

MINUTES OF MEETING
GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD
Wednesday, July 14th, 2021
1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tom Wilson (Chairman)
Faye Perdue (Vice-Chair)
Sandy Adams (Secretary)
Craig Camuso
Suzanne Dooley
Angela Mackey
Louise Hill
GVRA Executive Director Chris Wells (Non-Member)

Introduction

GVRS Board Chair Tom Wilson welcomed everyone in attendance. The meeting was called to order at 1:02 p.m.

Approval of Agenda

The board unanimously approved the agenda for the meeting.

Approval of Minutes

Minutes from the May 2021 meeting were unanimously approved. Ms. Perdue motioned to approve and Ms. Adams seconded.

GVRA Staff Updates/Reports

Executive Director – Chris Wells

Director Wells updated the board on current agency program highlights as well as organizational and financial updates. Program highlights are below.

- **Agency Financials** – Director Wells reviewed current agency expenditures, noting that GVRA had a particularly conservative budget for SFY21.
- **Administration Highlights** – Office hours across the state have been made uniform from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. statewide. In addition, GVRA began its in-house business unit on July 1, bringing more functions into the organization and allowing for more administrative control.
- **DAS Highlights** – SSA recently approved entry-level salary increases for adjudicators. In addition, the program recently moved to a new Disability Case Processing System.
- **Residential Campus Highlights** – RWS recently had a successful graduation ceremony with 12 graduates. Both RWS and CSC will continue reopening in phases to students.
- **Vocational Rehabilitation Highlights** – Director Wells gave an overview of client numbers for the VR program. While the pandemic did have an impact on the number of clients served, GVRA is committed to returning more resources to help field staff increase outcomes. This includes additional training for staff and ongoing recruitment efforts. VR is also working to begin to slowly serve individuals off the ongoing waitlist.

Stakeholders Summit – Ahnieyah Porter, Executive Assistant

Ms. Porter gave an update on the upcoming Stakeholder Summit, noting that she and Director Wells are meeting with presenters to ensure consistency across presentations.

Client Services – Jennifer Howell, Assistant Director

Director Wells introduced Jennifer Howell who recently was promoted to an Assistant Director position within VR. Ms. Howell reviewed ongoing training initiatives and outlined how the program is addressing provider needs across the state.

Transition Services – Jeff Allen, Transition Services Assistant Director

Mr. Allen noted that GVRA is working with Tools for Life to develop accessibility solutions for GVRA clients. He gave an overview of the GROW summer program, noting that this year's event drew more than 400 students statewide.

Business Enterprise Program – Teresa Eggleston, BEP Director

Ms. Eggleston noted the current number of blind vendors, and while COVID-19 impacted BEP sites, some are slowly returning to normal functions. BEP will also begin conducting a training program for vendors hoping to relocate to Georgia beginning in August. The BEP did receive financial relief through RSA to aid vendors impacted by the pandemic, and that is being distributed to those impacted. She showed that BEP sales have slowly ticked down since 2019, due in large part to the economic uncertainty surrounding the pandemic.

Georgia Industries for the Blind – Teresa Eggleston, Interim Director

Ms. Eggleston discussed the economic challenges facing GIB, noting that the program is working to certify its mask making machine.

State Rehabilitation Council – Kate Brady, Chair

No update.

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

Ms. Simmons noted that SILC has an upcoming board meeting next week. It will be held virtually.

New/Old Business – Tom Wilson, Board Chair

No old business. In new business, the board unanimously voted to move their September board meeting to August 25. Ms. Adams made the motion to change the date, and Ms. Perdue seconded.

Public Comment

None

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for August 25 at Roosevelt Warm Springs.

Official Minutes Statement

The foregoing Minutes for the July 14, 2021, Regular Meeting of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board were approved and adopted by the Board at the Board's meeting on August 25, 2021.

Tom Wilson, Chair

Date