



# 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

VSDB BOV Meeting  
June 27, 2013  
VSDB Main Hall Boardroom

Senator Hanger called the meeting to order.

Senator Hanger made opening comments, specifically noting the recent awards luncheon and dedication of the elementary and blind dormitory facilities.

Dr. Cook commented on his experience attending the dedication ceremonies and the recent blind alumni event.

Members present: Donna Gateley, Delegate Bell, Alice Frick, Senator Hanger, Dr. Virgil Cook, Delegate Wilt, and John Pleasants

Members absent: Rachel Bavister, Diane Sandidge, Senator Favola, and Jane McNeil

Also in attendance: Nancy Armstrong and Cameron O'Brien

A quorum is present.

## **Reading and approval of March 21, 2013 meeting minutes:**

There were no changes or corrections noted. Ms. Frick MOVED to accept the minutes. The motion was SECONDED. The motion passed without opposition.

## **Reports:**

Personnel: Mr. Nate McLamb

Mr. McLamb shared that VSDB had 19 resignations. Nineteen positions will be held open, which is about 10.5% of VSDB's authorized staffing.

Mr. McLamb introduced the new Principal, Pat Trice. Her credentials were described for the board members. Ms. Trice was in attendance. Senator Hanger invited Ms. Trice to make comments to the board.

Mr. McLamb also named the newly hired employees and their credentials were described. A handout was provided. In addition to Ms. Trice, new employees include: Jenilee Fletcher, Emily Moran, John LaBarbera, Julia Todd, Amy Bowers, and Travis Painter.

A handout was provided and reviewed describing the positions currently in recruitment. VSDB is currently recruiting for the following positions: Spanish Teacher, Teacher Assistant, Behavior Management Specialist/Analyst, two Food Service Workers, Grounds Worker/Maintenance

Technician, Transportation/Maintenance Worker, Housekeeper, three Campus Security Officers and a Registered Nurse. One Campus Security position has recently been filled and an offer has been made to a candidate for the Registered Nurse.

Senator Hanger commented that budget restrictions in recent years has hindered recruitment and hiring processes.

#### Testing Updates: Ms. Cyndy Ward

Cyndy Ward shared information about recent standardized testing that shows how students are progressing in their basic academic skills.

Diagrams showed student improvement by reading level based on PALS testing done with Deaf students. Data for fall 2012, Midyear 2013 and spring 2013 was available. A chart showed the type of progress made by each student based on data from PALS testing. 11% of students demonstrated regression. 40% of students experienced one or two year gains. The data presented a general picture of improvement for tested middle school and elementary school students. Delegate Bell asked if the regression was isolated to a group or reflected general information. Ms. Ward stated that the data was general and specific information could be seen in individual student reports.

Ms. Ward shared that there are some inconsistencies with the administration of the PALS testing. There will be training in the fall in order to address some of the inconsistencies. One area for improvement is making sure the same group of students is tested during each testing window.

Ms. Ward told the board that changes in the tool for reading assessment are under discussion. The Qualitative Reading Assessment (QRI) is under consideration for all grade levels. The secondary deaf department is currently using the QRI. The QRI tests a different set of skills than the PALS assessment. If a change is made, speech language pathologists may continue to use the PALS assessment as part of their treatment plan.

The ultimate goal of the testing is to make longitudinal comparison possible from elementary through secondary years.

Ms. Frick asked for clarification about what the PALS test is and what it measures. Ms. Ward described the PALS test as a test that uses passages to measure general literacy skills including fluency, spelling, comprehension and accuracy when reading. The test allows a basic reading level to be assigned for independent, instructional and frustration levels. The data allows students to be appropriately challenged. Ms. Ward offered to show an example of the test and Ms. Frick expressed interest.

Ms. Frick asked how writing is assessed at this time. Ms. Fernsler, assistant principal of the Deaf Department, stated the Kendall Writing Scale is used to assess writing performance in the classroom. The teachers complete this testing and it allows them to assign approximate grade levels.

Ms. Frick asked for the complete name of the PALS test. It is the Phonological Awareness Literacy Screening. Senator Hanger shared that this test was developed at the Curry School of Education at the University of Virginia.

Ms. Ward recognized Michelle Brown, speech language pathologist for preparing the graphs.

Ms. Ward reviewed a line graph that compared spelling skills to current reading level, based on the PALS assessment. It was found that students with higher reading levels had higher spelling proficiency.

