salaries to other Deaf and Blind School salaries. It would be difficult to compare due to the difference in cost of living between the locations of each school.

Mr. McLamb asked the Board to adopt this scale if funded. If not funded, continue hiring as we have been.

John Pleasants MOVED to support the decision package amount as written. Motion was SECONDED. Motion carried by voice vote.

Current recruitment: The Teacher Assistant Supervisor position is a new designation. The night dorm supervisor has been overseeing the early morning teacher assistants, but is accruing over time. Currently VSDB has 6.5 positions frozen. Secretary Fornash has approved hiring for the current positions we have posted.

Residential Report

Dr. Armstrong asked Javier Alcazar to give his report on the summer camp he attended. Javier reported that he attended the National Association of the Deaf Youth Leadership Camp in Oregon. There were many deaf youth representatives from many states. He learned about priorities and time management, and thought that one month there was equal to ten month in school. "Very cool, made lots of friends". Javier is a senior this year and plans to attend Gallaudet and major in business. He was very happy to go to camp in Oregon.

Dr. Armstrong presented the residential report. Javier is a good example of what happen to students who attend VSDB. He has advanced very well in our program. Currently VSDB has three “new” dorms, Kiser Hall for deaf boys, Houser-Tyler Hall for blind students, and Watts Hall for elementary children. Watts Hall was renovated as part of the project. Elementary boys on top floor while elementary girls are on lower floor. Both deaf and blind elementary students are in this dorm. Bass Hall is the dorm for the deaf girls, but was not part of the consolidation project.

Currently VSDB has 112 students, 77 are residential. The campus could house 116 students in the dorms, plenty of room to grow the residential program.

The girls’ Volleyball team will travel to Cave Spring, Georgia for the Mason Dixon Tournament. VSDB will share travel expense with the Tennessee School for the Deaf. This year away games have been reduced to save money.

In response to a question from a Board member. The dorm salary starts near \$16,000 and goes through \$30,000 with the average being \$20,000-\$25,000 per year. The turnover rate in the dorm is very low.

School Report

Keith VanFossen, Assistant Principal for the Blind Department and building supervisor for the Yates Shinpaugh Education Building reported on the schools. The move into the new buildings was a challenge, and everyone worked hard. Special thanks to the maintenance department for all the work they put into the move.

Students from the Blind Department attended a naturalization ceremony at the Frontier Culture Museum. This week is Deaf Awareness Week with many activities planned for the students. We have several students dual enrolled at Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC) taking Astronomy and Physics. Students are attending Valley Vocational Technical Center (VVTC) as well. The work-based learning program has 56 students enrolled with 16 going out to work in the community. Some students are working on campus as well. The school is hosting the Mason Dixon Boys’ Basketball tournament in January (23-26). Jim Kiser is coordinating. Basketball games will be on January 24-26. The majority of our students will go home early for this event. VSDB is also hosting the east coast Goalball tournament in March. A group of science students will be going to Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) for hands-on activities and practical experience in conjunction with the Chesapeake project at the school.

Diversity Report and Enrollment Report

Cyndy Ward reports that the admissions office is quite busy, though we would like to see it busier. Since January of 2012 we have admitted ten students in the Deaf Department and nine in the Blind Department. A new student will start in the Blind Department next week. There is a steady stream of new students. The school is stepping up the effort to get our name out there. VSDB staff are attending all events we can to provide information about the school.

A Diversity Committee was established to work on the consolidation of the two departments into the schools. This process is going very well. The students are doing great with adapting to new interactions; they are getting to know each other. Training and workshops have been given to both departments that have focused on building strengths and team building. A meeting is scheduled to go over the first few months. The Diversity Committee is scheduling more training. This fall, a cross country team with both deaf and blind students has been formed. There are 18 students who are consistently running. Guide runners are helping the blind students. The team went to UVA to watch and interact with their cross country team. The youngest runner is in middle school, with the ages ranging from 12 to 18. They will be competing in local meets. VSDB has a new parent infant outreach coordinator. VSDB is looking forward to expanding the program.

Horticulture Report

Nick Swanson, Horticulture Project Manager reported that the new horticulture program is starting. He has had a great response from the staff. VSDB has started the CROPS (**C**ooperation **R**espect **O**pportunity **P**erseverance **S**kills). This program works with the kids through gardening both as an academic re-enforcer and as an outlet for students who might not be athletically inclined. Mr. Swanson works with teachers on a curriculum that can be emphasized with gardening. The students are in the process of designing raised beds that they will build and then plant their gardens. The food grown by the students can be used in the cafeteria or students can sell their plants. The students are learning about healthy food choices. One concept that helps build confidence is taking care of living things; the process of caring for the plants builds responsibility.

