**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities**

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

***March 10, 2021***

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Coles-Johnson, Allison

Dixon, Alexandra

Kilgore, Jocelyn

Mann, Eric

Nunnally, Madeline

Olson, Katherine

Rayman, Vasantha

Shapiro, Matthew

Turner, Ed

Vincent, Frederique

Zimmerman, Nikki

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Korte, Molly

Banks, Diana

**VBPD STAFF PRESENT:**

Jarvela, Benjamin

Morgan, Teri

Sweetenburg-Lee, Penni

Weems, Megan

Wilson, Ronita

**GUESTS:**

Barnhill, Angel

Childers, Catherine

Dean, Marlo

Dowd, Nicci

Ibekwe, Jada

Miles, Selonia

Safeer, Sohail

**CALL TO ORDER:**

The Chair, Ms. Allison Coles-Johnson, called the meeting to order at 10:39 a.m.

The Chair called for a **MOTION to** adopt the changes to the committee meeting agenda. Mr. Ed Turner made a **MOTION**, Ms. Frederique Vincent **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** carried unanimously.

The Chair then called for the approval of the minutes from the December 9, 2020 Board meeting. Ms. Katherine Olson made a **MOTION**, and Mr. Eric Mann **SECONDED** the **MOTION.** The MOTION carried unanimously and the December meeting minutes were approved as written.

**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE UPDATE:**

The Chair gave an overview of the information covered in the Executive Committee meeting. This included Board member attendance, in which only one member’s attendance was noted. The Chair continued with an overview of the Executive Director’s update including: the 2021 Virginia General Assembly session and legislation, an update on the RFP for Board meeting hotel (the June 2021 Board meeting will be held virtually), staff involvement with workgroups, projects and activities, 2020 PPR federal report submission delayed, agency fiscal report, Federal spending extensions based on COVID-19 pandemic, and the State Plan report update. The Chair finished by noting that all of these updates could be found in the Board packet.

**PARTNERS IN POLICYMAKING (PIP) UPDATE:**

Ms.Ronita Wilson, Alumni Programs Coordinator, provided an update on the upcoming 2021-2022 PIP session which will be held from September 2021-April 2022. She provided an overview of the program plans which include monthly meetings that will be a hybrid virtual and in-person schedule for the duration of the seven months, based on the COVID-19 pandemic. She noted that the application recruitment will conclude March 19, 2021, and at this time 15 applications have been received.

## **YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY (YLA) UPDATE:**

Ms.Wilson provided an update on the upcoming YLA program session which will be held July 12-15, 2021 and likely be a virtual format due to the COVID-19 pandemic. She noted that the application recruitment will conclude April 2, 2021, and at this time 15 applications have been received.

Ms. Vincent asked about the YLA program applicant age range based on the program’s educational and informational content, and whether there a chance for the Board to develop a similar program that would be for an older group of individuals and include community, personal and professional development. Ms. Wilson agreed that this program concept would something that was beneficial. Mr. Benjamin Jarvela, Director of Communications, noted that this was something that the full Board would need to discuss based on funding and infrastructure. Ms. Megan Weems, Communications Assistant, mentioned that there have been comments received on the Board’s Facebook asking about a program like this. The Chair suggested that if this was something the committee wanted to discuss then they should proceed with presenting the idea to the full Board. Ms. Alexandra Dixon commented that the availability of virtual components to the Training Programs increases accessibility to a lot of people with disabilities. Mr. Jarvela replied that adding a virtual component will be an option in the future but will take a lot of coordination and infrastructure.

Mr. Mann asked what the Training Programs staff’s ideal participant number is for each program. Ms. Wilson replied stating that it is 25 students for YLA, and 25 for PIP. Mr. Mann asked what Board members can to do increase the number of applicants. Mr. Jarvela replied that the programs’ recruitment is pushed far and wide and specifically via Facebook and email networks and reiterated that Board members should continue to share and promote it to their own networks.

## **TRAINING ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (TAA) UPDATE:**

Ms. Wilson provided an update on the upcoming TAA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) panel discussion on the intersectionality of disability that will be held on April 16, 2021 and the upcoming Train the Trainer event that will be held on April 24, 2021. This event is for people with disabilities to learn how to engage in program education and curriculum as facilitators. Ms. Wilson introduced the TAA guests presented the five year review of the TAA program, which includes four regional chapters.

Ms. Selonia Miles (guest) provided an introduction for herself as a Councilwoman for the City of Dumfries, Virginia, a PIP alumni and co-chair of the transportation subcommittee for the TAA. She then introduced her co-presenters, Ms. Marlo Dean, a PIP alumni who has been involved as a co-chair on the TAA elections subcommittee who was able to help pursue voter accessibility legislation (House bill 1921) in the General Assembly in 2021; Ms. Nicci Dowd served as co-chair of the TAA DEI sub-committee and pursued legislation regarding cultural competency trainings; Ms. Angel Barnhill, a PIP alumni who has been engaged in the Tidewater region and chairs the TAA DEI sub-committee; Mr. Sohail Safeer, a PIP alumni who has worked to develop new techniques for engaging alumni in Central Virginia and co-chair on the TAA elections subcommittee; Ms. Jada Ibekwe, a PIP alumni who chaired of the TAA education subcommittee and worked to include disability history in the education curriculum in Virginia; Ms. Catherine Childers, a PIP alumni and co-chair for the YAA special advisory subcommittee and has worked on several other state agency advisory committees and engaged in grassroots advocacy.

