

**GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
VIRGIN ISLANDS BOARD OF EDUCATION**



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Winona A. Hendricks
Vice-Chairman

Shawna K. Richards
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Terrence T. Joseph
Emmanuella M. Perez-Cassius
Shawna K. Richards

St. Thomas/St. John Members
Kyza A. Callwood, MPA
Judy M. Gomez, Esq.
Nandi Sekou, Esq.
Jeanette Smith-Barry

Angel L. Bolques, Jr.
At Large Member

Vacant
Executive Director

Emmett Hansen II
Associate Executive Director

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**Virgin Islands Board of Education
Regular Meeting Minutes – August 29, 2022**

I. Call to Order

The regular meeting of the 20th Virgin Islands Board of Education was called to order at 5:32 p.m. by Chair Kyza Callwood.

II. Roll Call

The following were present: Kyza Callwood, Winona Hendricks, Shawna K. Richards, Nandi Sekou, Jeanette Smith-Barry, Judy Gomez, Terrence T. Joseph and Emmanuella Perez-Cassius. Member Angel Bolques, Jr. joined after roll call.

Staff Members Present: Executive Director Stephanie Berry and Director of Business and Finance Sandra Bess. Atty. Jennifer Jones was also present.

Stenographer: Diane Andrews

III. Approval of Agenda

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hendricks moved to accept the agenda as presented.

SECOND: Member Richards

So ordered.

IV. Review and Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Member Joseph moved to accept the June 24, 2022 minutes.

SECOND: Vice-Chair Hendricks

So ordered.

MOTION: Member Joseph moved to accept the July 1, 2022 minutes, as corrected.

SECOND: Vice-Chair Hendricks

So ordered.

MOTION: Member Joseph moved to accept the July 25, 2022 minutes.

SECOND: Chair Callwood

So ordered.

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MOTION: Member Sekou moved to accept the July 28, 2022 minutes, as corrected.

SECOND: Member Joseph

So ordered.

MOTION: Member Joseph moved to accept the August 5 minutes.

SECOND: Chair Callwood

So ordered.

V. Matters Arising from the Minutes

Mbr. Smith-Barry asked for her comments on the 9-12 policy in the June 24 minutes to be corrected. She also asked if the letter was sent to VIDE regarding the motion on VISA. ED Berry said the letter was sent and also included in budget testimony. Mbr. Smith-Barry also asked about the subpoena of VIVA records. Chair Callwood said the review of VIVA documents will be covered at a special meeting. Mbr. Smith-Barry asked about VIVA compliance with distance learning. Chair Callwood said that Atty. Jones opinion was forwarded to members.

Member Smith-Barry asked Mbr. Bolques if he had received an opinion from the Legislature's Legal Counsel regarding his service on the Board.

VI. Executive Director's Report

ED Berry reported on the supplemental budget request to the Legislature, which supports capital projects and the addition of temporary loan collections officers. ED Berry noted that the current staff cannot review/scrub thousands of collections records, many of which are still on paper. She said the VIBE should also be asking for the money for a St. Croix building. ED Berry said the VIBE's testimony defended the budget without cuts. ED Berry asked members to review the job description for the Associate Executive Director and Atty. Jones' contract.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hendricks moved that the VIBE complete the job description for a temporary construction manager and budget within 60 days.

SECOND: Member Perez-Cassius

Objection: Member Joseph asked if a construction manager for the Guirty House was needed and if DPW could not assist. ED Berry said she had explored that option, but that DPW is strapped and can only assist with the independent cost estimate for the parking lot.

Voting was as follows:

Yea (8) – K. Callwood, W. Hendricks, S. Richards, N. Sekou, J. Smith-Barry, E. Perez-Cassius and A. Bolques, Jr.

Nay (1) – T. Joseph

The motion carried.

Member Sekou questioned what the loan collections officers would be doing, especially since the VIBE has staff and pays a collections agency. ED Berry said that manpower was needed to review records older than 3 years and to support migration to the new system. She said the oldest record on

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Contract Collector goes back to 1971 and that if the VIBE wants to make a dent in collections, it needs to tackle older records.

