

Meeting Minutes

June 20, 2025

10:00 am – 2:00 pm

In Attendance:

Board Members Present: Amy Sabarre, Dr. Padmanabhan Seshaiyer, Edward Monroe, Amy Thompson, Chris Dovi, Rashid Farrell, Amy White, Victoria Chuah

Ex-officios and Staff: Camille Marshall (Governor's Office), JC LaRiviere (Office of the Attorney General), Deb Love (Office of the Attorney General), Aly Buckner (Assistant Secretary of Education) William "Billy" Reid (Secretary of Labor Office), Dr. Anne Petersen (VDOE Office of STEM & Innovation Science Coordinator), Ada Sue Siler (Science Museum of Virginia Staff)

Topics:

1. Welcome
2. Approving minutes from February and April
3. Electing Board Chair
4. Updates on STEM Ecosystem consultant
 - Overview of the work
 - Draft slides on 5 year plan from Envision ed
 - Board input and Discussion
5. Next steps for the board
6. Grants and future funding
7. Public Comment and next meeting date

Amy Sabarre called the meeting to order at 10:03am and noted that a quorum was present in person.

Ms. Sabarre welcomed the group and offered a reflection on her last four years of service, marking this as her final meeting as chair. She emphasized that board members serve as volunteers driven by a shared passion, and she expressed deep appreciation for the hard work and dedication of her colleagues. Ms. Sabarre noted that her tenure has been a significant learning experience, highlighting accomplishments such as securing federal funding, receiving a major grant, and collaborating with legislators. She acknowledged that the political dimensions of the role have provided valuable insight and growth.

Ms. Sabarre expressed gratitude for the opportunity to lead and for the relationships she formed throughout her service. She affirmed that the board has worked diligently to fulfill

its charge and advance the state's goals with the resources available. Looking ahead, she expressed a desire to continue supporting the mission of STEM education, even outside of her board role, and indicated her hope to remain involved as an emeritus member. She thanked the board for being part of her journey and encouraged members to follow the meeting agenda, as she would not be presenting slides.

Mr. Dovi thanked Amy Sabarre for her leadership and commitment to fulfilling the board's legislative mandate, acknowledging the learning curve involved in working with a new board. Dr. Seshaiyer and Rashid also expressed their appreciation for Ms. Sabarre's contributions and leadership. Ms. Sabarre then requested that the group review the minutes from the February and April meetings. Dovi made a motion to approve both sets of minutes, which was seconded by Amy Thompson. A vote was conducted by a show of hands and verbal affirmation, and the motion was carried.

Board Positions

The board discussed the process for electing a new chair and the appointment of an interim chair. There are currently five eligible candidates: Dr. Terry Whipple, Rashid Farrell, Amy Thompson, Amy White, and Rajbans Joshi. Ed Monroe requested clarification regarding the bylaw requirement that candidates must have at least two years remaining in their term; Amy Sabarre confirmed this requirement is outlined in the bylaws. Mr. Dovi inquired whether the current chair's term could be extended until new appointments are finalized. Dr. Seshaiyer reported that he had consulted with the Secretary's office and confirmed the current chair may continue in the role until new appointments occur. Amy White echoed this point, mentioning her communication with Zach Jacobs.

Mr. Dovi proposed a motion to allow the current chair and vice chair to remain in their positions until new appointments are made. Ms. Love clarified that if Amy Sabarre is reappointed, she must be re-elected to serve again. Mr. Dovi then suggested appointing an interim chair to serve until the position is formally filled. Ms. Love recommended that, if the incumbent is unavailable, the most senior board member could preside over meetings by default, referring to the role of presiding officer.

Mr. Dovi moved to maintain the current leadership until new appointments are made and to have a presiding officer selected from among the gathered group to lead the next meeting and oversee officer elections. Amy White seconded the motion. No further discussion was raised, and a vote conducted via chat was unanimous in favor with no opposition. Amy Sabarre noted that Amy White is the most senior member and will preside over the September election meeting. Mr. Dovi then moved to approve Amy

White as the presiding officer for the election meeting, a motion seconded by Ed Monroe. The motion passed unanimously by chat vote

Updates on STEM Ecosystems

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) has contracted Envision Ed and Battelle to develop a five-year strategic plan for STEM education, funded by a federal appropriation. Numerous stakeholder meetings have been held to establish the vision, mission, and goals for the plan.

