

GOVERNMENT OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS VIRGIN ISLANDS BOARD OF EDUCATION



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Emmanuella M. Perez-Cassius
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Judy M. Gomez, Esq.
Nandi Sekou, Esq.
Jeanette Smith-Barry

Angel L. Bolques, Jr.
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Vacant
Executive Director

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Virgin Islands Board of Education Regular Meeting Minutes – May 27, 2022

I. Call to Order

The regular meeting of the 20th Virgin Islands Board of Education was called to order at 3:22 p.m. by Chair Kyza Callwood.

II. Roll Call

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

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

Stenographer: Diane Andrews

Member Smith-Barry asked for the Board to recognize a moment of silence for the victims of the Uvalde school shooting. A moment of silence was observed.

III. Approval of Agenda

MOTION: Member Smith-Barry asked for the Board to consider what it can do immediately for the Department to begin action on making sure we reduce the likelihood of incidences in our schools

SECOND: Member Richards

So ordered. The item was added to the meeting under new business.

MOTION: Member Perez-Cassius moved to approve the agenda as amended.

SECOND: Member Joseph

So ordered.

IV. Review and Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Member Joseph moved to accept the minutes of December 10, 2021, December 29, 2021 (rev.), February 25, 2022 and May 16, 2022.

SECOND: Member Richards

MISSION STATEMENT

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So ordered.

Member Smith-Barry made corrections to the February 25, 2022 minutes and questioned a motion made in the October 15, 2021 minutes.

V. Correspondence

MOTION: Member Joseph moved to waive the reading of the correspondence log

SECOND: Chair Callwood

So ordered.

VI. Executive Director's Report

ED Berry highlighted a few items:

1. Classification of Employees – Job titles need to be more closely aligned with the job description.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hendricks moved to change the title of Administrative Assistant to Educational Certification Officer for those employees who deal with certification, to be in line with Personnel requirements effective October 1, 2022.

SECOND: Chair Callwood

OBJECTION: Member Joseph

Member Joseph said this process had been done when he was Chair. ED Berry said the process had not been completed and it had been brought to closure.

Voting was as follows:

Yea (8) – K. Callwood, W. Hendricks, S. Richards, J. Gomez, E. Perez-Cassius, and J. Smith-Barry.

Nay (1) – T. Joseph

Not Voting (1) – N. Sekou

Absent (1) – A. Bolques, Jr.

2. Online Services – The new collections system is very robust and aligns with financial aid policies. Collection efforts offset the cost of the system, which is \$23,000/year.

3. Members were reminded to submit their comments for the testimony for Bill 34-0238.

4. Capital Projects – The VIBE is waiting on a response on the DPNR grant.

5. Expenses – Member Sekou questioned the overtime expenses. ED Berry said that classified should get overtime and employees have asked for money and not compensatory time. Member Sekou also noted that an expense of \$686.36 in the Feb. 2022 expense report should be listed as a reimbursement to her and not a stipend. ED Berry noted there were some coding issues to be resolved. Member Smith-Barry wanted the record to reflect that she returned the funds for the San Diego conference (unable to attend due to flight cancellations).

6. FY 2023 Budget – Big ticket items include capital projects and reimbursables. The \$100,000 administrative fee for the CARES scholarships was also discussed. Member Sekou said the budget should increase scholarship amounts, especially education scholarships.

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VII. Legal Counsel’s Report

Atty. Jones updated on the VI History case and the PERB matter, which she is trying to schedule. The 9-12 policy was checked for legal sufficiency.

Member Smith-Barry asked when members would see the findings of fact for the VI History case. Member Sekou asked to see the documents admitted in Moorhead v. VIDE. Member Perez-Cassius asked for any new information on the Carty case.

VIII. Standing and Ad-Hoc Committee Reports

Policies, Rules and Regulations

Vice-Chair Hendricks reported on committee activities. She said the student discipline policy needs to be worked on in July. A letter outlining all policies was sent to the VIDE.

MOTION: Vice-Chair Hendricks moved for the Board to approve to approve two promotion and retention workshops, to include meals, in July.

SECOND: Member Sekou

OBJECTION: Member Perez-Cassius who said that other committees are being neglected.