Members discussed requirements for the AED position. Member Perez-Cassius asked for a working meeting to be a priority since the job description draft was first circulated on July 25.

Vice-Chair Hendricks and Member Gomez asked about the construction manager. ED Berry said the position would be posted once the budget was approved, with the contract expected to last for the duration of one fiscal year.

BFD Bess reported on the budget. Chair Callwood asked how the VIBE will ensure that there are no cost overruns in the next fiscal year. ED Berry said that in the past when there were cost overruns, it would be offset by other categories, but that if all funds for operations are spent, then funds to cover overruns can only be pulled from personnel. She said the VIBE's lump sum budget gives it flexibility, as opposed to a line item. ED Berry advised members that the ERP system closes on September 15 and there will be an internal meeting to discuss funds that need to be encumbered. In response to Member Bolques question about high priority items, ED Berry said those include the roof in the A Bldg and the parking lot.

Member Sekou asked for the expense reporting to list the members hotel stays.

VII. Standing and Ad-Hoc Committees Report

Policies, Rules and Regulations

Vice-Chair Hendricks reported on the progress on the PreK-5 and 6-8 policy groups and said she anticipated completion by December. She said the student discipline policy is in progress. She also reported that PRR has been asked to participate in a training for School Deans.

Hendricks said the VIDE had inadvertently submitted a draft for social studies standards, which was voted on by the VIDE. Member Smith-Barry said the standards do not account for Virgin Islands history and asked when will the VI get standards.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hendricks moved to accept the social studies standards submitted on August 22 without "draft".

SECOND: Chair Callwood

Objection: Members Joseph and Smith-Barry

Voting was as follows:

Yea (6) – K. Callwood, W. Hendricks, S. Richards, T. Joseph, J. Gomez and E. Perez-Cassius

Nay (2) – J. Smith-Barry and A. Bolques, Jr.

Not Voting (1) – N. Sekou

The motion carried.

Schools, Plants and Facilities

Member Perez-Cassius apologized for not having a written report. She said that items would be addressed in Executive Committee. She said the committee needs to pay more deliberate attention to the STTJ district and recommended that the Board send a letter to the VIDE Commissioner to addresses VIBE monitoring of federal grant funds.

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Certification

Member Smith-Barry said there are issues affecting certification that need to be clarified, specifically VIVA and the process of getting people certified. She mentioned recently passed legislation that brings retired teachers back and the certification issues involved. She also updated on the certification policy.

MOTION: Member Smith-Barry moved that the certification policy clearly stipulate that student teaching requirements be waived for applicants with teaching experience.

SECOND: Member Joseph

Member Perez-Cassius said the language needed to be tighter. Vice-Chair Hendricks asked about the criteria and spoke about the relevance of student teaching to pedagogy.

Voting was as follows:

Yea (4) – K. Callwood, J. Gomez, T. Joseph and J. Smith-Barry

Nay (4) - W. Hendricks, S. Richards. A. Bolques, Jr., and E. Perez-Cassius

Not Voting(1) – N. Sekou

The motion failed.

MOTION: Member Smith-Barry moved to accept the St. Croix and St. Thomas-St. John certification listing.

SECOND: Member Perez-Cassius

So ordered.

The vote was re-done and the motion separated at the recommendation of Atty. Jones, who said that all votes have to be heard and recorded when members are participating virtually.

MOTION: Member Smith-Barry moved to approve the St. Thomas-St. John certification listing.

SECOND: Member Perez-Cassius

All were in favor and the motion carried.

MOTION: Chair Callwood moved to approve the St. Croix certification listing.

SECOND: Member Perez-Cassius

All were in favor and the motion carried.

Member Smith-Barry said a vote was needed for how to handle retired teachers who are seeking certification.

Finance

Member Richards spoke about the committee’s initiative to publish ads to reach delinquent borrowers, in a last effort before borrowers are reported to the credit bureaus for delinquency and read the proposed ad. Atty. Jones said the Board should not send a blanket statement. Member Gomez said she doesn’t want to call people’s names and it should be a general notice to contact Board if they have outstanding debt.

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MOTION: Member Richards moved that the Board notify the public for a period of 50-60 days of the intent to report recipients of student loans who are in delinquent status to the credit reporting agencies.
SECOND: Callwood

The motion was withdrawn to further refine the language.