The first session focused on setting the tone, defining STEM, and creating the vision and mission statements. The vision aims to ensure that all Virginia preschool through grade 12 students have access to STEM education that fosters literacy, problem-solving, and innovative thinking to prepare them for life and careers. The mission supports innovative, inclusive, community-driven STEM education that prepares students for post-secondary opportunities and leadership.

Subsequent sessions addressed next steps, including forming workgroups and facilitators, with key deliverables such as a Landscape Analysis by June 30, 2025, and a Network and Hub Model Overview by December 30, 2025.

Amy Sabarre shared a summary of the Virginia STEM Ecosystem Plan. Anne Peterson clarified that the plan is not yet officially approved by VDOE and invited the board to provide feedback. The contract with the consultants extends through December 30, 2025.

Questions arose regarding the inclusion of collegiate and industry partners in the vision. Dr. Petersen explained that the project's scope is intentionally focused on K-12 education, as directed by the Governor's office and VDOE leadership, but future funding could expand the scope to workforce development and post-secondary education. Amy Sabarre noted that regional hubs would not exclude industry or collegiate partners from participation.

Concerns were raised about the existence of two visions and missions (one for K-12 and a broader one) and how to communicate these effectively to avoid confusion. Dr. Petersen emphasized the need to clearly distinguish the K-12 scope aligned with VDOE.

Chris Dovi highlighted the importance of establishing criteria to ensure that future funding aligns with the board's broader mission, including K-20 education, while

maintaining board autonomy. Amy Sabarre noted that if VDOE remains the fiscal agent, the scope will remain limited to K-12.

Dr. Seshaiyer shared information about the Virginia Chamber of Commerce's upcoming Blueprint 2030 initiative focused on workforce development and described his roles on related workforce boards, contrasting their funding and support with the STEM Advisory Board's current challenges in securing operational funding.

Amy Sabarre stressed that STEM networks evolve and adapt, noting potential changes with the incoming administration, and redirected focus to the draft strategic plan and public-private partnership model.

The partnership model includes identifying a private-sector lead partner to provide resources, selecting regional hub organizations through a competitive process, standardizing data analysis, and developing diverse funding streams from government, industry, education, and philanthropy. The plan supports local STEM education aligned with Virginia's priorities for student readiness.

Key metrics include signing a memorandum of understanding with private partners by December 2025, increasing network participation annually through 2030, full distribution of federal grant funds by mid-2026, submission of competitive funding proposals by 2027, and sustaining full- and part-time network coordinators by 2030.

Anne Peterson explained that the number of hubs will depend on the number of applications received, with initial startup funding of \$100,000 per hub and a cap on indirect costs. Hubs are responsible for their own fundraising.

The STEM website will serve as a virtual hub and resource center, enabling users to search programs by zip code. The site is expected to launch publicly in October 2024. Stakeholders offered assistance with website development.

A quarterly implementation plan will run through June 2026, with ongoing efforts to raise awareness of STEM education's importance and ensure program stability under the new gubernatorial administration.

The strategic plan emphasizes advancing individual STEM disciplines, creating authentic interdisciplinary connections, and bridging STEM education to careers.

Amy Sabarre directed the group's attention to a question document related to staffing and hub selection. She explained that any staff hiring will follow the State hiring process through VDOE's HR department. In her research on hub models from other states, she noted that when primary hubs were assigned to universities, the initiative often became university-centered rather than statewide. The group discussed how the board could be involved in selecting primary and regional hubs, including having input on primary staff, and ways the board can support this process. Ms. Sabarre encouraged members to add further questions to the document.

Rashid expressed appreciation for the discussion trajectory but noted he needed to leave the meeting.

The group took a break from 11:30 to 12:00.

The document's questions began with the Primary Hub vision. Dr. Petersen shared the opportunity to identify a Virginia organization willing to foster communication and coordination. Ms. Sabarre sought clarification that the application process for hubs will be open. Chris Dovi inquired about the best type of entity for the role, suggesting Maguire Woods for legal oversight. He questioned whether the DOE or the board has the expertise to determine the best charter for the hub. Concerns were raised about the university model, and various options were proposed, such as having a backbone organization or a single hub with funds to oversee and support regional hubs. The group discussed that subgrants through a state agency simplify funding, while other approaches involve requests for proposals and additional complexity. It was noted that legal advice from the Secretary of Education's Office may be necessary. A cap on indirect costs of 8% was discussed.

