

Governor's Advisory Board on Services and Volunteerism

November 13, 2023; 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Patrick Henry Building

1111 E Broad St, Richmond, VA 23219

Board Members Present: Naila Alam, Jason Ascher, Vanessa Diamond, Cynthia Downs-Taylor, Mark Fero, Clovia Lawrence, Peppy Linden, NaQuetta Mitchell, Sam Parham, Joy Parker, Dominick Rascona, Reagan Polarek, Shane Roberts-Thomas, Elizabeth Schultz, Jamie Seagraves, Julie Strandlie, Sheila Williamson-Branch, Clifford Yee

Board Members Absent: Kim Luckabaugh, Enid Mpumwire Machayo

Ex-Officio Members Present: None

Serve Virginia Commission Present: Kathy Spangler, Analise Gammel, Alexander Vanik, Sasha Bronder, Kimberly Brown, Samantha Lukasiewicz

Guests: Lee Bernstein, Jacob Nash, Alex Johnston, Kelly Gee

The Board Meeting was called to order at 3:02 p.m. by Board Chair Clifford Yee.

Welcome and Introductions

Chair Clifford Yee welcomed new board members Elizabeth Shultz, Jason Ascher and Shane Roberts-Thomaas and recognized them alongside Clovia Lawrence, Sam Parham, Dominick Rascona, and himself as the class of 2023 gubernatorial appointees to the Board. Chair Cliff Yee also thanked the newly appointed Secretary of the Commonwealth, Kelly Gee for attending. All Board members and attendees were asked to introduce themselves round-robin before Secretary Gee provided her remarks.

Remarks from Secretary of the Commonwealth

Chair Clifford Yee offered an introduction for Kelly Gee before welcoming her to the podium. In her remarks, Secretary Gee reflected on the experiences and mentorship which led her to this appointment and discussed her current role and priorities within the State of Virginia, which includes appointments. Secretary Gee thanked all members of the Board for serving and recognized their qualities of leadership and moral integrity. Following her term as Secretary of the Commonwealth, Secretary Gee stated that she hopes to join the non-profit sector and to continue to engage with the Board.

Adoption of Agenda and Minutes

Chair Clifford Yee called for the adoption of the agenda. Elizabeth Schultz motioned to adopt the agenda, seconded by Mayor Sam Parham, and this motion passed unanimously. Chair Cliff Yee

called for the adoption of minutes from September 26, 2023. Mayor Parham motioned to adopt the minutes, seconded by Julie Strandlie, and this motion passed unanimously.

Chair's Remarks

Chair Clifford Yee reflected on the progress which has been made in the two years since his initial appointment to the Board. At this time, the pandemic was still active, there was no state service plan, and new staff leadership was coming on board. While the basic functions were continuing, the partnership between the Governor's Advisory Board and the Virginia Service Foundation was at a crossroads, and statewide awareness was low. Chair Cliff Yee recognized the efforts of leaders, staff, partners, and consultants that has led to a new and exciting time at Serve Virginia.

Over the last two years, a three-year state service plan was developed to advance the power of service and volunteerism throughout Virginia and to inspire more Virginians to service to address the most pressing needs of their communities. The VSF and the GAB entered into an agreement to jointly implement this plan and mounted the first Virginia Community Engagement Index. They also rebranded as Serve Virginia, launched an awareness, recruitment, and recognition campaign, sought to strengthen their grantmaking through the pipeline project to identify potential future candidates for AmeriCorps programs, accelerated outreach to elected officials, and conducted AmeriCorps site visits.

In the year ahead, Serve Virginia will focus on aligning their AmeriCorps portfolio to the most pressing needs across the Commonwealth, pursuing a policy change agenda to reduce barriers and create new opportunities for AmeriCorps, work with the Virginia Service Foundation to increase investments in service, volunteerism, and community engagement, and empower the Board to advance their strategic vision. In closing, Chair Clifford Yee called upon all Board members to rally around the state service plan as they look to the year ahead.