### Clinical Services

Ms. Ward shared that she has compiled a scope of the services provided at VSDB. This describes what each provider addresses and their caseloads for the past year. A handout with the information will be provided.

### Budget: Ms. Janice Rankin

Ms. Rankin shared that the general fund is currently in the black by approximately \$500.

Ms. Rankin presented and reviewed the 2013-14 No Child Left Behind Grant, Title I. A copy of the grant was provided. This grant includes a Spanish Teacher, tutors, remediation, one CNA position, interpreters for students and meetings, foreign language interpreters, workshops for staff not covered by other grants, online and other technological applications for students. The total of the previous year is used and then it is adjusted during the application review process. The grant requests are approximately \$130,000. The amount awarded from year to year varies, but stays within the same range.

John Pleasants MOVED to approve the Title I grant application. The motion was SECONDED. The motion passed without opposition.

Ms. Rankin presented and reviewed the No Child Left Behind, Title II 2013-14 grant application. These funds are typically for teacher and administration use. Tutors are funded to support staff members trying to pass licensure related tests. Tuition reimbursement is provided for those needing classes for licensure. Training materials are purchased to assist with staff development. Some conferences and workshops are also funded. Ms. Frick asked if funding from this grant is used to pay for classes and testing, do the teachers have any obligation to the school. Ms. Rankin shared that teachers are obligated to work at VSDB for an additional 2 years after completion of a class.

Ms. Gately asked if it would be a better idea to ask for a higher amount. Ms. Rankin shared that asking for a higher amount would not result in a higher level of funding.

Delegate Bell MOVED to approve the Title II grant application. The motion was SECONDED. The motion passed without opposition.

Ms. Rankin reviewed the budget for fiscal year 2014. A print out of the “roll up” of the budget was provided. The entire budget is available if requested. The budget has approximately \$10.2 million. Contracts with outside providers have not gone up at this time since those contractors have not requested the allowable yearly increase.

Senator Hanger asked if there is any accounting for funds regained from outside sources such as rentals. A category of Contingency Funds was included in the budget and this accounts for monies which may not be realized.

Funds for tuition reimbursement were included in order to balance the budget. The actual amount to be received will be based on the December 1 Child Count. Ms. Frick asked if more students would provide additional revenues to balance the budget. Ms. Rankin stated that though funds will increase for tuition reimbursement but most likely would not be enough to balance the budget. Though more students result in more tuition reimbursement, there are also more expenditures and these vary from student to student

Senator Hanger noted that the budget will be looked at by the Governor later in the year and funding for VSDB will be examined and also be impacted.

Donna Gateley MOVED to approve the FY 2014 budget as presented. The motion was SECONDED. The motion passed without opposition.

Ms. Rankin stated that a form must be completed stating that the budget for 2013 is not in debt. The form will be provided as required.

#### IEPs and Testing: Ms. Pattye Leslie

Ms. Leslie presented a PowerPoint with information on the impact IEP meetings and standardized testing has on staffing.

#### CROPS: Mr. Keith VanFossen

Mr. VanFossen shared highlights of the program for Mr Swanson who was ill. The program has had an intern working with them, Chelsea Wakstein. Approximately 35 students have been working with the program. The raised beds have been planted and are ready to be harvested this summer. Edible landscaping, fruit trees and composting have been established. A spring garden festival was held to highlight the program and raise some additional funds. The CROPS program was able to raise \$700. Produce is currently used by the cafeteria, some local businesses, and some other classroom projects.

Mr. Pleasants asked about the status of the memorial fountain to be placed near the blind dorm. Fundraising is still underway and is going quite well.

Dr. Armstrong shared that Mr. Swanson and Ms. Wakstein attended a recent Rotary meeting. Members of that group were provided with produce in order to show what the program is providing.

Ms. Wakstein will stay until the end of the year and it is anticipated that another intern will come when her time is finished.

### VSDB Video

The video was not ready for presentation.

### Rental Space: Dr. Nancy Armstrong

Dr. Armstrong reported that at this time no one has committed to renting any of the available spaces. Some groups have inquired and may be considering the space; however no one has contracted with the school to rent.

Delegate Wilt asked how information about the rental space will be provided and if there are others who may be interested in the spaces. Senator Hanger stated that expanding the scope of advertising could broaden if the renter would be compatible with the school.

