

**MEETING MINUTES OF THE
GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD**

March 13, 2024

1:00 PM – 2:15 PM

State Botanical Garden of Georgia, 2450 S. Milledge Avenue, Athens, Georgia 30605

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tom Wilson, Chair

Faye Perdue, Vice Chair

Sandy Adams, Secretary

Craig Camuso

Jane McCall

GVRA Executive Director Chris Wells,
Non-Member

Suzanne Dooley

Louise Hill

Vincent Martin (attended virtually)

James Defoor (attended virtually)

BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:

Johnathan Taylor

Opening, Welcome, and Invocation

GVRS Board Chair Tom Wilson welcomed everyone in attendance, and the meeting was called to order at 1:01 p.m. Mrs. Adams, Board Secretary, delivered the invocation.

Approval of Agenda and Consent Agenda

Chairman Wilson performed a roll call and recommended approval of the agenda and the Consent Agenda, consisting of the following:

- Approve Board Meeting Minutes from Previous Session
- Approve Budget Report

On motion of Vice Chair Perdue, seconded by Secretary Adams, and unanimously carried, the Board approved the agenda as presented.

GVRA Staff Updates/Reports:

Executive Director Report – Executive Director Chris Wells

Agency Spotlights

- Executive Director Wells recognized the following employees:
 - Jessica Sanford, a VR Counselor for the Lafayette office in District 1, was chosen as the December employee of the month.
 - Treasure Hight, a VR Counselor for the Columbus office in District 5, was chosen as the January employee of the month.
 - Lauren Knox, a retired VR employee, returned to the agency in her former role as Interim Director of Client Services.

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House Bills 915 and 916

- Executive Director Wells provided information on House Bill 915 – the amended Fiscal Year 2024 budget, House Bill 916 – the Fiscal Year 2025 adjustments and the Fiscal Year 2025 Capital Funding.

Vocational Rehabilitation Updates

- Executive Director Wells shared that the turnover rate for Counselors has improved from 13% in FY2022 to 3% in FY2023 following the improvement in counselors' pay. He also stated that the number of Counselors has increased from 86 in FY2020 to 130 in FY2024.
- He further provided a breakdown of the number of Counselors and Pre-Employment Specialists from FY2019 – FY2024.
- Executive Director Wells also provided updates regarding the increased funding and contracts for the following:
 - Georgia Radio Reading Service
 - Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)
 - Friends of Disabled Adults and Children (FODAC)
 - BlazeSports
 - Tommy Nobis Center (TNC)
 - Bobby Dodd Institute (BDI)
 - Partnering with the Atlanta Braves

Legislative Update – John Pilgrim, Legislative & Governmental Affairs Liaison

- Mr. Pilgrim spoke to the current bills that are awaiting approval by the House or Senate related to Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation clients and the Agency.

Business Relations Update – Leon Allen, Jr., Business Relations Manager

- Mr. Allen briefed the Board on what the Business Relations team does, how the Agency benefits from their efforts, the key principles of VR Business Relations and Engagement, and the different outreach approaches the team uses.
- The Business Relations team has also provided disability etiquette awareness training to the Meriwether County Rotary Club.

Old Business/New Business

Chairman Wilson reviewed the following items with the Board:

- Project SEARCH – This program is a wonderful opportunity for GVRA. Jeff Allen and his team have worked hard to bring this program as a collaboration with GVRA and hope to transition it to GVRA in October.
- The May 8th GVRS Board meeting will be held virtually.

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- The August 14th GVRS Board Meeting will be held at Roosevelt Warm Springs
- The October 9th GVRS Board meeting will be held in Perry, Georgia at the Georgia National Fairgrounds during GVRA Day at the Fair.

Public Comment & Adjournment

Chairman Wilson opened the floor for public comment. As there was no public comment, he called for a motion to adjourn.

On motion of Mrs. McCall, seconded by Vice Chair Perdue, the board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 1:54 p.m.