Mission Moment

Sheila Williamson-Branch welcomed Lee Bernstein, the 2023 AmeriCorps State Member of the Year, alongside representative from the Virginia College Advising Corps Alex Johnston, for the Mission Moment. Lee Bernstein served for three terms with the Virginia College Advising Corps as College Adviser at Rappahannock County High School in Washington, VA and was one of the highest performing advisers in VCAC history. Among Ms. Bernstein's achievements are her efforts to secure nearly \$5,000 worth of donations for her annual Decision Day celebrations that honor the postsecondary plans of seniors and her work with the statewide FAFSA assistance initiative, where she was in part responsible for the 3.2% increase in FAFSA completions. During her terms of service, Ms. Bernstein held over 1,300 one-on-one meetings with her seniors, shepherded 400 college applications, and supported students in earning over \$520,000 scholarship dollars and counting.

In her own remarks, Lee Bernstein discussed the experience of joining the College Advising Corps during the Covid-19 Pandemic, and the way that the students, teachers, and fellow staff at Rappahannock High School became a second family. One highlight of Lee's service was having three of her students receive Fulbright Scholarships during her final year with VCAC. Her three terms of service provided Lee with incredible leadership experience and ultimately set her on a

career path to join Christopher Newport University as a student success coordinator, where she continues to guide students through their educational journeys.

Following Ms. Bernstein's remarks, Chair Clifford Yee opened the floor for questions. Dominick Rascona asked how many high schools are served by VCAC and how those schools are selected. VCAC currently serves 63 schools, but the number is always changing; these schools are selected by prioritizing districts with a high percentage of students under the poverty line, low post-secondary enrollment, and other markers of need. VCAC also targets schools which do not already have a staff member dedicated to college advising. Peppy Linden asked whether Ms. Bernstein has any recommendations for the program, perhaps including higher compensation. Ms. Bernstein replied that while more pay is always positive, she would love to see a College Advisor in every school, which requires more people willing to serve.

Serve Virginia Financial Presentation

Chair Clifford Yee welcomed Kathy Spangler, Director of Serve Virginia to provide an overview of the fiscal framework. Ms. Spangler recognized the Serve Virginia staff members in attendance. She then turned to the fiscal framework of Serve Virginia. Over 20 years, they have received federal contributions of over \$70 million, local funds of over \$54 million, and over 270,000 of member service hours. This is an overall investment of almost \$125 million.

In the current fiscal year, Serve Virginia has been awarded over \$4.1 million in federal funds and leveraged almost \$3 million in grantee match. In the year ahead, Serve Virginia has funds to award up to \$8 million from a mix of federal sources. To award these funds, they want to identify organizations interested in planning grants who are looking to not only build capacity for their own work, but to incorporate Serve Virginia's Virginia Community Engagement Index research in their design. Ultimately, these planning grantees will use their funds to get ready for an operational AmeriCorps grant or to leverage service and volunteerism systematically across their communities. Ms. Spangler called for Board members to direct any recommendations for such organizations towards Analise Gammel, Statewide Outreach Coordinator, and Samantha Lukasiewicz, AmeriCorps Manager. In addition to planning grants, there will be additional funds available for new operational grants. Serve Virginia is also welcoming its first Professional Corps opportunity through Teach for America. Ms. Spangler called again upon Board members to help identify future partner organizations before opening the floor for questions.

Elizabeth Schultz asked whether there are resources to introduce organizations to AmeriCorps. Kathy Spangler identified 'AmeriCorps 101' resources on the Serve Virginia website. Ms. Schultz expressed concerns that these resources may be spread out or difficult to find. Ms. Spangler emphasized that one-on-one conversations are typically the best way to discuss the complicated process of applying for and running an AmeriCorps program but committed to producing a 'one-pager' on the topic.

Dominick Rascona inquired about the difference between planning grants and operational grants, to which Ms. Spangler explained that planning grants are to prepare an organization for an operational grant, which is a functional program involving members in the community. Mr. Rascona questioned whether planning grants are good investments. In the following conversation, attendees including Kathy Spangler, Cynthia Downs-Taylor, and Vanessa Diamond

communicated that first-year operational grants can be quite high-risk and supported the funding of planning grants to secure stronger programs in the future.

