

MINUTES OF MEETING
BOARD OF GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES
WEDNESDAY, MAY 13TH, 2020
1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tom Wilson (Chairman)
Faye Perdue (Vice-Chair)
Sandy Adams (Secretary)
Louise Hill
Suzanne Dooley
Craig Camuso
Jonathan Taylor
Vincent Martin
Angela Mackey
GVRA Executive Director Shawn Ryan (Non-Member)

Introduction

GVRS Board Chair Tom Wilson welcomed everyone in attendance, noting this was the first board meeting held via video conference.

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Wilson called for a motion to approve the minutes from March 11th, 2020. Ms. Perdue motioned to approve, and Mr. Camuso seconded. It was passed unanimously.

GVRA Staff Updates/Reports

Executive Director – Shawn Ryan

Executive Director Shawn Ryan updated the board on the agency's Covid-19 plan was submitted to the Governor's office. The model was based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) guidelines. He provided a detailed description of the agency program and administrative operations during the pandemic.

No GVRA staff were diagnosed with the virus while in office operations were ongoing. However, there were reports of employees diagnosed after staff started teleworking. In preparation for reopening, all of agency locations will be deep cleaned. When staff return, they will do so on a rotating teleworking schedule. The Facilities and Fiscal Services departments were able to secure sanitizer, gloves and masks for staff use.

Due to the pandemic, there have been significant revenue reductions. Therefore, the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) and the General Assembly have requested all state agencies cut budgets by 14% for 2021, based on the 2020 base levels.

Program and administrative leads have been asked to submit detailed plans to inform the budget and finance staff where the cuts need to happen. These plans are to be submitted to OPB by May 20th. OPB will finalized the plans.

Mr. Ryan announced his departure from GVRA at the end of May. His successor has not yet been named.

Vocational Rehabilitation – Dr. Christine Fleming, VR Director

VR highlights – the Georgia State Plan was submitted on January 10th. The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) is currently reviewing the latest round of revisions. The state plan will be updated after data from the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and Accenture reports have been approved by the Governor’s office. Dr. Fleming provided data on staff and clients served as of April 20th. She also shared the VR Performance Goals (client data). VR requested providers to submit proposals to request an exception to the Outsourcing manual and request permission to deliver services remotely. The Accenture and CSNA report are both pending at the Governor’s office.

An AWARE Taskforce has been created to work with the end users to focus on the functionality of data submitted in AWARE. VR is working with the Georgia Department of Labor (DOL) on the SWISS agreement, which shares employee wage data.

VR is moving toward all ACH payments. The VR provider Outsourcing Manual has been updated. Dr. Fleming is working with the SRC regarding public comments on the manual.

Dr. Fleming updated the Board on RWS remote service delivery options.

Mr. Wilson thanked Mr. Ryan and Dr. Fleming for all the hard work they both have done during the pandemic.

Business Enterprise Program – Teresa Eggleston, Director

Their RSA visit was cancelled due to the pandemic. Ms. Eggleston shared with the board the number of active vendors and trainees. During the time, the trainees are receiving their training remotely.

Ms. Eggleston provided details on the pending opportunities for the vendors along with facilities that are out for competitive bid.

In response to COVID – 19, BEP suspended much of its operations, allowing staff to telework. BEP is currently reviewing opportunities for CARE assistance for vendors. BEP is putting together a plan in accordance with CDA and public health guidelines to reopen their locations. The marine base location in Albany will reopen next week.

There have been two vendors who have been exposed to COVID -19, but to the agency’s knowledge, none have actually contracted the disease.

Mr. Wilson thanked Ms. Eggleston for her leadership during the pandemic.

Budget Report – Jessime McGarity, Director

Ms. McGarity provided data on the agency’s financial performance by program and major object classes. She described and provided a description of the agency major object classes (personal services, grants and benefits, contractual services, real estate computer and other operating costs).

As of this date, the agency is on schedule to meet the budget year end.

Ms. McGarity shared with the board the mission, goals and objectives for the Office of Planning and Budget.

Mr. Wilson thanked Ms. McGarity for her efforts.

New Business – Tom Wilson, Board Chair

The board proceeded with the election of board members Ms. Faye Perdue for Vice Chair and Ms. Sandy Adams for Secretary. Both are willing to continue their services into the new state year. Mr. Wilson has also agreed to continue his role as Board Chair. Mr. Camuso motioned that all the current officers remain due to the ongoing pandemic and the departure of the current GVRA executive director. Mr. Wilson opened the floor for discussion and other nominations, asking if any of the other board members would be willing to serve. Hearing no further nominations, Mr. Wilson called for a vote to elect the current officers. The board voted unanimously, electing current officers to another one year term.

Old Business – Tom Wilson, Board Chair

None

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) – Kate Brady, Chair

The SRC offered its support in search of the new executive director.

The CSNA report has been completed. Upon further review from the Governor’s office this report will be shared with leadership first and then staff.

The SRC is collaborating with VR on upcoming public comments for revisions to the agencies funding model for Inclusive Post-Secondary Education (IPSE).

Mr. Wilson thanked Ms. Brady for her support and efforts as SRC Chair.

Statewide Independent Living Center (SILC) – Shelly Simmons, Executive Director

SILC offices are open for business. SILC and the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) have skeleton crews at most centers. Many staff are working remotely.

SILC is currently waiting on the approval of four board nominations from the Governor’s office.

SILC is considering revising its bylaws to reduce the number of board members needed to meet the qualifications for the SPIL to be approved. The SPIL will be ready by the end of next week and will be up for public comment through three Zoom meetings.

Several of the centers' staff lost their lives to COVID-19. Ms. Simmons mentioned the loss of Steve Oldaker, SILC council member.

Public Comment

Mr. Charles Hall with GATES thanked Mr. Ryan for his service to GVRA and wished him well.

Mr. Taylor also expressed well wishes for Mr. Ryan.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:48 pm. The next meeting date is Wednesday, July 8th via MS Teams.