

**MINUTES OF MEETING**  
**BOARD OF GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES**  
**WEDNESDAY, October 12, 2016**  
**1 p.m. – 3 p.m.**

Athens Technical College - Elbert County Campus  
1317 Athens Hwy, Elberton GA 30636

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Sandy Adams

Jimmy DeFoor

Tom Wilson

Dianne Davis

Angela Mackey

Louise Hill

Vincent Martin

Jimmy DeFoor, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 1 p.m.

Chairman DeFoor welcomed those in attendance and thanked Ms. Adams for her hospitality and for allowing the board to attend the annual *Friends Helping Friends* basketball game.

Mr. DeFoor recognized Heather Breeden as GVRS Board liaison and Dana Skelton-Sanders as SRC Board liaison. Both Ms. Breeden and Ms. Skelton-Sanders introduced themselves and described their backgrounds.

**E3/Transition Presentation**

Mr. DeFoor recognized GVRA Transition Director Dale Arnold who introduced GVRA Deputy Transition Director Lauri Tuten. Ms. Tuten said that the *E3* program had expanded to six pilot locations. *E3* staff recently met with Decatur County leaders and discussed the Jobs for the Future program that will soon rollout asset mapping and labor market integration for that district.

*E3* has also entered into an agreement with *Parent2Parent*, with the ultimate goal being 100-percent parental involvement in all of the pilot districts.

*E3* staff members, as well as GVRA staff members, also helped fundraise for Georgia Public Broadcasting at a recent pledge drive, helping to better educate the public about the mission of the program and the agency as a whole.

*E3* also had an *E3 Academy* with staff and partners to ensure everyone involved was making strides toward the greater mission. The event was capped off by keynote speaker I. King Jordan, the first deaf president of Gallaudet University.

Mr. Arnold spoke on the wider transition initiatives within the agency, the goal of which is to partner with every school district in the state. The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) places a significant emphasis on transition, he said, and the agency is working to meet these expanded requirements.

The agency is also working to solidify an MOU with the Georgia Department of Education (GDOE) that will establish strategic focuses to drive graduation rates and post-secondary education rates, while at the same time reducing the dropout rate of students with disabilities. Mr. Arnold said the agency will meet the WIOA requirements as they apply to every school district in the state.

Mr. Arnold introduced Karen Royston, who heads the *High School High Tech (HSHT)* initiative in Georgia. It is an in-school transition program to assist students with disabilities to become aware of post-secondary and employment opportunities after high school. Ms. Royston said *HSHT* tailors its approach to individual school districts and does not simply apply a one-size-fits-all approach. *HSHT* is currently in 54 school districts and provided over 9,000 transition activities last year alone.

*HSHT* promotes high school graduation, prepares students for life after high school and develops a high degree of self-discipline and reliance among students with disabilities.

### **Board Member Reimbursement Procedures**

Ms. Breeden noted that all board members would soon be provided with a flash drive that details reimbursement procedures, O.C.G.A. code related to the board and its activities, and other related documents.

Ms. Breeden discussed board member per diem amounts and the steps necessary to collect that per diem and other expenses related to board service.

Mr. DeFoor recognized Al McCall, son of Representative Tom McCall, for making the facilities at Athens Tech available to the board.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Mr. DeFoor moved to consider the minutes for September 2016. Mr. Wilson made a motion for the approval of the minutes, which was seconded by Ms. Davis. Mr. DeFoor noted a discrepancy in the previous month's minutes. Ms. Adams made a motion to discuss this portion of the September minutes, correct the minutes and send back out to board members. The previous motion was rescinded.

## **Executive Director Report**

Mr. DeFoor recognized GVRA's Executive Director Greg Schmieg. He noted that this would be Mr. Schmieg's final GVRB Board meeting as he would be retiring at the end of the month of October. Mr. DeFoor thanked Mr. Schmieg for his service and noted his accomplishments during his tenure as the Executive Director of GVRA.

Delivering a written statement, Mr. Schmieg said he would only present one slide, showing a picture of the fictional hero Ulysses as he is tied to the mast of a ship while the sirens call out to him and his crew. Mr. Schmieg thanked his staff for their tireless devotion to the cause. He thanked outside partners.

He personally thanked Keith Horton, Lynn Hampton, Ed James, and Jimmy Wilson.

He noted the agency's most important accomplishments over the past several years. He said he is proudest of the agency's belief that "every person can work." In addition, the agency has set a goal to employ 50,000 individuals a year and serve 100,000 individuals annually. Georgia has a chance to demonstrate to the entire country that the way individuals with disabilities have been treated is not the way it has to be, he said.

Returning to the picture of Ulysses, he said that GVRA is on a similar journey, and it is important to remember the greater mission and not be wavered by distractions. He said that he did not plan on retiring nor want to retire and he wishes his entire statements to be included in these minutes. *They are included as an addendum.*

## **Budget Report**

GVRA COO/CFO Jimmy Wilson discussed the state's Fiscal Year 2016 YTD budgetary comparison, noting that the agency has, for the third year in a row been in state compliance. He discussed the 110 Federal Carryover.

