

GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS VIRGIN ISLANDS BOARD OF EDUCATION



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Virgin Islands Board of Education Emergency Meeting Minutes – August 27, 2021

I. Call to Order

The emergency meeting of the 20th Virgin Islands Board of Education was called to order at 5:01 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, and Terrence Joseph. Members Emmanuella Perez-Cassius and Judy M. Gomez joined after the roll call. Member Angel Bolques, Jr was absent.

Staff Members Present: Executive Director Stephanie Berry and AED Emmett Hansen

Attorney Jones was also present,

III. Discussion on V.I. Department of Education and School Re-opening

Chair Callwood reviewed the press release from the VIDE, the VIBE's walkthrough of both districts, and the VIDE's decision to open schools without any discussion with VIBE. Vice-Chair Hendricks raised her concerns about COVID-19, and timely notification to the public.

Members discussed which entity has the responsibility for re-opening schools. Member Sekou said she thinks the VIDE has the final statutory authority. She said she felt that the physical plants were ready to receive students, but was concerned about placing students and staff in harm's way because of the current COVID-19 surge. She said the Board needed to sit with VIDE and share their concerns.

Atty. Jones reviewed the statutory authority of the VIBE. The Code mandates that the Board certifies the environmental safety of the schools, but there is nothing in the Code that speaks to the authority of the Board to open/close schools in the absence of certification. Member Perez-Cassius suggested making a public statement that the schools are not environmentally safe. Atty. Jones said the VIBE cannot make statements that are not proven.

Member Smith-Barry said a plan is needed to safely return students/ staff to school. She felt it was the responsibility of school-based personnel to make the best decisions to return students to school.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Virgin Islands Board of Education is to provide leadership and oversight, set policy and advocate for continuous improvement of the Public Education System of the Virgin Islands of the United States.

VISION STATEMENT

Each child is provided with the best quality education which guarantees academic excellence, promotes our history and culture, and builds strong local and global communities.

Vice-Chair Hendricks discussed vaccination and said the VIBE, in its role as advocates, should should take a public position.

MOTION: Member Smith-Barry moved that the VIBE take a stand in favor of vaccination and urge all parents, staff and students over 12 to get vaccinated and help reduce the spread of the virus and to be able to have all students return to in-person learning.

SECOND: Members Hendricks and Joseph

OBJECTION: Member Sekou

Voting was as follows:

Y (7) – Callwood, Gomez, Hendricks, Joseph, Perez-Cassius, Richards and Smith-Barry

N (1) – Sekou

A (1) – Bolques

The motion carried.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hendricks moved for the VIBE to recommend to the VIDE that the DOH be encouraged to set up vaccination sites for parents and students in junior-senior high school grade levels upon return.

SECOND: Chair Callwood

OBJECTION: Joseph

Y(5) – Callwood, Gomez, Hendricks, Perez-Cassius, Smith-Barry

N (2) – Joseph and Richards

A (1) – Bolques

NV (1) - Sekou

The motion carried.

MOTION: Member Smith-Barry moved that Board request the presence of Commissioner and Superintendent to explain the details of plans for returning Pre-K to 3 students to in-person learning on September 7.

SECOND: Member Gomez

Member Perez-Cassius moved to amend the motion by subpoenaing the Commissioner and Superintendent to give a report on schools on or before September 2. The motion was seconded by Chair Callwood. After discussion, the original motion and amendment were withdrawn.

MOTION: Member Smith-Barry moved to subpoena the Commissioner and Superintendents to appear before the Board on or before September 1 to provide details of the plans to reopen schools for PreK-3 students at each site.

SECOND: Chair Callwood

The motion was amended by Member Sekou to subpoena deuces tecum. The

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amendment was seconded by Vice-Chair Hendricks. The amendment was so ordered.

There were no objections to the motion as amended and the motion was so ordered.

Chair Callwood asked members to submit their information requests for VIDE that evening.

Members also reviewed and made corrections to the VIBE’s press release.

IV. Adjournment

MOTION: Chair Callwood moved to adjourn.

SECOND:

The meeting was adjourned at 6:28 p.m.

Submitted By:



Shawna K. Richards, PMP
Secretary

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