

MINUTES OF MEETING
GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD
Wednesday, August 25, 2021
1 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Roosevelt Warm Springs Campus

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

Tom Wilson (Chairman)
Faye Perdue (Vice-Chair)
Sandy Adams (Secretary)
Craig Camuso
Louise Hill
Vincent Martin
Angela Mackey
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 July 2021 meeting were unanimously approved. Ms. Adams motioned to approve, and Ms. Perdue seconded.

Special Recognition

Chairman Wilson noted the recent passing of former board member Don Parks, noting Mr. Parks' dedication to helping individuals with disabilities.

GVRA Staff Updates/Reports

Executive Director – Chris Wells

GVRA Executive Director Chris Wells updated the board on the existing agency leadership structure. He noted a number of high level accomplishments over the past year. This includes consolidation of staff emails, the rollout of a new business unit, completion of RSA monitoring, creation of a data analytics unit and the commencement of the GVRA employee of the month initiative, among many other achievements.

Administration Update -- Jonathan Buxton, Chief Financial Officer

Mr. Buxton did a review of the FY2021 budget as well as the FY2022 budget alignment. The agency is currently in the planning stages of a bond request submission. The agency is continuing to explore consolidation efforts at 200 Piedmont, with the move to floor 13 to happen within the next several months. In addition, multiple offices have consolidated across the state. In addition, the Information Technology Department is implementing an electronic signature system in addition to network infrastructure upgrades.

Georgia Industries for the Blind Update – Raj Pagadala, Interim Co-Director GIB

Mr. Pagadala gave an overview of GIB, explaining how the workforce is predominantly blind or low vision. GIB is currently in the process of certifying face masks produced at the factory as level 3, which qualifies these

masks for use in hospitals and other medical facilities. This certification will cost roughly \$50,000. The goal, he said, is to move away from solely manufacturing to more providing services. He suggested possible digitization services and call center services.

Training Initiatives – Buffy Mitchell

GVRA is currently combining its different program training units into an enterprise wide training unit. Currently, she said, they're auditing the current training curriculum and schedule and will be rolling out new trainings in the coming weeks and months.

Stakeholder Summit – Ahnieyah Porter

Ms. Porter updated the board on the upcoming Stakeholder Summit, which will take place on the RWS campus on 8.26.21. The event will be predominantly digital with a small in-person component. The decision to limit in-person attendance was due to the rise of the Delta variant of the coronavirus.

Residential Services Update – Lee Brinkley Bryan

Ms. Bryan noted that in 2020, staff served over 1,000 students despite limitations due to COVID-19. The campus shifted virtually during the pandemic and is slowly opening the campus to students once again, though the campus is still not at full capacity. She said that the Cave Spring Center is building out additional service and program opportunities, as both campuses expect an influx of students in the coming years. She highlighted the academic education team on campus, which helped drive students' skill gains and credential attainment. Some students increased their reading level by as much as five grade levels in a single year and increased their math level by as much as four grade levels in that same time period. She said GVRA will continue to become more and more involved in pre-employment transition services for students across the state.

The board heard from an RWS student who discussed his time at Warm Springs, saying he learned quite a lot and that it gave him an opportunity to carve his own path in life.

Ms. Bryan recognized RWS Development Fund Board Chair Steve Stanfield. Steve gave some historical background on the Development Fund Board, beginning with its foundation in 1986. Since that time, it has raised \$30 million for capital projects on campus.

SRC Report – None

SILC Report – None

New/Old Business – Tom Wilson, Board Chair

The board unanimously voted to reapprove Jimmy Defoor as GVRS Chairman Emeritus. Ms. Perdue made the motion and Ms. Adams seconded.

Public Comment

None

The meeting was adjourned a 2:32 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, November 10, 2021.

Official Minutes Statement

The foregoing Minutes for the August 25, 2021, Regular Meeting of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board were approved and adopted by the Board at the Board's meeting on November 10, 2021.

Tom Wilson, Chair

Date