MOTION: Member Richards moved for the Board to issue a public notice advising all persons with outstanding loans to contact the Board immediately to make arrangements for payment to avoid further collections efforts, including reporting to credit bureaus.
SECOND: Members Hendricks and Joseph

Objection: Member Sekou

Voting was as follows:

Yea (7) – W. Hendricks, S. Richards, T. Joseph, J. Gomez, A. Bolques, Jr. and J. Smith- Barry

Nay (1) – N. Sekou

Not Voting (1) – K. Callwood

Member Richards presented language that the Finance Committee recommended to be added to the Financial Aid, Awards and Collection policy: “The VIBE requires all loan payoff payments to be completed by credit card, certified check and money order. Monthly payments can be made by personal check, credit card, certified check or money order. After one returned check, the individual is responsible for the \$50 returned check fee and payment can only be made by credit card, certified check or money order.”

MOTION: Member Richards moved to add the recommended language to the Financial Aid policy.
SECOND: Member Perez-Cassius

Objection: Member Sekou who said there is accommodations for people who make cash payments.

The motion was withdrawn.

MOTION: Member Richards moved that the following language be added to the Financial Aid, Awards and Collection Policy: “The VIBE requires all loan payoff payments to be completed by credit card, certified check and money order. Monthly payments can be made by personal check, credit card, certified check, money order or cash in amounts not to exceed \$2,500. After one returned check, the individual is responsible for the \$50 returned check fee and payment can only be made by cash, in amounts not to exceed \$2500, credit card, certified check or money order.
SECOND: Member Perez-Cassius

Voting was as follows:

Yea (9) – K. Callwood, W. Hendricks, S. Richards, A. Bolques, Jr., T. Joseph, J. Gomez, J. Smith-Barry, N. Sekou and E. Perez-Cassius

Member Richards reviewed the proposed legislative amendments, which would clarify language affecting eligibility for special legislative grants.

MOTION: Member Richards moved for the Board to approve the legislative amendments, as presented, and send to the Legislature.

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SECOND: Chair Callwood

Voting was as follows:

Yea (9) – K. Callwood, W. Hendricks, S. Richards, A. Bolques, Jr., T. Joseph, J. Gomez, J. Smith-Barry, N. Sekou and E. Perez-Cassius

Internal Controls

Member Gomez presented the committee’s recommendations, which would increase stipends and clarify travel days. Member Sekou noted that the recommendation is consistent with recent actions taken by the Legislature.

MOTION: Member Gomez moved to increase the per diem from \$75 to 100 and to insert in the Stipend Policy Section “Stipend Amounts, after ‘training event’ insert: “any trip that requires travel for five (5) or more hours an additional day of travel to include cost associated with said travel shall be added to the traveler’s itinerary”

SECOND: Chair Callwood

So ordered.

MOTION: Chair Gomez moved to amend the internal controls policy.

SECOND: Chair Callwood

Voting was as follows:

Yea (7) – K. Callwood, W. Hendricks, A. Bolques, Jr., J. Gomez, T. Joseph, E. Perez-Cassius and N. Sekou

Nay (2) - S. Richards and J. Smith Barry

VIII. Public Comment

Ms. Orpha Penn asked about mandatory reporting and who is responsible for training. Ms. Lesley Commissioning said it had been one year since Bruce Smith was arrested and how do we prevent this from happening. She asked for accountability from the Board. ED Berry said she would verify reporting requirements. Chair Callwood said the concerns of mandatory reporting would be shared with the VIDE.

IX. Executive Session

MOTION: Member Richards moved to go in to Executive Session.

SECOND: Chair Callwood

The Board entered executive session at 8:30 p.m.

MOTION: Member Joseph moved for the Board to return to the regular meeting.

SECOND: Member Bolques

The Board returned to its regular meeting at 9:05 p.m

Chair Callwood reported that the Board considered collection and personnel matters.

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X. Adjournment

MOTION: Member Gomez moved to adjourn.

SECOND: Member Bolques

The meeting was adjourned at 9:06 p.m.

Submitted By:



Shawna K. Richards, PMP
Secretary

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