

MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES
WEDNESDAY, February 15, 2016
1 p.m. – 3 p.m.

Center for the Visually Impaired
739 West Peachtree St NW
Atlanta, GA 30308

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Sandy Adams
Bob Green
Tom Wilson
Dianne Davis
Angela Mackey
Louise Hill
Jonathan Taylor
Vincent Martin

Tom Wilson, Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m. Noting that Chairman Jimmy DeFoor recently had a death in the family, Mr. Wilson called for a moment of silence.

Mr. Wilson welcomed Fontaine Huey, President of the Center for the Visually Impaired (CVI). Ms. Huey discussed the mission of CVI and the services they offer at the center. She welcomed everyone to CVI.

Approval of Minutes

Mr. Wilson called for approval of minutes from the Dec. 14 meeting. Bob Green motioned to approve the minutes. Ms. Hill noted that several changes needed to be made regarding the dates in those minutes. Those changes will be made, and the amended minutes will be distributed to the board.

Executive Director's Report

Mr. Casey gave an update on the number of staff in the agency.

He noted that he recently attended the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) meeting, saying that GVRA will further partner with the SWDB to help clients with apprenticeships.

Mr. Casey said that he and other staff presented before the House Budget Committee and Subcommittee, noting that they agreed to give the organization \$4,000 in additional funds for the next fiscal year.

He described a recent meeting with the Governor's Office to discuss his first 100 days in his new role. In that meeting, he noted the creation of a new position in leadership that would oversee services to the blind and deaf communities.

Mr. Casey described the process that the Office of Communications and Marketing went through to rebrand the organization, noting that they asked staff to vote on the new logo. He noted that GVRA is working to expand its awareness efforts through targeted advertising. As part of the rebranding effort, he noted that the agency recently changed its email and website domain to gvs.ga.gov, unveiling a newly designed website in the process.

He said that the agency is working to improve and relocate local offices, working with the State Properties Commission to relocate the Waycross office and possibly move the Perry and Cleveland offices.

Mr. Casey noted that Roosevelt Warm Springs (RWS) was recently recertified in its Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) accreditation. It was a three-year recertification.

He said that while he's been traveling less than during the Legislative Session, he did recently have the opportunity to visit the main Business Enterprise Program (BEP) office.

Mr. Casey introduced Chief Client Management Officer Dale Arnold who noted that in recent months, the organization has brought Business Services and other functions back under Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to ensure a more seamless client experience. Mr. Arnold said they have been busy hiring staff to grow local office staff to full capacity.

Mr. Arnold said the organization will host a VR training for managers and supervisor next week.

Mr. Arnold noted that currently there are no changes to the VR process, through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act will mandate some changes in the future. He said that staff will soon be doing business process mapping to address how clients move through VR, and staff will be trained on that in late spring.

Mr. Arnold introduced Director of Transition Lauri Tuten to discuss transition services offered through GVRA. She said that staff were recently trained in self-advocacy as it pertains to GVRA clients. In late January, she said, staff were able to participate in the filming of several informational videos and will be shooting more at the E3 pilot schools several days following the meeting.

Ms. Tuten said that students at the Georgia Academy for the Blind recently had the opportunity to tour and work in a BEP site.

She said that the organization will soon unveil a transition tool kit that will be available via the GVRA website.

Mr. Wilson introduced Director of Communications and Marketing Robin Folsom to further discuss the rebranding efforts. Ms. Folsom gave details about the new logo and said that local offices will soon be receiving rebranded marketing materials, collateral, letterhead, business cards and other items.

She said that all GVRA employees now have a new domain alias (gvs.ga.gov), through emails sent to the ablegeorgia domain will still be received.

Ms. Folsom introduced John Boan, Communications Manager, to discuss the new website. Mr. Boan noted that the new site was designed around user testing of the previous site. This testing noted that users were looking primarily for contact information and location information. Both of these items have been brought to the forefront and optimized on the new site.