Mr. Pleasants asked what the status was of the DBVI office returning to the VSDB campus. At this time, the commissioner has decided that the DBVI counselors will stay in the current location. Dr. Armstrong shared that DBVI employees have been on campus for a summer program this week and VSDB is enjoying that partnership.

Senator Hanger shared that a group related to mattress storage has expressed interest in coming to Staunton and it may be worth checking with that group.

### Superintendent's Report: Dr. Nancy Armstrong

Mr. VanFossen shared information about the summer program for the visually impaired held on the VSDB campus. The students have been involved in a program about America, the Great Melting Pot.

Ms. Fernsler shared that there are about 18 deaf students including current VSDB students and some from the public school programs. The students have been learning about flight. The program has been a partnership with James Madison University. Students attending the program utilize a variety of communication modalities. Students currently not attending VSDB are expressing interest in attending VSDB during the school year, and application packets will be provided when students go home.

Dr. Armstrong shared that week long programs will begin during the 2013-2014 school year offering more students a chance to come to the campus and experience our program. This program is funded by the Foundation.

Dr. Armstrong has been touring the state and meeting with superintendents' groups. There are many new superintendents coming to Virginia from out of state and it has been a good opportunity to share information with those professionals. The outreach coordinator, Kathy

Guisewite, has also been meeting with a variety of groups, including parent groups. Dr. Armstrong looks forward to working with Ms. Trice to examine needs across the state and focus VSDB programming to address additional needs of students across the state.

Mr. Pleasants had heard of a presentation that Kathy Guisewite made at a recent convention. He stated that there were “rave reviews” of her presentation.

Projects continue on campus, including a project to address the sewer drains in the cafeteria kitchen. Many projects have been completed recently with great success.

The enrollment for the coming year is at 96 students; 58 in the deaf and 28 in the blind department program. It is typical for numbers to drop below 100 in June. There are 15 scheduled evaluations in July for prospective students. Ms. Gately asked if students needing a 1:1 aide 24 hours per day are accepted. Dr. Armstrong explained that this level of staffing is not possible at this time. Dr. Cook shared concerns about a student he had heard of having 1:1 aide assistance from kindergarten through graduation and the fact that the student did not develop appropriate independence.

#### ADA Report: Mr. Jonathan Garber

Jonathan Garber with Linage Architects was in attendance to report on findings from a recent study. A contract with the firm was signed and then a team came on campus for 90 days to determine ADA compliance. He also gave background on changes to the Americans with Disabilities Act. A PowerPoint of the firm’s finding was shown.

All new regulations must be followed for any project that broke ground after March 15, 2012. The agency has the option about what to align with the new regulations for any projects prior to March 15, 2012. Additional disabilities must now be addressed based on the new law.

Physical and measurable elements must be considered as Building Blocks. Components are groupings of building blocks with the most important component being the accessible route. The biggest considerations are the scoping requirements that allow the program to meet requirements without addressing every building block. These components are important when considering cost.

The hired firm’s primary job was to look at current compliance. Cost projections were provided for some areas, but were not the primary purpose of the study. The report on the playground is the last area that will be provided. Specifics of the study were described including the accuracy of measurements used in the assessment. Rounding of measurements is not permitted and precise measurements were required. The measurements established by the Department of Justice are exact and “close enough” will not be accepted. Common problems were described. Many of these problems were found due to the older construction on campus. Some problems were found in the new constructions. Some problems can be remedied with modifications that do not require extensive construction. Other problems will present more problems such as the requirements for grab bars in restrooms.

The project results are just over \$1 million. This cost is based on Q4 2012 values. Costs have increased since 2012. Financial infeasibility can be claimed based on cost. The largest cost is related to exterior accessibility. Bass Hall, Battle Hall and Healy Hall have problems in excess of \$100,000. Kiser Hall and Houser Hall have problems valued at \$10,000 for each building. Reach requirement creates quite a few problems.

VSDB staff has shared concerns about providing real life experiences rather than “building a wall of protection.” The firm can only consider the requirements of the law.

Some requirements are so new that solutions were not on the market to address the problem. Suppliers are catching up to the requirements and more solutions will become available. Stuart Building and Peery Hall had problems valued at approximately \$5,000. The Chapel has approximately \$4,000 of problems. Yates Shinpaugh and Watts Hall are in excellent shape with a small number of problems. Scoping must be remembered and considered when thinking about correcting problems.

