**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities**

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

***Dec. 6, 2017***

**Committee Members Present:**

Caroline Raker (Vice Chair)

Ethel Paris-Gainer

Rachel Loughlin

Allison Coles-Johnson

Travis Webb

Alexis Nichols

George Burak

Frederique Vincent

Ron Lanier

Eric Raff (Guest)

Jarl Jackson

Alexus Smith

Donna Lockwood

**Committee Members Absent:**

Matthew Shapiro (Committee Chair)

Jocelyn Kilgore

**VBPD Staff:**

Heidi Lawyer

Benjamin Jarvela

Penni Sweetenburg-Lee

Kara White

Ronita Wilson

Amberly Millis

**CALL TO ORDER:** Ms. Caroline Raker, Vice Committee Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:12 a.m., noting the absence of Mr. Matthew Shapiro, the Committee Chair. Following introductions, Ms. Raker called for a **MOTION** to approve the September Committee meeting minutes. Ms. Rachel Loughlin made a **MOTION** to approve minutes and Ms. Ethel Paris-Gainer **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** carried and the September meeting minutes were approved as written.

**REVIEW OF EXECUTIVE MEETING:** Mr. Benjamin Jarvela, Communications Director, reviewed and summarized the Executive Committee meeting, noting that the September minutes had been approved. During the Executive Director’s report, Ms. Heidi Lawyer, discussed the Agency’s Fiscal Report and explained that a revised operational budget would come before the Board to accommodate a needed increase in the Partners in Policymaking program budget due to unanticipated expenditures for participant reasonable accommodations. Next, Mr. Jason Withers, Grants Manager, discussed grant expenditures and projects. The meeting concluded at 9:15 a.m.

**REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF PROGRESS ON FFY 2017 STATE PLAN GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

**ALUMNI DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM:** Dr. Penni Sweetenburg-Lee, Director of Training and Alumni Development, announced that the Alumni Development Program (ADP) has achieved multiple accomplishments over the past several months. She noted that with a full-time Coordinator on staff, the productivity of the ADP has significantly increased. She informed the Committee that meetings were held by all four of the regional chapters, with a total of 29 Alumni in attendance. In addition, 34 Alumni have expressed an initial interest in the Board’s efforts to provide one-day training for self-advocate leaders on how to serve as trainers. The training would also provide Alumni with instruction on topics like housing, transportation, leadership, self-advocacy, self-determination, and education. The Board is planning to hold the event in the spring of 2018.

Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee reported that the Board is taking initiative to recruit more Alumni to the ADP. She acknowledged that the Board receives the most responses from Alumni who have graduated within the past five years, which is why her team would like to place a stronger focus on recruiting these Alumni. She stated that the Board was pleased to receive a total of 85 survey responses from Alumni this year, compared to last year’s turnout of 25 surveys. Mr. Jarvela spoke on the significance of this accomplishment, noting that it is a federal mandate for the Board to receive a certain number of surveys.

Next, Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee stated that her team worked in collaboration with the Board’s communications unit to build a webpage for the ADP, which turned out to be a great success. Ms. Ronita Wilson, Alumni Development Coordinator, gave a preview of the webpage and its content to the Committee. She informed the Committee that the Board decided to postpone the ADP’s Association Conference to September 2018 so that the Regional Chapters have more time to prepare. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee also invited, and strongly encouraged, the Committee to attend The Arc of Virginia’s Developmental Disability Advocacy Day on January 17, 2018. She explained that the Board will cover all transportation, respite care, and lodging accommodations for alumni attending the event.

**PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING:** Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee reported on the progress of the Partners in Policymaking (PIP) program, noting that it has been in session since September 2017 and will conclude on April 7, 2018. There are 29 active PIP members; one member dropped out due to personal challenges. She stated that the program has been running smoothly, and there have been no major issues or concerns. The students are currently engaged in their projects, and have partnered with 20 agencies and organizations. She stated that supervising and planning of these projects has been a significant undertaking for her team.

Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee stated that Capitol Day was successfully held on November 4, 2017 at the Patrick Henry Building. She informed the Committee that the students did very well delivering their testimonies. However, one challenge that her team faced was that none of the invited legislators attended the event, although one did attend the luncheon. Agency representatives did attend. The Committee discussed ways to address this problem and increase Legislator attendance. Ms. Alexis Nichols inquired whether or not the Partners could meet with their Legislators beforehand to make a personal connection; Mr. Eric Raff asked if the event could be held when the General Assembly is in session; and Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee mentioned expanding receipt invitations to Legislators outside of specific Partners’ regions. Sweetenburg-Lee concluded her report by sharing her intention to try to book Governor Northam as the speaker for the PIP graduation ceremony.

**YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY:**

Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee announced that the Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) will take place July 9-12, 2018 at Virginia State University, which is three weeks earlier than anticipated due to booking constraints. She and Ms. Wilson distributed YLA marketing materials to the Committee, which were developed in collaboration with the Board’s communications team. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee encouraged the Committee to spread word of the program and recruit participants. She announced that the application went live on December 1, 2017 and will be available until March 16, 2018 on the Board’s website. Based on the connections made from the workgroup the Board participated in during the summer, the Board is anticipating an increased number of participants. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee stated that the Board is looking forward to a successful YLA program and is currently in the process of preparing its curriculum. She shared that Ms. Alexis Nichols, Mr. Matt Shapiro, and Ms. Mary McAdams, Executive Chair, will be conducting presentations during the upcoming session.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

Mr. Jarvela gave a report on the Board’s communication activities. He elaborated on the status of the YLA’s marketing materials, highlighting that a flyer, handout card, and social media campaign were developed in preparation for the program’s recruitment. He also discussed the progress of the ADP’s webpage development, and explained that the decision to create a webpage was established after Facebook changed its document hosting procedures for group pages. All of the ADP’s documents and materials are now available on its webpage, which is located on the Board’s website.

Next, Mr. Jarvela discussed the campaign the Board implemented for October’s Disability History Awareness Month. The campaign contained resources, history, infographics, and a visual video. Mr. Jarvela reported that it performed very well and had a great turnout. He also stated that the Board ran a micro campaign on voting rights during the gubernatorial election. He concluded by stating that the communications team is preparing to work on the Board’s Program Performance Review highlights, which will be a primary focus for the upcoming quarter.

Following Mr. Jarvela’s update, Ms. Sweetenburg-Lee acknowledged Mr. Ron Lanier for an article he wrote featured in the *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, as well as acknowledged his last Committee meeting after 21 years of service.

The Committee concluded after agency updates and announcements were given.

Ms. Raker **MOTIONED** for the meeting to adjourn at 10:48 a.m. The **MOTION** was **SECONDED** and **APPROVED**.