**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities**

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

***June 13, 2018***

**Committee Members Present:**

Rachel Loughlin (Acting Chair)

Jarl Jackson

Frederique Vincent

Allison Coles-Johnson

Eric Raff

Jocelyn Kilgore

Alexus Smith

Donna Lockwood

Alexis Nichols  
 Sarah Kranz-Ciment

**Committee Members Absent:**

Matthew Shapiro

Traci LaGanke

Randy Burak

Travis Webb

**VBPD Staff:**

Heidi Lawyer

Benjamin Jarvela

Penni Sweetenburg-Lee

Nia Harrison

Ronita Wilson

**CALL TO ORDER:** Ms. Rachel Loughlin called the meeting to order at 9:15 a.m. and explained she would be serving as acting chair in the absence of the Chair and due to the committee needing to select a new Vice Chair as the previous individual had stepped down. Mr. Benjamin Jarvela, Communications Director, explained that the Committee would be selecting a Vice Chair at the September, 2018 meeting, following new Board member appointments and committee assignments in July.  
  
Following introductions, the Acting Chair called for a **MOTION** to approve the March Committee meeting minutes. Mr. Jarl Jackson made a **MOTION** to approve the minutes and

Ms. Allison Coles Johnson **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** carried and the March meeting minutes were approved as written.

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE UPDATE:** The Acting Chair discussed the Executive Director’s report and other issues discussed at the Executive Committee meeting including grant reviews, Board administration, and budget matters.

**REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF ALUMNI DEVELOPMENT 2018 EVAULATION AND 2019 WORK PLAN**

**2018 ALUMNI DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION:** Ms. Nia Harrison, Director of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, gave a presentation of the results of the evaluation of the Alumni Development program. The presentation covered the history of the program’s development since Board approval in 2016 and outlined the current guiding principle of the program’s development – slow implementation to ensure success and prudent use of funds.  
  
Ms. Harrison then covered the activities of the past year, including the selection of new chapter officers, the development of regional charters for each chapter, and the training Board staff had conducted for each chapter’s officers. She explained the participation rates, which have steadily improved for chapter meetings, but has remained relatively flat for advocacy activities. Ms. Harrison then demonstrated how the program has currently met one of the six federal performance measures in place to monitor the program overall, and that work was steadily continuing on the remaining measures. As of the presentation, 18 of the required 20 self-advocates had participated and 19 of 40 family members were involved and new data for the remaining performance measures will be gathered from the annual Alumni survey in the fall.   
  
Ms. Ethel Paris Gainer inquired about the reason for the cancellation of the DD Advocacy Day in early 2018, which had a notable impact on overall performance measures. Dr. Penni Sweetenburg-Lee, Director of Training Program, explained that the event was cancelled due to inclement winter weather making it unsafe for individuals from around the state to travel to Richmond. Mr. Eric Raff ask about eligibility for involvement in the program and inquired if the performance measures could be met by expanding involvement from non-Alumni and Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee and Ms. Heidi Lawyer, Executive Director, explained that this would be difficult due to federal funding requirements mandating that money be spent directly on individuals who had been previously involved in the training programs and met the criteria of being either self-advocates or advocates for direct family members.  
  
Ms. Harrison then moved onto a discussion of the challenges and opportunities to the current program, concluding funding requirements, limited participation in alumni chapter meetings, limited participation in advocacy activities, and recruitment difficulties, and outlined multiple steps for each Board staff will be undertaking to improve results.  
  
Ms. Alexis Nichols asked if staff had considered providing on-site child care in some fashion in order to attract more parents. Ms. Lawyer stated that while such a plan would likely work, there would be large liability issues for the agency to consider and vet before implementing such a program. The Acting Chair then asked about improving the social aspects of the Alumni Chapter meetings by providing refreshments and other considerations. Ms. Lawyer explained that new federal guidelines were now prohibiting spending federal program money on food and drinks of any kind for program functions lasting under four hours.  
  
**2019 ALUMNI DEVELOPMENT WORK PLAN:** Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee explained revisions being made to the 2019 Alumni Development Program work plan, stating that the agency is looking for ways to significantly improve participation in grassroots advocacy work from alumni, with a focus on decreasing participation in chapter meetings and increasing participation in said work.  
  
Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee outlined the changes to the work plan, including expanding communications efforts, further development of the program website, continued facilitation of Facebook as a chapter communications tool, highlighting Alumni activities to increase momentum and notoriety, and the conducting of in-person training for chapter officers over the coming summer, during which time the officers will be trained on all aspects of their activities and be required to select chapter communications tool following training and advice from Mr. Jarvela.  
  
Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee also stated that the staff were considering ways to increase stipends for chapter officers and is continuing to plan the statewide conference, the delay of which had previously been approved by the Board to allow greater focus on assembling individual chapters. She noted that the program will be reviewed again in the third year of operation to recommend substantial overhaul or potential cancellation. Mr. Raff asked about the timeline for such a decision and Ms. Lawyer explained that it would take place during the third year, but that cancellation was extremely unlikely given the relatively new status of the program and the Board’s previous acknowledgement that it can take five years or more to build something of this nature. Ms. Nichols asked what staff had been doing to gauge participant ideas regarding program improvement and Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee explained the process of identifying such improvements and passing them on to the chapter leadership teams.  
  
**PARNERS IN POLICYMAKING (PIP) EVALUATION AND PROGRAM UPDATE**

Ms. Harrison guided the committee through the results of the evaluation of the recently completed PIP session, explaining that participants had been surveyed multiple times throughout the course of the program. The results were overwhelmingly positive and participants rated their overall skills, including advocacy, substantially higher at the end. Ms. Harrison noted that the only area of consistent negative feedback involved the venue for the program, including food and lodging. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee explained that there was a current five-year contract with the venue and that no other eligible institutions had responded to the Board’s initial Request for Proposals while meeting all of the various criteria involving accessibility, etc. She also stated that work is underway to improve these issues in the future and identify a better location.  
  
**YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY REPORT**

Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee covered the details of the upcoming Youth Leadership Academy, which will be held on the campus of Virginia State University from July 9-12. She explained the students will begin arriving at 10 a.m. that Monday and that staff had secured the participation of Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney as the keynote speaker for Capitol Day on Tuesday. Work is still underway to secure a Keynote address for the graduation ceremony. She also highlighted that Board staff had received more RSVPs from state legislators for participation in Capitol Day mock testimonials than at any point in the past 15 years.  
  
Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee also highlighted the federal spending restrictions noted during the Alumni Development Program overview would come into play during the Youth Leadership Academy, and that the restrictions were precluding a graduation reception due to the prohibition on entertainment, food, and beverage purchases. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee explained that Board staff were still searching for ways to compensate for these regulations.  
  
**COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**

Mr. Jarvela began by noting the staff had accepted the resignation of the Board’s Communications Assistant the previous day and that efforts to fill the vacancy were already well underway, with approval to do so having already been secured. Mr. Jarvela went on to note the significant activities of the Communications team during the previous quarter, including the publication of the Board’s Program Performance Review Highlights and the completion of the 2018 Assessments, which Mr. Jarvela stated were expected to be shipped from the printers by the end of the week. Mr. Jarvela also noted that the federal spending restrictions impacting the training programs were also having an effect on communication’s efforts, with spending on direct promotion of the agency being prohibited in most circumstances. He explained that research on ways to compensate for these restrictions is still underway.

**ADJOURNMENT:** After calling for any additional business and hearing none, the Acting Chairadjourned the meeting 11:00 AM.