**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities**

**Advocacy, Outreach, and Training (AOT) Committee Meeting Minutes**

**Dec. 4, 2019**

**Committee Members Present:**

Allison Coles-Johnson (The Committee Chair)

Ethel Parris Gainer

Alexandra Dixon

Jocelyn Kilgore

Molly Korte

Eric Mann

Kate Olson

Matthew Shaprio

Jamie Snead

Frederique Vincent

**VBPD Staff:**

Benjamin Jarvela

Penni Sweetenburg-Lee

Megan Weems

Ronita Wilson

Evette Wingfield-Woodley

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The Committee Chair, Ms. Allison Coles-Johnson called the meeting to order at 9:19 a.m.

**Review of the Agenda:**

The Chair called for an addition to the agenda, “Selection of the Vice Chair”, be inserted after the 9:15am "Approval of the September Committee Minutes”.

**Approval of the September Committee Minutes:**

Mr. Matthew Shapiro made a **MOTION** to approve the September Committee minutes as written. Ms. Frederique Vincent seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** carried unanimously.

**Selection of Vice Chair:**

Mr. Benjamin Jarvela, Communications Director, briefly explained the role of the Committee Vice Chair. Mr. Eric Mann volunteered himself as the Committee Vice Chair. Ms. Alexandra Dixon made a **MOTION** to select Mr. Mann to serve as the Committee Vice Chair. Ms. Jocelyn Kilgore seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** carried unanimously.

**Executive Committee Update:**

Mr. Jarvela gave an Executive Committee meeting update covering: the approval of the September meeting minutes, Board members attendance, with a note that one Board member has missed three meetings and that the Governor’s office had been notified. Mr. Jarvela continued with the Executive Director’s update, agency updates, fiscal updates/budget updates, Grant expenditure updates, with a note that the Grant Review Team’s grant proposals up will be up for approval from the Board, and the State Plan progress report and Update. Mr. Jarvela noted the time allotted in the Board meeting agenda for the outgoing Executive Director, Ms. Heidi Lawyer’s retirement and recognition during the full Board meeting.

Mr. Mann asked about the influx in Grant proposals and whether there were new groups applying. Mr. Shapiro and Ms. Vincent agreed that based on their understanding, most of the grant proposals came from groups and organizations that have not received one of the Board’s grants before. Ms. Vincent discussed her excitement to see more employment-based grant proposals.

**PIP Update:**

Dr. Penni Sweetenburg-Lee gave an update on the Training Programs department progress this quarter. Based on a series of personal circumstances within the Training Programs staff, they have been understaffed based on various personal leave time.

Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee commented that Partners in Policymaking (PIP) program held three successful sessions and noted the upcoming session in January. Ms. Ronita Wilson, Alumni Development Coordinator has covered the PIP program procurement process, which had undergone a series of changes. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee discussed the Capitol Day program and its impact on the participants (“Partners”). Partners were able to engage with the agency representatives and legislators who served on the panel. She noted the impact of having Delegate Delores McQuinn present as the keynote speaker, and the Delegate’s direct interaction with the Partners and their advocacy testimonies. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee discussed the panel participants and the process of engaging with the Partners one their advocacy issues. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee wondered whether the program should be shifted to focus on interacting with agency representatives who were able to engage and, in some cases, provide direct solutions for Partners. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee noted an example in a current Partner, Jeremy Smith, who is working with the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services to correct his issue of underemployment. Ms. Dixon suggested connecting the Partner with the local Center for Independent Living for employment opportunities. Ms. Vincent commented that as an employee of a CIL, the issue would be the employment recommendation from DARS.

Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee noted that the overall program goal is for staff to facilitate Partners’ communication with legislators to create effective policy change. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee commented that this goal falls in line with the updated PIP 2020 project goal. Currently there are 24 Partners and that roughly 78% of them have been able to meet with their legislators and provide a write up on their experience. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee handed out copies of the PIP 2019/20 program booklet. Mr. Shapiro and Ms. Kilgore commented on the organization and the presentation of the information in the booklet. Mr. Mann asked about an electronic version of the document and whether that could be shared with other organizations and businesses. Mr. Jarvela and Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee agreed that it could be shared.

Mr. Mann asked about connecting private sector partners with the Board’s projects, specifically PIP and disability employment events. Mr. Jarvela commented that the funding regulations might be an issue. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee believed the idea could possibly applied to the Training Alumni Association (TAA). Mr. Shapiro suggested the possibility to connect via Event Support applications. Mr. Mann agreed that a hiring event would need to be a collaborative goal of multiple organizations. Ms. Shapiro noted that there were several disability job fairs held around the Commonwealth, but that if larger employers (SunTrust, Wells Fargo, Amazon, etc.) participate then that would draw more participants. Discussion ensued. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee added that she appreciated the suggestion and will try to work with Ms. Wilson to develop something for the TAA. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee continued the report, she noted the Request for Proposals (RFP) for the vendor providing nursing services for the Training programs. The new vendor, ATC Healthcare Services, have been selected, and the new staff have to be trained for the upcoming PIP sessions (January 10-11, 2020).