Financial Report

Mr. Wilson introduced Minerva Nixon to give a financial report on the organization. She shared budget information for the second quarter SFY 2017. She said that spending through the first half of the year was on track, noting that some seasonal trends—especially at Georgia Industries for the Blind (GIB)—may skew some of their finances.

She said that the agency as a whole ended the first half of the year at \$49 million spent, which is 50 percent of the total budget.

Ms. Nixon then broke down the VR program spending further, noting that field services, the Cave Spring Center and Roosevelt Warm Springs all fall under the larger umbrella of VR.

Customer Relations Update

Mr. Wilson then introduced Customer Care Manager Julie O'Connor to discuss the Customer Relations and Customer Care Unit (formerly Constituent Services). She noted that her staff are the ones who field calls from clients with concerns and handle general inquiries. Requests or questions submitted through the website are also submitted to this unit. They use Salesforce software to track all inquiries and ensure that every issue is resolved.

Ms. O'Connor noted that her unit received 2,272 various inquiries across all forms of contact in the latest three-month period. She further broke the numbers down by program.

AWARE Conversion Status Report

Mr. Wilson introduced Deborah McCloud, Director of Application Management, to discuss the implementation of the new case management system, AWARE. To date, the project is 25 percent complete, which includes a planning and design phase and a significant amount of data conversion. It is slated to be fully concluded and implemented in July 2018.

Report on Georgia Industries for the Blind

Mr. Wilson introduced Mike Jackson, Co-Director of GIB, to discuss recent operational happenings in the program.

Mr. Jackson said that two GIB employees will travel to the National Industries for the Blind (NIB) Conference, as they've been nominated for national awards at that conference.

He gave a brief rundown of all the services GIB offers and the history of the program itself. He shared the vision and mission of GIB, as it offers employment opportunities for individuals who are blind.

He noted several concerns, including reduction in federal sales, competition in the marketplace and lack of state sales, among other things. He said there were several building repairs—including a major roofing repair—needed for the manufacturing facility in Bainbridge.

To help ease financial stresses, GIB has been working to consolidate responsibilities, hiring a sales person for the Metro Atlanta area, as well as continuing to pursue commercial and state business.

GIB was recently recognized by NIB for “upward mobility,” which came in the form of a donation of slightly under \$25,000.

SRC Comments

Dana Skelton-Sanders presented the SRC report. She noted that the SRC will be further reviewing and advising the VR program. She discussed several upcoming events that SRC members will be attending.

Ms. Skelton-Sanders noted that the SRC will once again be assisting with the customer satisfaction surveys for agency clients this year.

SILC Comments

Executive Director of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) of Georgia Shelley Simmons said her organization is working on a video series to expand outreach

efforts across the state. It is slated to be completed by March 1. She said it will be available on the SILC website.

She said that the Independent Living Day at the Capitol on March 7 may be postponed and/or cancelled due to a scheduling conflict.

The SILC meeting for April has been postponed to May due to cost restrictions.

Old Business

Mr. Wilson noted that there had been some discussion about the scheduling of board meetings. With Chairman DeFoor absent, Mr. Wilson said he would withhold calling for a vote on changing the board schedule until a later date.

He said that board members should chose a particular area of interest in the agency to which they would serve as a liaison. He said it would be important to defer that decision as well.

Mr. Wilson said that board members have reached out to retirees to see if they would like to organize groups so that they could be a resource to GVRA staff.

Mr. Wilson presented Heather Breeden, GVRS Board Liaison, with a plaque thanking her for her service. This marked her last board meeting.

New Business

No new business.

Public Comment

Vashaun Jones noted that he was live streaming the board meeting. He described his first visit to CVI. He described the core focus of the Cobb County wing of the National Federation of the Blind and how the organization helped blind individuals find employment.

Georgeo Vickers **[SPELLING]** described his connection with the Cobb County wing of the National Federation of the Blind. He said that empowerment is the key to closed cases, and that closed cases are what everyone is working towards.

Adjournment

Mr. Wilson adjourned the meeting at 2:58 p.m.