



Virginia Israel Advisory Board

Office of the Governor

Minutes of Board of Directors' Meeting

March 29, 2016 10:05 AM – 12:00 PM, House Room 2, Richmond, Virginia

Attended in Person: Bob Budoff, Mel Chaskin, Donald Ferguson (OAG), Delegate Eileen Filler-Corn, Daniel Fogel (Richmond Federation Rep), Will Frank, Darcy Hirsch, Joel Kanter, Julie Krachman, Jay Myerson, Kevin O'Holleran, Ralph Robbins, Richard Samet, Nathan Shor, Eric Steigleder (for Secretary Holton), Steven Valdez, Larry Wilder Jr. (for Secretary Jones)

Attended Via Conference Call: Aliza Asher, Aviva Frye, Sophie Hoffman

1. Mel Chaskin, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM.
2. The Board Minutes of December 1, 2015 were presented. There were no corrections.
3. **Minds in Motion Update.** Ralph summarized the program for the Board meeting attendees and emphasized that the central purpose of the program is to improve self-confidence in the Arab-Israeli and Jewish-Israeli participants thereby leading to openness and acceptance of other cultures. He reiterated that Annie Sandler of Tidewater, Virginia had brought the Brookdale Institute and Professor Jack Habib on board to analyze the efficacy of the program. VIAB will be helping the Richmond Ballet to make presentations to the Virginia Federations for funding. Nathan Shor suggested that a challenge grant might be a good idea and this could be a good opportunity for a sister city project. Another possibility would be for representatives from each Federation to attend the program or incorporate attendance at the program into an Israel trip. Delegate Eileen Filler-Corn said that a video of the program should be linked to the web site. Delegate Eileen Filler-Corn also offered to make a meeting between the Richmond Ballet, the VIAB, and Secretary of Education Anne Holton to discuss the program and the potential ramifications of the research being conducted. Ralph thanked Delegate Filler-Corn for the offer and said that the VIAB will act on the offer.
4. **Virginia Tech, SW Virginia and other Business Development updates.** Ralph Robbins reported that Professor Tom Thompson, Virginia Tech Professor and Department Head, Crop and Soil Environmental Sciences, joined him in Israel to do some due diligence and additional planning on the Virginia Chickpea Project. He and Ralph visited Hebrew University and also visited some early stage field tests of potential "disruptive" disease suppression technology that could improve chickpea yield in Virginia.

Ralph reported that unfortunately the Virginia State University Stage 1 Virginia chickpea development was inconclusive. It is expected that Phase 2 of the chickpea initiative will be transferred to Virginia Tech. In the meantime, the VIAB's efforts have led to the Virginia Tech Agriculture Department being awarded \$40,000 from the Commonwealth and Ralph hopes to have Virginia Agriculture Secretary Todd Haymore meet the Israeli chickpea breeders during the Governor's visit to Israel this coming summer.

- 5. Smart Greenhouse Technology in Southwest Virginia.** Ralph explained that the VIAB has developed an ecosystem for the smart greenhouse project. Working with a top Israeli agronomist who will lead the new business, the VIAB helped to identify a well-qualified Virginia individual who wants to own and operate the first unit which will be the demonstration farm. This person is also a Veteran and could qualify for some government set-asides or preferences. Banks have been identified to provide financing. The land has been located which will accommodate the greenhouse, and Virginia Tech continues to support the project. Ralph has also re-engaged with Food City since the project has had a long lead time. Ralph recognized Board Member Aviva Frye for her integral role in putting this program together. A key challenge is securing financing for the Demonstration Site. The VIAB is working with the VEDP, the County where the Greenhouse will be built, and other institutions to try to resolve this.

Ralph reminded everyone that one of the strong advantages of this program is that non-farmers including veterans are eligible since agricultural experience is not necessary to build and operate one of these greenhouses. Training is offered by the Israeli company who will be executing the program and building their business. Ralph also shared that an Israeli company who builds the steel frames for the greenhouses is also interested to participate. It is hoped that the Israeli steel company will also establish a distribution center in the region to support the company as it grows.

