

UTAH SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF AND THE BLIND

Advisory Council Meeting Summary

October 23, 2025

Openshaw Education Center

4:30 p.m. - General Session

Attending: John Clements, Voting Member
Kiara Guymon, Voting Member, Zoom
Aunilie Hathaway, Voting Member
Shari Solomon-Klebba, Non-Voting Member
Katie Nelson, Voting Member
Amy Query, Voting Member
LeAnn Wood, Non-Voting Member, ZOom
Ray Wright, Chair, Voting Member

Absent: Kari Harbath, Voting Member
Philippe Montalette, Vice-Chair, Voting Member
Gretel Sampson, Non-Voting Member

Also Attending:

Tamara Flint, Executive Assistant
Deborah Jacobson, USBE Assistant Superintendent of Operations
Darin Nielsen, USDB Assistant Superintendent
Susan Patten, USB Associate Superintendent, Zoom

Interpreters:

Cindy Andersen, Interpreter
Alisa Ensign, Interpreter

Others:

Marla Palmer, Parent of a blind child
Jonathan Helgesen, USD Extracurricular Director
Liz Mumford, Trust Advocacy Office
James Smith, KBS Director

1. Welcome and Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Wright welcomed Council members in attendance to the October 23, 2025 Advisory Council meeting. Mr. Nielsen led the Council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. Public Comments

James Smith - KBS Director - James is a parent of three deaf children and an active member of the deaf community. Add agenda items related to two things. USBE audit - Leah Voorhees outstanding questions. We must focus on language, not disability. That is a high impact. USDB has not had USBE involvement.

Jonathan Helgesen - USD Extracurricular Director. The deaf community is involved in this school and we value our deaf students and their successes. Don't take their choices away. He is concerned about the cut in our Enrichment Funds. Our students' success depends on these funds. He is also concerned about the low wages of our ESA's and that they do not receive benefits.

3. Consent Calendar

Mr. Wright asked Council members if they had any questions or concerns regarding the October 23, 2025 consent calendar. There were no questions or concerns. Ms. Nelson made a motion to accept the Advisory Council minutes for September 25, 2025, the Vacancy Report as of October 15, 2025 and the Donated Accounts Summary as of October 20, 2025. Mr. Clements seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous. Motion carried.

Ms. Hathaway noticed that there are many vacant intervener positions. Ms. Patten noted that it is normal to have vacancies because we have such a high rate of turnovers in that position. We do our best to continually hire for this position, but it is an ongoing challenge.

4. Review Updated FY2026 Enrichment Fund and Trust Lands Project List

The USDB Finance Director, Deborah Jacobson, presented an updated proposal for the use of FY26 enrichment funds. These funds are generated from permanent trust funds managed by the School and Institutional Trust Lands Administration and are distributed in two separate trusts: a trust for schools for the deaf and a trust for schools for the blind. The Advisory Council has responsibilities for receiving proposals and providing recommendations to the

Board. The Council reviewed recommended changes to the FY2026 USDB Enrichment and Trust Lands Projects.

There was a discussion about the eight positions including staff that provide 100% of their work to the expanded core curriculum and assistive technology. Following the discussion, Ms. Nelson made a motion to recommend these Enrichment Fund changes to the board for approval. Aunilie seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous. Motion carried.

5. Enrichment Fund Requests

Ms. Patten reviewed an Enrichment Funds request from a parent for their child to attend the Performing Arts New York City tour January 29, 2026 - February 2, 2026. The tour includes performing at Carnegie Hall and attending a Broadway show and performance workshop. We will also be visiting the 911 Memorial, the Statue of Liberty, the Metropolitan Museum and SUMMIT One Vanderbilt Observation deck. Areas of the ECC include career education, independent living, orientation and mobility, recreation and leisure, self determination and social interaction skills. Costs for this trip include travel, hotel, meals, entrance fees, subway passes and tour hosts.

Following a discussion and addressing questions, Ms. Nelson made a motion to approve the Enrichment Fund request for \$750. Mr. Clements seconded the motion. Voting was unanimous. Motion carried.

6. Board Policy 4002 - USDB Community Council Discussion

The Council reviewed a recommendation from the Interim Assistant Superintendent Darin Nielsen proposing ways to increase parent participation on the Community Council stemming from an email from a parent of a blind student and the USDB Standing Committee request. Following a discussion, it was suggested forming a subcommittee to explore ways to increase parent representation. Katie Nelson, Kiara Guymon, Ray Wright, Alisa Ensign and Phillippe Montalette volunteered to serve on the subcommittee. Following the subcommittee meeting, the suggestions will be brought to the December USDB standing committee.

7. 2024-25 Annual Report/Executive Summary

Dr. Tanner and Ms. Patten reviewed highlights from the 2024-25 Annual Report including student counts, campus educators, services provided, test scores and graduation rates. They encouraged Council members to review the annual report and are open to answering any questions they may have.

8. USDB Subcommittee Update

Board Member Wood updated the Council on the activities for the USDB Standing Committee including updating policies. The subcommittee reported to PEA this month which will make recommendations to EAC for their November meeting. We continue to address data concerns to make sure that it is accurate. We will also continue to work on creating a mechanism for an automatic funding source for USDB. There is also a motion out of committee to request that the state superintendent rather than the board chooses the superintendent to be in better alignment with USDB being placed under USBE.

9. Superintendent Report

Superintendent Nielsen will defer to Dr. Tanner and Ms. Patten for an update on USD and USB.

USD - Dr. Tanner

Science Teacher award - Shari Solomon-Klebba received the Outstanding Information Science Teacher from the Utah Science Teaching Association. If anyone knows her, she is so deserving of this award.

Deaf ed APPEL - This has been approved through the standing committee and will move to the board for final approval.

Deaf Town - We just wrapped up Deaf Town. It was a huge success. Thank you to the kitchen staff for their help to provide food and snacks to all the students who attended.

Basketball - We are excited for the upcoming basketball season. Craig Radford will be coaching this year.

Battle of books - This will be starting on November 3rd.

School Improvement Plan - We continue to work on this as it is constantly being reviewed and modified. We will bring this to Council when it is finalized.

Volleyball - Our volleyball team is at Idaho School for the Deaf and has won their

first three games.

USB - Ms. Patten

TVI Memo - This memo goes out monthly statewide to TVI's to get the information out to parents via our TVI's, board members and Advisory Council. We want to streamline this information so that it is reaching everyone and are open to any ideas on how to reach more parents. We encourage Advisory Council members to attend any of these activities. We are also trying to hit different regions of the state to meet the needs of students statewide.

10. Future Agenda Items

Space Camp presentation - postponed until November 20, 2025
FY26 Enrichment Funds List
USDB Subcommittee report - Member Wood

13. Other

Mr. Wright thanked everyone for attending the October 23, 2025 Advisory Council meeting. Our next meeting will be November 20, 2025, which is the 3rd Thursday due to the Thanksgiving holiday.

Please email any future agenda items to Ray Wright or Tamara Flint.
The October 23, 2025 Advisory Council meeting was adjourned at 6:30 p.m.