Voting was as follows:

Yea (7) – K. Callwood, W. Hendricks, S. Richards, J. Gomez, T. Joseph, N. Sekou and J. Smith-Barry.

Not Voting (1) – E. Perez-Cassius

Absent (1) – A. Bolques, Jr.

The motion carried.

Schools, Plants and Facilities

Member Perez-Cassius reported that she turned in the draft of the School Management Accountability Report (SMAR). A walkthrough of the St. Croix district is scheduled for June 3 and a work session is scheduled for June 4. She reminded members to review and comment on the draft. Member Richards reminded members that the SMAR is a report on infrastructure and not a report on the state of education, which is something the Board should be working towards.

Professional Staff Certification & Higher Education

Member Smith-Barry reported on the committee’s activities, specifically when it came to Proximity. She said Proximity has received \$1.3 million dollars, yet the VIBE still knows very little about its operation. She expressed her concern that not many UVI graduates are going into teaching and the need to revisit the Alternative Pathways program as an opportunity to develop educators. She thanked ED Berry and Ms. Heath for their work on the certification process.

MOTION: Member Smith-Barry moved that the Committee convene one 3-hour work session on June 8, 16, 17 or 18 to complete revisions to certification policy and to include a meal for the work session.

SECOND: Member Joseph

So ordered.

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MOTION: Member Smith-Barry moved that the Board request from the VIDE Commissioner a detailed report on VIVAS teaching, teachers, student performance and results of their work.

SECOND: Member Joseph

So ordered.

MOTION: Chair Callwood moved to approve the list of Proximity applicants for certification.

SECOND: Member Joseph

So ordered.

MOTION: Chair Callwood moved to approve the St. Thomas – St. John certification listing.

SECOND: Member Joseph

So ordered.

MOTION: Member Joseph moved the approve the St. Croix candidates certification listing.

SECOND: Vice-Chair Hendricks

So ordered.

Finance

Member Richards reported that the committee met on March 29, 2022 to consider an ongoing collection matter and to receive an update on the financial aid application process. At that meeting the Committee voted to treat the funds appropriated for stenographers as a special legislative grant. She commended the financial aid and collections staff for their exemplary work.

IX. Executive Session

MOTION: Member Smith-Barry moved to go into Executive Session.

SECOND: Chair Callwood

So ordered. The Board went into Executive Session at 5:30 p.m.

The Board returned to regular session at 5:36 p.m.

X. New Business

Budget

The Board will meet on June 8 to review the 2022 budget presentation. Member Perez-Cassius asked if the SMAR Could be reviewed on the same date.

Calendar

The Board discussed the previously proposed 2022 calendar.

MOTION: Chair Callwood moved to approve the VIBE 2022 calendar.

SECOND: Vice-Chair Hendricks

So ordered.

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School Safety

Member Smith-Barry said the Board needs to urgently demand action on school safety and recommended that all facilities be reviewed with a focus for school safety. Members discussed their concerns about open school grounds throughout the territory. Member Perez-Cassius said she recently attended a training for school security where the focus was on how to body slam and take down students.

Vice-Chair Hendricks noted KidsCount data of students reporting they were bullied (15.7%), sad (35.7%) and suicidal (17.7%). She reminded members of the school based comprehensive emergency response plan for earthquake, tsunami and active shooters, and said that all policies should be sent to the VIDE as a reminder. She said that the Board attended VIDE orientations in the past. Member Gomez said the VIBE needs to write the VIDE and let them know of policy. Vice-Chair Hendricks also recommended that the VIBE add a section to the SMAR on school safety.

Member Smith-Barry spoke about the ease with which the Uvalde shooter entered the campus, and her concerns regarding the territory's open campuses.

MOTION: Member Smith-Barry moved for members to provide a checklist of activities for review of the facilities and for members to partner to tour school campuses, by June.

SECOND: Chair Callwood

Chair Callwood stated his reservations about the proposed motion because there are other issues that VIBE should be concerned about, like pedophiles in the schools.

XI. Adjournment

MOTION: Member Joseph moved to adjourn.

SECOND: Chair Callwood

So ordered. The meeting was adjourned at 6:12 p.m.

Submitted By:



Shawna K. Richards, PMP
Secretary

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