The school is partnering with the Allegheny Mountain School to have an intern on campus starting in January. The intern will assist Mr. Swanson in all horticulture programs.

Update on current business:

Foundation Report

Nancy Armstrong reports the Foundation is funding Nick Swanson's position thereby providing a great opportunity to the students. The Foundation also provided scholarships for summer school. The Foundation fund is 3.5 million and is managed by Davenport and Company. The Foundation decided to send out a Request for Proposal (RFP) to find out if Davenport is the best manager for the fund. Twenty seven RFPs were received. Foundation members are reviewing the RFPs and will recommend three to come to the Foundation to present. The Foundation funded a charettes, (a brainstorming group) that was held on August 24th. Business leaders from the local area, representatives from Richmond, school members and Foundation members attended the meeting. The school is slated to receive \$245,000 for design of Main Hall in approximately 18 months. The charette will provide a vision to use when the planning process begins. The full report will be presented to the Board for approval when it is received. Idea for fundraiser: Small version of VSDB flag to sell at school events.

Construction Report

The dedication of the Yates Shinpaugh Education Building (YSEB) was held on September 13th. This dedication symbolized the entire consolidation process, as the education building was the

main focus of the consolidation. There will be a dedication for Houser-Tyler later in the year. The court yard will be finished in November/December.

The communication system is one item on the punch list to be corrected. One of the main problems is how to notify deaf staff that a message is being sent out by the intercom. Additional problems have been found with the security doors, the deaf staff cannot hear the unlocking click to know the doors are open. Cell phones do not work in the YSEB; the Architects are looking into how to correct this. Things have gone very well. Kjellstrom & Lee will still be on campus for some items. Lights in the classrooms to indicate change of class periods is also being looked into. The new emergency light system is good, but does not work for changing classes.

New Business:

Presentation of the Hamilton Relay Community Leader Award

Alice Frick was presented with the Hamilton Relay Community Leader Award for her community service.

Legislation

Senator Hanger reports the General Assembly has passed legislation (HB 1184) that requires local school boards to implement agreements with community colleges for dual enrollment that will allow students to work toward an associate's degree while still in high school. Dr. Armstrong affirmed that VSDB currently has a signed agreement with Blue Ridge Community College (BRCC). VSDB and BRCC have worked together on tech. programs, this is the first year we have dual enrollments. Delegate Bell MOVED to affirm the agreement between VSDB and BRCC. Motion was SECONDED. Motion carried by voice vote.

The Board would like to see similar agreements with community colleges in other regions of the state close to where VSDB students live. This will facilitate possible summer courses for VSDB students.

Other new business

John Pleasants thanked Delegate Bell for proposing the Resolution for Ray Houser. The resolution will not be official until the end of the session, April or May. There will be a presentation to the family at that time.

The Board would like to have a joint meeting with the VSDB Foundation. This will allow the two boards to meet and discuss projects.

The Board would like the ADA report to be presented at the next meeting along with an elevator update.

No other new business.

Public comment:

A question was placed to the Board on how is Virginia Lottery money used. How much comes to VSDB? Lottery money is applied to education, but it is not in addition to state general funding.

The amount of tax money spent on education is reduced by the amount received from the Lottery. The more money received from the Lottery, the less tax money is spent on education. To put the amount into perspective the Lottery, in a good year, provides \$400-\$500 million to education. The state spends 5 billion a year on education.

The representative from Hamilton relay informed the Board that they have a scholarship in the amount of \$500 for deaf or hard of hearing students. The application is due in April.

Next meeting:

December 13, 2012, at 10:00 a.m. in the Boardroom of Main Hall.

Rachel Bavister observed that it is difficult for deaf or hard of hearing individuals to follow a conversation using a speaker phone as they are unable to see who is speaking. If the Board continues to have remote locations a video conference should be setup in place of a speaker phone for equal access.

Executive Session:

In accordance with Virginia code 2.2- 3711(A) 1: John Pleasants MOVED to go into a “closed” executive session of the Board to review the recommendations of the Executive Committee on the Employee Work Profile (EWP) and Evaluation of the Superintendent. Motion was SECONDED. Motion carried by voice vote. The Board went into executive session. Senator Hanger MOVED to end the executive session of the Board. Motion was SECONDED. Motion carried by voice vote. Senator Hanger polled the Board members to confirm that only items related to the EWP and evaluation of the Superintendent were discussed during the executive session. Each Board member affirmed.

Rachel Bavister MOVED to approve the Superintendent’s EWP and evaluation. Motion was SECONDED. Motion carried by voice vote.

The Board meeting was adjourned at 12:35 p.m.

Minutes approved December 13, 2012.