Kathy Spangler presented Serve Virginia's operational budget. The organization receives \$430,000 in federal funding through the Commission Support Grant, matched at 100% by the Commonwealth, 93% of which goes towards staffing, with the remaining funds going to travel, supplies, contacts, and support. The Commission Investment Fund represents another \$550,000 in federal funding, 83% of which is used for staffing, while the rest goes to travel, support, supplies, contracts, and training. Serve Virginia was also awarded \$450,000 through the American Rescue Plan, matched at 100% by the Commonwealth, which is used 21% for staffing and 79% for state service plan projects. These funds will be available until October 2024.

Elizabeth Schultz inquired about how much of the ARPA funding has been used and what the plan is for any remaining funds. Ms. Spangler responded that there were some administrative roadblocks in initially receiving these funds, leading to a slow start to spending, but that there is a plan to draw down these funds ahead of the October deadline.

Ms. Spangler presented the financial framework of the Virginia Service Foundation. \$7,000 was generated this year in sponsorships in support of the Annual Volunteerism Summit and \$14,500 was generated in Summit registrations. The annual expenses of the VSF are nearly \$16,500.

Dominick Rascona inquired whether Board members should work with corporate sponsors to expand VSF's budget. Kathy Spangler noted that, while the Board and VSF work toward a shared mission and purpose, it is not a Board responsibility to administer VSF. However, the Board can be very beneficial in supporting VSF, which allows for critical events such as the Volunteerism Summit, the mini-grant program, and the Governor's Service Awards. Ms. Spangler emphasizes the VCEI and other state service plan projects as future sources of funding for VSF. Julie Strandlie, chair of the Virginia Service Foundation, noted that adding more members, creating an advisory board, and expanding a list of future donors are future VSF priorities.

Breakouts and Reflection

Chair Clifford Yee invited Board members to spend 30 minutes in breakout groups. The topics for breakout groups were: The State Service Plan, Building A Strong VSF Board, and Expanding our Fundraising.

Following the breakout groups, Julie Strandlie invited a representative from each group to give a report on their conversations. Analise Gammel from the State Service Plan group reported that they discussed the process of creating the SSP as well as strategies to demystify the plan for individuals who are new to it. Sheila Williamson-Branch emphasized that implementation of the state service plan requires engagement from youth, and that it is therefore important to reach young people where they are. Clifford Yee from the Fundraising group reported that they brainstormed high-potential targets for fundraising, including large statewide corporations. Anyone with recommendations for potential fundraising partners should direct those to Kathy Spangler. Julie Strandlie from the VSF Board group reported that they discussed onboarding materials provided to new board members, efforts to recruit new members and partners, and

highlighted the existence and potential of ‘nonprofit speed-dating’ events designed to match new board members to organizations.

Public Comments / Updates

Chair Clifford Yee opened the floor for any public comments.

Mark Fero shared the news of Janet Brooking’s passing. Ms. Brooking was a member of the Virginia Service Foundation. She served Drive Smart for 17 years, loved community service, and held a degree in Philanthropy from the University of Richmond. She served on many boards, received a lifetime achievement award for volunteerism, and truly dedicated her life to service. Ms. Brooking passed away from cancer on November 13, 2023. Following this news, Chair Cliff Yee asked the room to observe a moment of silence for Janet Brooking.

There were no further public comments.

Close and Adjourn

Chair Clifford Yee reminded all Board members to complete their engagement forms, share their biographies and photographs for a website update, and watch for a request to score the MLK Day mini-grant applications. The Governor’s Service Awards were planned to directly follow the Board meeting, and all Board members were encouraged to attend.

The next board meeting is planned to be held virtually on February 15th, 2024, from 10 AM– 12 PM.

Chair Cliff Yee called for adjournment of the meeting. Kathy Spangler motioned to adjourn, seconded by Mark Fero, and this motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:47 pm.

Prepared by Sasha Bronder
Submitted by Kathy Spangler