Ms. Miles recognized the efforts of the Training Programs staff and their push for alumni members to engage in grassroots advocacy and other efforts. Guests presented the five year review of the TAA program, which includes four regional chapters.

Ms. Dean provided an update on 2016 program development which included: chapters being founded, the chapter officers volunteered, four meetings were held, and the Communications staff developed program branding. Additionally a website was created to house all program documents, and social media platforms were created to increase communication and engagement between members.

Ms. Childers provided an update on 2017 program progress which included: regional chapter responsibilities were established, and new regional chapter officer were selected and responsibilities were determined. Additionally annual strategic planning retreats were launched, regional officers assisted in updating the alumni database and attempting to engage past program alumni in the TAA, and TAA members were able to participate in the 2017 PIP and YLA programs to market the program to them. Ms. Childers noted that a progress report was developed along with a yearly calendar established to include meeting templates and evaluation forms to provide data on the program’s development. Mr. Safeer discussed the efforts in 2017, which included chapter charters and a code of ethics, as well as, evaluation documents were provided to the Board.

Mr. Safeer continued to discuss 2018 in which a budget request was made for a full-time staff person, now Ms. Wilson, along with stipends for chapter leaders and reimbursements for travel and care for alumni members.

Ms. Dowd discussed the fourth year of the program development, 2019, in which TAA members re-established the program mission, providing advocacy trainings, information sessions, and facilitate grassroots advocacy activities. Ms. Dowd noted that program success included connection with individuals and organizations to bring awareness and resources, along with the development of several subcommittees that worked to impact local and state legislation regarding various topics that impact Virginians with disabilities. Ms. Ibekwe discussed some challenges for the program in 2019 included the roles of the chapter leaders, the needs and interest that the past program structure was not meeting, as well as, program identity. Ms. Ibekwe commented that there was a need to increase awareness and advocacy activities so there was a push for members to participate in the VAULT ADA Pride day, Step UP for Down Syndrome, RVA Different Abilities Days, Developmental Disabilities Advocacy Days and several other local events.

Ms. Ibekwe explained the deeply personal connection and impact the program has had on her advocacy efforts as a self-advocate and a parent. Ms. Barnhill discussed the 2020 program progress as it entered its fifth year. She noted the organizational restructure and identity rebrand and the change to have coordination of events and efforts the responsibility of Training staff while TAA leaders developed advocacy agendas. Ms. Barnhill noted that subcommittees were developed to engage all regional chapters across the state. She also thanked the Communications staff for their efforts to present virtual events and participation in legislative meetings. Ms. Barnhill emphasized that self-advocates were provided more opportunities to engage and network, including the Day of Action during the weeklong 30th ADA Anniversary event in July 2020. During 2020, the TAA was able to broach difficult topics like diversity, equity and inclusion with their DEI Panel series that have had a high level of engagement and discussion. Ms. Miles concluded the presentation by providing a report of the 2021 TAA program plans, which included the final DEI panel event and engagement of state agencies and organizations; and asked for questions and comments.

The Committee Chair called for discussion on the presentation and TAA. The Board Chair, Mr. Matthew Shapiro noted the impressive advocacy efforts of the TAA and thanked them for their dedication to the program’s development and growth. The Committee Chair thanked the guests for presenting on the programs efforts and applauded the personal sacrifices and time dedicated.

## **COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE**:

Mr. Jarvela provided an update on the Communications Unit work and projects including, the Training Programs applications recruitment and program materials, the Project Living Well document development and promotion, Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month social media campaign, including a request for a Governor’s Proclamation for March 2021, IT Agency updates on policies review request.

## **OTHER BUSINESS:**

The Chair called for any additional comments, discussion or other business. Ms. Nikki Zimmerman requested any resources from other committee members for psychologists that can work with persons with disabilities for VA reevaluations in Northern Virginia. Ms. Jocelyn Kilgore replied commenting that she is a civilian psychiatrist but can engage with Ms. Zimmerman on this topic. Ms. Wilson called attention to the question asked by Ms. Kilgore of the TAA guests for their “wishlist” of goals of the program for the next year and how the Board can help and engage. Ms. Childers noted the shift that in coordination to the Board staff made a big difference in the momentum of the efforts of the alumni leaders. Ms. Barnhill noted her goal of further engagement of self-advocates and alumni in the events and putting more skills in play to provide opportunities in their communities.

The Chair emphasized this point and the fact that AOT developed this program for the Board and she encouraged committee members to continue to follow the TAA’s efforts. Ms. Dean commented that the funding and support from the Board makes an impact on the programs abilities to produce events. The Chair and Mr. Jarvela noted that there were a lot of regulatory changes made in the previous federal administration but that hopefully there will be changes to allow for the promotion and marketing. Discussion ensued.

## **ADJOURNMENT:**

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 12:07 PM