

MINUTES OF MEETING
GEORGIA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES BOARD
Wednesday, November 10, 2021
1 p.m. – 3:05 p.m.

Suite 404, Sloppy Floyd Building
West Tower
Atlanta, GA 30334

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

GVRA Staff Updates/Reports

Executive Director – Chris Wells

GVRA Executive Director Chris Wells updated the board on the newly-created agency pillars: Transparency, Empowerment, Accountability, Compassion, and Honesty. He noted a number of initiatives that are set to be implemented over the following months. These include counselor hiring, call center centralization, professional development, website refresh, among many other initiatives. Lastly, he gave the board updates regarding the agency's residential services, Disability Adjudication Services, and the Business Enterprise Program.

Administration Update -- Jonathan Buxton, Director of Administration

Mr. Buxton reviewed the agency's current budget position four months into FY 2022. He updated the board on IT projects such as an upcoming equipment refresh, network infrastructure upgrades, and the transition to Microsoft Voice. He added that offices in 200 Piedmont will be consolidating to the 13th floor by January. Lastly he updated the board on current fiscal year grants and American Rescue Plan (ARP) grant funds.

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

Mr. Pagadala gave an overview of GIB, explaining how the workforce is predominantly blind or low vision. He stated GIB has seen declining revenues over the last eight years, and the current supply chain issues have not helped. He further stated GIB employees were furloughed for four weeks, but are now back at work. He added

that BEP is now using GIB storage space in Griffin, GA; GIB has begun offering paper shredding services; Mr. Pagadala and Ms. Eggleston visited the Alabama Industries for the Blind for a tour.

Provider Management – Sheila Pierce, Assistant Director of Provider Management

Ms. Pierce updated the board on current provider management initiatives including the Provider Management Task Force, the virtual portal for providers, updating of provider contracts, virtual provider information forums, creating a provider directory, among others.

Constituent Services – John Peyton Boan, Public Affairs Officer

Mr. Boan gave the board an update regarding the reorganization of the constituent services call center. He added that the new software the call center will work off of will allow for better monitoring of phone calls constituent concerns. Mr. Boan also updated the board on plans for a website refresh. He added that a lot of information on the website is out of date. Lastly, he stated the website layout needs to be optimized and more intuitive.

Transition Services – Jeff Allen, Assistant Director of Transition Services

Mr. Allen updated the board on the recent Pre-Employment Services meeting held at Roosevelt Warm Springs. The meeting reviewed job roles and responsibilities. He added that the first session of the Parent Forum took place on October 21. This forum had 54 families attend. Lastly, he provided data to the board regarding the number of Pre-ETS cases per district.

Chairman Wilson asked Mr. Allen if the agency has spent the required 15% of federal grant funds on transition services. Mr. Buxton answered that the agency has not spent the 15%, but the funds are being reserved so the agency is still in compliance.

SRC Report – None

SILC Report – Shelly Simmons, Executive Director of SILC

Ms. Simmons stated that SILC have officially submitted their PPR report to the federal government. She added that the annual report has been completed and that she would like to get the report to all GVRS Board members. Lastly, she stated she was hopeful that with the upcoming legislative session in January, GVRA and SILC could advocate for additional funding for the centers for independent living across Georgia. She added that the cuts amounted to a loss of \$809,000.

New/Old Business – Tom Wilson, Board Chair

None

Public Comment

None

The meeting was adjourned at 3:05 p.m.

Official Minutes Statement

The foregoing Minutes for the November 10, 2021, Regular Meeting of the Georgia Vocational Rehabilitation Services Board were approved and adopted by the Board at the Board's meeting on January 12, 2022.

Tom Wilson, Chair

Date