The agency, he said, has built out its own phone and IT services, and all these communication management systems are currently in house.

In the coming legislative session, the agency will request \$1.6 million for the RWS hospital program. This will be the last year the agency must request these funds for the hospital system, and it is the agency's hope that these funds will be available for federal match.

The state is still leaving unmatched funds on the table, but it is the agency's hope that the legislature ensures full federal funding in the coming years.

## **GA Response to WIOA/Project Horizon**

Gap analyses were done to develop a four-year employment-driven strategic plan, develop a high-quality workforce development model, design a strong service integration, improve the structure and delivery of services and ensure performance accountability and the value for the money spent.

To meet these challenges, the agency hired an outside firm, iServiceX, to implement a three-phased approach that includes a team-based and employee-driven approach; guidance and oversight provided by the GVRA executive leadership team; and engaged clients and providers. These were broken down further into four work streams: strategy and performance management; organizational effectiveness and the value delivery process; provider management; and strategic sourcing.

As of now, GVRA is in the implementation phase of Project Horizon, which is broken down into five stages. The first addresses how the agency implements something of this magnitude on a statewide level. The next looks at the changes associated with the new processes and how these can be shared with the appropriate staff. From there, the implementation will focus on embedding the strategies and changes with a final focus on results and post implementation review.

He discussed the timeline for implementation as it stretches from the present day through August of next year, though most of it will be accomplished by March 2017.

Mr. Wilson broke down the 2016-2017 operating budget by department, also showing how much was paid for the Project Horizon initiative. It was covered entirely by carryover funds.

Mr. Wilson said that the agency is moving away from the LIBERA client management system, and the agency will be moving to a new system by April 2018. Due to the technical issues involved, it is a long process, and the agency is focused now on implementing a system that works and allows staff to access and analyze client data.

Mr. Wilson introduced Staff Attorney Crystal Perry to discuss the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. She said the agency is committed to proactively addressing the requirements laid out in WIOA. This is part of a larger move to a different service model across agencies around the state. The regulations as part of WIOA go into effect the week following the board meeting, so quick change is necessary.

GVRA's role in WIOA is that of a core partner as part of a unified state plan. In this, GVRA is a core partner in four different workgroups: data sharing development; board and governance; finance; and one-stops (intake through one central group). GVRA's portion of the state plan was accomplished on a timetable which began in the summer of 2015 and was submitted to the Governor's Office on April 1 of 2016.

Mr. Wilson shared the agenda for the upcoming GVRA Leadership Summit. He introduced GVRA HR Director Marya Calhoun, who said that its aim is to help managers and supervisors with training opportunities and to ensure strategic alignment in the mission.

Mr. Wilson introduced D'Arcy Robb to speak on the Georgia Evolution Conference. Ms. Robb discussed the goals of the conference: to help GVRA staff and partners to support the belief that everyone can work and everyone has the tools to do such. Its goal is for 300 attendees, and as of October 6, 2016, there were 243 attendees registered.

## **Old Business**

No old business.

## **New Business**

No new business.

## **Public Comment**

Stacey Ramirez, state director of The ARC Georgia, spoke in support of Mr. Schmieg. She commended him for a lifetime of service and urged the board to focus on the future and to continue along the path to success that Mr. Schmieg established. She said individuals with disabilities in Georgia have excelled in post-secondary programs due to GVRA, and GVRA is to be commended for all the collaborations and partnerships it has fostered under Mr. Schmieg's leadership. She said that she has a son who has applied for Roosevelt Warm Springs, and if it wasn't for the changes Mr. Schmieg implemented, she would have never encouraged this decision.

Lynn Smith, GATES Association, noted that GVRA and GATES have mutual goals. While she applauded the agency for the goals set under Project Horizon, she said GATES members have concerns about the vetting process for CRPs moving forward.

## **SRC/SILC Comments**

Shelly Simmons with the SILC said she appreciates Mr. Schmieg for his service, and that under his leadership, the relationship between the SILC and GVRA flourished. She said she hopes to continue her collaboration with GVRA moving forward.

Dana Skelton-Sanders, board liaison to the SRC, read several statements from SRC Board Chairman Kip Slade. She discussed the federal mandates that guide the SRC. She said further agency policies and implementations should involve the SRC. The SRC is currently working on its annual report, which will be published before the end of the year. She said she is working to ensure that SRC members can travel across the state so that individual members can meet the mandates required of them.

## **Adjournment**

The next GVRS Board meeting is scheduled for November 9, 2016, at 200 Piedmont Ave. SE, West Tower, 20<sup>th</sup> Floor boardroom, Atlanta, GA 30334.

Mr. DeFoor adjourned the board meeting at 4:08 p.m.