- 6. Israeli Reusable Bag Factory in Southwest Virginia.** Ralph has been working with an Israeli company that has developed a new manufacturing technology that can produce reusable "tote bags" that are sold at supermarket checkout counters. The technology enables the bag to be manufactured without the need for stitching in the corners. This process creates bags which compete with those manufactured in China with cheap labor. Board Member Nate Shor offered some promotional follow-up with Jewish companies in Richmond which provide similar bags and that could be useful for market research.
- 7. EPC.** This Israeli company continues construction of their first waste treatment facility in Tazewell Virginia. VIAB is now working with the company and the county to create a "soft opening" where all of the Park's Authorities in the areas will be invited. The company has committed to open assembly in Tazewell when they reach a certain sales level.
- 8. Cybersecurity.** Ralph reported that on a rare occasion, Vince Barnett contacted the VIAB and gave a heads up of an event in California where the Governor was going to meet some Israeli Cyber Security companies. The VIAB used this opportunity to involve the Israel Electric Corporation (IEC), which offers expertise for defending critical infrastructure from cyber attacks. With over 400,000 cyber-attacks per day, the IEC works in partnership with many small and large Israeli companies in the field. Ralph's vision is to leverage the IEC's connections with some of the best emerging Israeli companies to create a collaborative effort with Virginia's cyber players.
- 9. Oran Safety Glass (OSG).** The Israeli company OSG, with a manufacturing facility in Emporia, Virginia, recently won a large contract and needs to expand their production capacity. While there is strong competition with two other states, the VIAB believes we'll be able to secure the expansion

at their current site. We also expect to work with the company to offer compelling reasons why the company should consolidate their Vermont facility with the Virginia facility. The latter is a longer term project. Ralph also introduced them to the Martin Agency, a major advertising agency located in Richmond and NYC. This may lead to new production opportunities for some of OSG's emerging consumer technologies. Chuck Lessin, Vice Chairman of VIAB, met with OSG's leadership during a recent trip to Israel and offered some compelling ideas of how to structure a package that would be attractive to the company and secure the long term commitment of the company to Virginia.

10. **Nilit.** Nilit is an Israeli company and is the largest producer of nylon 6.6 in the world. They bought an ailing company in Martinsville seven years ago which saved two hundred jobs. They are having a challenge right now with some issues involving TPP agreements. They are also looking at expansion. Ralph will have the Secretary of Trade & Commerce meet the company when in Israel during the Governor's mission in July.
11. **Aquaculture.** No updates on the aquaculture project. We continue to observe developments and remain hopeful the project will come to fruition. Ralph will have them meet the Secretary of Commerce and Trade during the Governor's trip to Israel. The VIAB remains concerned that the management change in the US company that took place about one year ago may impinge on the company's original vision.
12. **Governor's Trip.** The VIAB is working with the VEDP to ensure that the Governor meets with all relevant companies so the visit is effective. He will meet with Sabra and other major manufacturers with current interests in Virginia or who are interested in Virginia.

13. Other New Business:

The VIAB Budget was approved by the State. The total budget for FY2017 and 2018 is \$209,068 for each year. Mel thanked everyone for their support especially the Federations for their participation in Jewish Lobby Day. There may be additional funds required for the Governor's visit and that will be addressed when we have more information.

Mel Chaskin complimented Vince Barnett from the VEDP for all of his help and assistance on VIAB initiatives.

Sophie Hoffman offered to assist in organizing a meeting with the Northern Virginia Federation for a VIAB and Richmond Ballet presentation of the Minds in Motion program.

New Product Accelerator – Secretary Maurice Jones is working on 26 incubators set up by the state. We will work with Larry Wilder of Secretary Jones' office on engaging Israeli bioscience and agriculture companies with the incubators. Ralph will meet with Larry to discuss this in more detail.

14. Mel asked everyone to note the upcoming meetings on their calendars:

July 26, 2016

November 29, 2016

April 4, 2017

The meeting was adjourned at 12:00.