**ALUMNI DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM Update:**

Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee commented that Alumni Development Program (ADP) held a Retreat on August 1-3, 2019. The purpose of ADP Retreat was to discuss the mission and vision of the program, from this event Training staff were given an agenda from alumni of topics and legislative training events they would like to have. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee explained that based on the timing of the circumstances resulting in extended personal leaves within the Training Department, their event goals were unable to be met in the time. Staff have communicated with alumni members of the TAA. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee mentioned the upcoming Developmental Disabilities Advocacy Days during the upcoming General Assembly session. Alumni have requested a brand identity and so there has been an effort to purchase scarves and hats to help identify TAA amongst other organizations participating in DD Day. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee believed this event is a great networking opportunity for TAA members to connect with other advocates and current Partners.

Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee added that there is an effort to organize alumni to attend a Town Hall event (January 2, 2019) with Delegate Delores McQuinn that would discuss legislative advocacy practices. Mr. Shapiro offered his expertise and understanding of the legislative process. Ms. Dixon commended and thanked Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee and the Training department on the work they have been doing in the face of personal difficulties and challenges.

**YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY UPDATE:**

Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee discussed the upcoming Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) program on July 13-16, 2020 to be held at Virginia State University. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee explained that the YLA program agendas were being developed and the application would be available next Monday, December 9, 2019. Applications will be due by Friday, March 27, 2020 by 5:00 PM. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee requested references and promotion of the application by Board members. There are 25 available slots and all costs are covered by the Board. Ms. Jamie Snead asked about whether the application process has a tracking system of where the applicants found out about the program. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee explained that applicants are asked but it has not been formally tracked.

**Communications Update:**

Mr. Jarvela gave an update on the Communications Department. Mr. Jarvela discussed the upcoming YLA 2020 recruitment starting Monday, December 9, 2019, and encouraged the Board members to share and promote the YLA application. Mr. Jarvela gave an overview of the Disability History Awareness Month (DHAM) social media campaign, the Governor’s DHAM proclamation, yearly Alumni surveys, and the MeWe social network fee ($2/monthly). Mr. Jarvela mentioned the upcoming proposals of adding an Instagram account to the Board’s social media presence. Ms. Vincent asked for a full social media list of the Board sites be shared with Board members. Mr. Jarvela explained the design and purpose of MeWe as a network, and the downsides to Facebook and its lacking user base for our target audience. Discussion ensued about the importance and impact of various social media networks. Mr. Jarvela gave an update on the Project Living Well grant project’s documents and an overview of the project objective. Ms. Vincent asked for an email or communication when the Project Living Well assets are available online. Mr. Jarvela agreed and explained that there would be a promotional marketing effort for the project as the documents are published. Mr. Shapiro asked about the need for the Assessments with the Project Living Well project on the table. Mr. Jarvela expanded and explained that the Board is statutorily required to produce the Assessments, but that staff is working to redevelop the process of the Assessments and make them more visually accessible.

**Committee Naming Discussion:**

The Chair asked Mr. Jarvela to give an overview of the purpose of renaming the committee. Mr. Jarvela referred to the September 11, 2019, Board meeting and the resulting restructuring of the committee responsibilities and then the discussion developed a list of possible new committee names. Mr. Jarvela reminded the committee that the committee names and structure were developed/decided based on the staff who chaired the committees, most of these pieces have changed in the past few years and so it was decided to give the committees a chance to update the name. Mr. Shapiro offered the name “ACT: Advocacy, Communications, and Training.” Ms. Dixon agreed with “ACT.” Ms. Snead offered the idea of cutting “advocacy” from the name because all of the committees focus on advocacy, and offered the name “CT: Communications and Training." Mr. Mann commented that he felt that “ACT” is an action word and applies to the committee responsibility. Discussion ensued. The Chair called for a consensus on the need for a committee name change. Mr. Shapiro asked about the data from the Board survey about the need to change the name. Mr. Jarvela explained that the feedback was that the name structure was unclear and should change. Mr. Mann noted the longevity of this change impacts future committee and Board members. Ms. Dixon asked about the idea of “advocacy” and the definition based on the work that the Board is doing. Mr. Jarvela reiterated that the definitions were based on the staff responsibilities and functionality at the time. Discussion ensued. Ms. Kilgore asked about encompassing Communication and Training within the idea of “outreach.” Ms. Snead commented that she would prefer to table the discussion until the March meeting and see what the other committees decide to change. The Chair called for a motion to change the committee name. Mr. Shapiro made a **MOTION** to vote on the name (ACT or CT). Ms. Dixon seconded the **MOTION**. Discussion ensued. The Chair called for a vote to change the name to ACT or CT. Mr. Shapiro withdrew his **MOTION** from the table. Discussion ensued. Ms. Snead made a **MOTION** to change the name to Communications and Training Committee. The **MOTION** received no second. Ms. Vincent made a **MOTION** to table the discussion until the March 2020 Board meeting. Ms. Snead seconded the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** passed unanimously.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:28 a.m.