Dr. Cook and Mr. Pleasants shared some areas that were noticed during the recent Blind Department Alumni event. Specifically, protruding railings and the amount of pressure required to open a door. Dr. Cook asked what will happen with things that must be changed to meet the ADA requirements, but will compromise the historical integrity of some buildings such as Stuart Hall. Mr. Mahler and Mr. Garber shared that there are some exemptions permitted for buildings identified as historical landmarks. Buildings without official designation will not be eligible for those exemptions.

Exterior doors and fire doors do not have a requirement, only interior doors. Some areas have been submitted to the general contractor to address as part of the new construction warranty. At the time, the requirements have not yet been met and it may not be possible to meet the requirements.

Mr. Mahler shared that it has been found that different contractors measure different ways in order to be compliant which creates significant discrepancies. Problems are resulting from some contractors not yet catching up to the application of the regulations.

Mr. Mahler and his staff plan to take the report and address what makes sense, first.

Dr. Armstrong noted that problems with door openings have been noted by students. Some students are small and have difficulty opening the door. In addition, some children wish to sleep with a door open and this is not possible with the new doors. She asked if alternate routes can address some slopes that do not meet ADA requirements. Mr. Mahler explained the concern that a person could end up on some slopes that are not compliant without realizing the noncompliance.

The report includes over 1,000 items.

Senator Hanger noted the comprehensive report is now available and Ms. Gateley expressed interest in reviewing the report after the meeting.

Ms. Frick made a motion for a short break. Delegate Wilt seconded the motion and a 5 minute break was taken.

**FOIA: Cameron O’Brion**

Cameron O’Brien brought information for the board’s consideration. A PowerPoint presentation was shown and questions were answered.

**Main Hall Proposal**

Money is now available for initial planning. Recommendations have been received from staff members. Senator Hanger stated there would be no harm in moving forward with the planning phase. He noted that each member will have different ideas to share and that some areas may be limited by funds. Senator Hanger recommended that the planning phase could move forward with agreement from the board and noting that there are disagreements at this time about what the project should accomplish.

Mr. Pleasants shared that there are concerns related to the Chapel. It is a recognized historical landmark and there is significant Blind Department history related to this structure. The Blind Department Alumni oppose major changes to this structure. Dr. Cook added comments in support of this noting additional historical significance. He shared that there may be precedent to support use of the ground floor space as a cafeteria. Dr. Armstrong stated there has never been intent to change the second floor space. The cafeteria in the basement has been the proposal and this would allow the possibility for events in the second floor area to have access to food from the cafeteria. A copy of the Blind Alumni Association’s resolution was provided.

Dr. Armstrong shared that any changes to the Main Hall Buildings will be under historical review throughout the process. Dr. Cook’s desire is for historical value to be preserved.

Virgil Cook MOVED to accept the Blind Department resolution. The motion was **SECONDED**. The motion passed without opposition.

**Other Business**

Senator Hanger recognized that Dr. Armstrong has started endeavors to increase the growth of the student body. He noted that if student enrollment increases the process of obtaining funding to support a Main Hall project will be easier.

Ms. Frick raised the topic of the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of VSDDB in 2014. She asked if plans should be made for the celebration. The Deaf Alumni have already started to consider plans, but she feels it may be good to consider ideas that include staff and students. It may be good for the school to schedule an event and invite outside guests. Senator Hanger proposed that this topic be placed on the agenda for the next meeting.

Ms. Frick shared that Mary Kraus, Head of the Museum Committee, has found information about a board award that has been awarded to a graduate with high academic achievement and high level of school activity participation. This award was discontinued when the school was placed under the Department of Education. The board was asked if this should be awarded again

in the future. Ms. Frick showed a past award that had been donated to the museum. It was also noted that Dr. Cook received this award when he was a graduate. Senator Hanger asked that Dr. Armstrong discuss this idea with VSDB staff and bring back comments at the next meeting.

Senator Hanger asked for public comment.

Rocco DeVito brought comment about the new library. His wife Donna, former librarian, has found information about Job Turner. He is the first deaf librarian of VSDB. He and his wife would like to propose naming the second floor library in Stuart Hall after Job Turner. Senator Hanger asked Dr. Armstrong to bring staff comments to the next meeting.

Byron Heath, representative of the Deaf Alumni Association, wished to share that the group would like to also maintain the historical preservation of the Chapel and Main Hall. The group is in agreement with the resolution of the Blind Alumni Association.

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, September 25, 2013.

Hearing no additional business, Senator Hanger adjourned the meeting.

**Minutes approved September 25, 2013**