**Virginia Board for People with Disabilities**

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

**September 15, 2021**

**BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Coles-Johnson, Allison

Dixon, Alexandra

Kilgore, Jocelyn

Mann, Eric

Matuszak, Robert

Turner, Ed

**BOARD MEMBERS ABSENT:**

Banks, Diana

Korte, Molly

Nunnally, Madeline

Rayman, Vasantha

Vincent, Frederique

Zimmerman, Nikki

**VBPD STAFF PRESENT:**

Harrison, Nia

Morgan, Teri

Sweetenburg-Lee, Penni

Weems, Megan

**CALL TO ORDER:** The Chair, Mr. Eric Mann, called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m.

The Chair asked for committee member introductions for the new committee members present.

The Chair called for a **MOTION** to approve the committee meeting agenda, and June committee meeting minutes. Dr. Jocelyn Kilgore made a **MOTION**, Ms. Allison Coles-Johnson **SECONDED** the **MOTION**. The **MOTION** carried unanimously and the June committee meeting minutes and September committee meeting agenda were approved as written.

**Executive Committee (EC) Update:** The Chair gave an overview of the information covered in the Executive Committee meeting. The Chair explained that Board member attendance had been presented by Mr. Henry Street, Director of Administration; and that there were no outstanding attendance issues and that there are five new Board members. The Chair continued by discussing the Executive Director’s update which reviewed the Board staff’s work from the past quarter, including: special initiatives related to COVID-19, Grants and Contracts and the Training Programs. The Chair emphasized that the Executive Director then participated in a Q&A with EC members regarding COVID-19 vaccinations for people with disabilities in Virginia. The Chair mentioned a brief agency fiscal report summary was given by Mr. Street, and noted that the update included a correction to the operating budget.

**Partners in Policymaking (PIP) Update:** Dr. Penni Sweetenburg-Lee, Director of Training and Alumni Development, gave an update on the Partners in Policymaking (PIP) program activity from the past quarter. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee thanked and acknowledged her staff but noted that the Training Programs have been working shorthanded as her staff have been out on family and medical leave. The 2021-22 PIP program currently has 26 approved Partners that include a wide range of diverse demographics. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee discussed the success of the first session date, September 10-11, 2021. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee invited committee members to attend the upcoming PIP Capitol Day event on November 6, 2021; which will be held virtually and will include a panel of Delegates and Senators from the Virginia General Assembly. The panel will be moderated by Delegate Delores McQuinn. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee concluded her report by mentioning that that PIP partners would be encouraged to participate in the 2022 DD Advocacy Days during the General Assembly session, these dates will be shared with committee members at the December board meeting.

The Chair requested for staff to share the links to the PIP sessions for Board members to be able attend and support. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee asked and deferred to the Executive Director’s opinion on the request. Ms. Teri Morgan, Executive Director, replied by noting that the PIP sessions can include deeply personal and intimate information shared by the Partners and that having Board members drop in and out of sessions could be disruptive. She recommended that Board member participation be planned in advance. Committee members were reminded that there are several dates throughout the program that they are invited to attend including, Capitol Day, Partners presentations during the March sessions, Baccalaureate ceremony (April 2022), and the Graduation celebration (April 2022).

**TRAINING ALUMNI ASSOCIATION (TAA) UPDATE:** Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee gave a report on the Training Alumni Association’s activity from the past quarter. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee reviewed the TAA Annual Retreat that took place on August 7, 2021. This event shapes the priorities of the TAA for the next year. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee discussed the emphasis Retreat attendees focused on which were program goals and member engagement. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee discussed that 5-6 subcommittees were being formed to work on the decided goal areas. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee then asked for Ms. Coles-Johnson and Dr. Kilgore to reflect on the successes of the Retreat, as they were both presenters. Ms. Coles-Johnson mentioned that based on discussion of a desire for continued training and education, she wondered what impact the Board could have and work to assist in trainings for the TAA. Dr. Kilgore agreed to this point and thought that the Retreat was a success based on the level of involvement of members and their passion for advocacy. Discussion ensued.

**Youth Leadership Academy (YLA) Update:** Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee gave a report on the Youth Leadership Academy’s activity from the past quarter. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee noted the success of the 2021 YLA Program which took place from July 12-15, 2021. She provided updates on the staff and volunteer training and the positive impact of including mentorship-like relationships between YLA staff and program Delegates. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee provided an overview of the program’s format, which was held virtually based on the COVID-19 pandemic, and the inclusion of a self-advocate panel, the speakers and presenters, and the legislative panel which included several members of Virginia’s General Assembly.

Ms. Alexandra Dixon asked what role the committee can play in aiding the staffing for the department. Dr. Sweetenburg-Lee remarked that the position statuses are related to the Board staff’s organizational structure and is determined by the overall agency budget. Small discussion ensued related to the YLA program and responses from participants. Ms. Nia Harrison, Director of Planning, Research, and Evaluation, noted that she would be providing an update.

**YOUTH LEADERSHIP ACADEMY EVALUATION FINDINGS:** Ms. Harrison provided an update on the 2021 YLA evaluations that were collected through surveys and focus groups, both before and after the program, and related to knowledge, skills, and satisfaction. Ms. Harrison noted that overall feedback from participants and staff were positive but noted that there are always opportunities to improve. She discussed that the virtual format was generally effective but that some responses indicated that smaller group activities would be helpful and that some participants had a harder time being heard via a virtual platform. Ms. Harrison commented that staff volunteers felt satisfied with their experience and would return to work the next program, if asked. She discussed additional feedback that suggested shorter program days due to screen time burnout and that there are opportunities to expand accessibility features using multiple formats for using a virtual platform.

Ms. Dixon asked what additional materials or information the Board can produce related to disability rights and knowledge of the history of the disability movement; based on the YLA participants limited knowledge on these subjects before completing the program. Dr. PSL commented that there might be an opportunity to engage the TAA and provide education sessions. Ms. Dixon replied that her concern was more related to young adults and minors. Discussion ensued related to the possibility of the Board staff developing a new format of “playing cards” related to influential members of the disability rights movement.

Dr. Kilgore commented that the data behind the YLA evaluations is impactful and gives the committee a full picture of the knowledge and skills gained through the program and thanked Board staff for their efforts.

**Communications Update:** Megan Weems, Communications Assistant, provided a brief update on the activity of the Communications department from the last quarter. Ms. Weems noted that the Communications Director role had been filled and the new staff member would be formally starting on September 27, 2021. She continued by discussing the ongoing efforts and projects of the department which included: support and development of Training programs materials for YLA and PIP, the Project Living Well formats and the development of the plain language comic variant, the publishing of the 2020 and 2021 Assessments of disability services, the annual PPR Highlights (which will be published in October 2021), and the development of a monthly eDigest; as well as the day-to-day responsibilities including: social media, PR, agency website management, and communication campaigns.

The Chair noted his appreciation of the development of the eDigest for Board members and suggested the addition of direct calls to action and clear directive for requests of Board members.

**Other Business:** The Chair called for any other business or comments.

**Adjournment:** The Chair adjourned the meeting at 10:19 AM.