There was debate over the type of agency best suited as backbone organization, including higher education offices, foundations/nonprofits, industry partners, or universities. The group considered how many hubs are anticipated, with the current timeline suggesting eight. Questions arose regarding who will determine the primary hub, whether the selection process will be open, the criteria for selection, and how the board will be involved. A recommendation was made for the September meeting to establish key criteria and review the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Drafts are to be created by VDOE and the board, with a subcommittee to review and finalize before September.

The board discussed involvement in selecting key staff for the primary hub, given that hiring lies outside VDOE's usual process, and agreed this should be addressed in the MOU. The group also explored ideas for private partnerships to support the initiative,

naming potential partners such as Battelle, Newport News Shipbuilding, tech councils, the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, Google, Amazon, and LEGO Education. The board's subcommittee will also be involved in hub application review.

The MOU is intended to be signed by the private sector organization, VDOE, and the Governor's STEM Advisory Board, outlining roles and five-year commitments to support the statewide STEM network and hubs. The group discussed how to accommodate decisions of the new governor and General Assembly, suggesting providing them an overview of the board's work and needs. They also considered regional equity concerns regarding focus on Tidewater, Richmond, and NOVA, recommending inclusion of higher education centers.

A subcommittee including Ed Monroe, Amy Sabarre, Anne Peterson, and Dr. Seshaiyer was proposed to draft private sector documents and approach potential partners. Dr. Seshaiyer shared information about Virginia Works, describing its creation by the Secretary of Labor and highlighting similarities for structuring the STEM Board's primary hub. Amy White clarified the reorganization that led to Virginia Works' creation.

Regarding the timing of the hub application call, Dr. Petersen noted procurement rules will dictate whether private entities may apply, and mentioned indirect cost considerations. She emphasized that the MOU will shape key criteria and invited input and subcommittee participation, which Ms. Sabarre, Dr. Seshaiyer, and Mr. Monroe supported.

The board considered their potential involvement in staff hiring, noting HR rules may limit participation but agreed to request involvement in the MOU. For public-private partnerships, the group discussed potential models like Ohio's STEMx and Battelle, evaluating local organizations' suitability. Questions about fees and contract amendments were raised.

Ed Monroe proposed the Virginia Chamber of Commerce as a private partner, with Amy White adding tech councils as supportive entities. Dr. Petersen reviewed the hub application timeline and acknowledged the importance of accounting for the new governor and legislative priorities to ensure continuity. The group discussed advocacy strategies to sustain funding and support, emphasizing the need to address regional perceptions of imbalance and enhance board support for VDOE's efforts.

Dr. Petersen noted she cannot engage directly with private partnerships, and Mr. Dovi requested a draft communication to send to potential partners.

A subcommittee was proposed to develop the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and establish application criteria for hub and regional hub selection. Ed Monroe volunteered to participate, and Anne Peterson confirmed her availability. Ms. Sabarre invited others interested in joining to email her. Ms. Sabarre and Dr. Petersen will coordinate scheduling, and Rashid and Dr. Seshaiyer also expressed interest in joining.

Regarding grants and future funding, documents compiling grant opportunities by region were shared. Mr. Dovi offered assistance with grant writing as needed. Dr. Petersen explained that providing these documents was a requirement of the grant, intended to help hubs identify sustainable funding sources.

The group discussed whether the board has met the requirements of new legislation passed the previous year, which added tasks to the STEM board. Dr. Petersen inquired about expectations for fulfilling these obligations. Billy recommended reaching out to Ms. Love for clarification, emphasizing the need to address the legislation and obtain additional clarity. The legislation referred to is House Bill 615. Amy Sabarre expressed concern that the board's legislative responsibilities feel like an unfunded mandate and noted that lack of support hampers fulfilling those duties. Mr. Dovi suggested including a recommendation in the legislative report to request resources to meet the legislative requirements.

Amy White raised a question about curriculum standards, noting that standards are discipline-specific and uncertain how the STEM board might review their detailed aspects.

Dr. Seshaiyer asked about the timing and location of the September meeting and offered to host. The Science Museum has available space for the meeting.

Public Comment and New Business

None heard

Adjournment

Meeting concluded at 1:18pm.