

Virginia State Rehabilitation Council
Meeting Minutes
August 14, 2006

The meeting of the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was held on August 14, 2006, at the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services, Richmond, Virginia.

Members Present: Chet Avery, Karen Baugh, Daniel DeBoer, Race Drake, Frances Lewis, Marianne Moore, Dana Nelson, Hiawatha Nicely, Philip Sieck, James Rothrock (conference call), Samuel Simon, Florence Watt, and Roy Ward.

Members Absent: Kenneth Holloway, Michael Organ, Cherie Takemoto, and William Hall

Others Present: John Phelps, Field Rehabilitative Services Director; Elizabeth Smith, Policy and Planning Director; Ernie Steidle, Chief Operations Officer; Barbara Tyson, Staff Support; Vanessa Rakestraw, Policy Analyst; Mary Lutkenhaus, Policy Analyst; Myra Owens, Lead Research and Evaluation Analyst; Mable Fleming, Senior Research and Evaluation Analyst; Donna Walko-Francovic, Research Assistant, Cat Clough and Bernadette Mayhall, Interpreters; and Kelly Wolf, Public Information Officer.

Call to Order

Council Chairperson Samuel Simon called the meeting to order at 11:40 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

A motion was made by Chet Avery, seconded by Roy Ward, and passed by unanimous vote to approve the minutes of the May 8, 2006 meeting.

Matters of Public Comment

There were no public comments.

Chairperson's Report

Recognition of Departing Members: Mr. Simon recognized departing members, Frances Lewis and Race Drake, by thanking them for their hard work and dedication to the Council and by presenting them with Outstanding Service Award certificates.

SRC Retreat and November Meeting: The next meeting of the SRC will be held on Monday, November 20, 2006 at the Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) in Fishersville, Virginia. The meeting will be preceded by a SRC planning retreat on Sunday, November 19 beginning at 2:00 p.m. at WWRC. Additional information will be sent to members in early November.

Election of Chair and Vice Chair: A motion was made by Chet Avery, seconded by Florence Watt, and voted on unanimously to elect Hiawatha Nicely as Chair and Daniel DeBoer as Vice-Chair of the SRC for 2006-2007.

SRC By-Laws: Mr. Simon will chair a committee with Daniel DeBoer, Roy Ward, and Hiawatha Nicely (ad hoc) to draft by-laws for the SRC to be reviewed at the November meeting.

Lunch: During lunch, Ernie Steidle provided the members with a tour of the Central Office to meet DRS staff and learn more about the agency's programs.

Commissioner's Report

Disability Champions Event: October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month and events will be held across the Commonwealth highlighting employers who have partnered with DRS in hiring persons with disabilities. The event in Richmond will be the First Annual Disability Employment Champions Breakfast to be held on October 24, 2006. Dominion Resources is sponsoring the event to be held at the Virginia Crossings Resort (recipient of the Richmond Chamber of Commerce 2006 All-Star New Freedom Award). During the event, Governor Kaine will be recognized along with employers and consumers. The event would not have been possible without the support of William Hall, SRC member and Vice President of External Affairs & Corporate Communications at Dominion Resources. SRC members will be invited to the event.

New Public Information Officer: Commissioner Rothrock introduced Kelly Wolf who has been appointed by Governor Kaine to serve as the agency's Public Information Officer.

Order of Selection: If DRS receives reallotment funds from the Rehabilitation Services Administration, DRS may be able to assist with order of selection. There is no intent, at this time, to open Priority Category 4, but we may be able to serve the more than 200 people who are on the waiting list.

Non English Speaking Population: Nuria Rodriguez Padro, a DRS counselor in Northern Virginia, has been working with the Commissioner on identifying ways DRS can be more responsive to the non-English speaking population in outreach and service provision. A report will be provided to the SRC at their November meeting.

RSA Visit: Commissioner Rothrock thanked members of the SRC who participated in the meeting with the Rehabilitation Services Administration officials who visited DRS on June 19, 2006. They seemed especially impressed with the collaborations that DRS had with its partners, i.e. Department of Social Services and the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services.

Employee Recognition Award: At the recommendation of the Commissioner, the SRC presented an SRC Employee Recognition Award to the staff of the Grants and Special Programs Unit. Dr. Joseph Ashley, Assistant Commissioner for Grants and Special Programs, informed the SRC of the activities of the unit and introduced the staff who were present: Dr. Georgia Coopersmith, Dr. Kristen Rowe, Susan Watson, Gloria Bledsoe, Benjamin Blumenthal, Virgie Coleman-Cousins, Kenneth Knorr, and Elin Glass.

Dr. Ashley stated that the Ticket-to-Work Incentives Advisory Panel, whose goal is to transform public policy to realize substantially better outcomes in employment and economic well-being for people with disabilities, invited Governor Kaine to provide testimony to the panel. Governor Kaine appointed Secretary Tavenner to review the appropriate policy documents and to direct further development and review of policy options to enhance disability employment. Commissioner Rothrock and Dr. Ashley will work with the Secretary on this project.

Students in Transition

Marianne Moore suggested having students in transition share their personal experience with the SRC. Members agreed that this would be a good idea. Mr. Nicely mentioned that transportation issues continue to be a major barrier to persons with disabilities and maybe the SRC should consider taking a role in identifying the transportation barriers for people with disabilities in seeking and retaining employment.

Council Roundtable Report

Virginia Workforce Council: Mr. Nicely reported on the series of Virginia Workforce Council town hall meetings that included not only workforce development but also economic development; the comments from the meetings will be published in September. He stated that the Council is looking at collaboration between the different Secretariats to determine the most effective use of federal workforce development funding coming into the State from different federal programs. Mr. Nicely will give an update at the SRC's November meeting.

Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC): Mr. Sieck reported that the SILC met on July 20, 2006. Issues discussed at the meeting included the planning for the next Statewide Independent Living Plan and personal assistant issues, such as lack of benefits. The SILC passed a motion to formally support the formation of a Personal Care Assistant Association to stabilize the availability of personal care assistants. The Independent Living Conference will be held in Roanoke on August 28-30, 2006 with the focus of the conference being on leadership development for people with disabilities. Tim Edwards was nominated as Chair and Marcia Dubois as Vice-Chair of the SILC.

Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS) Council: Mr. Avery reported the next meeting is scheduled for September 20, 2006 to approve applications for funding for the VATS formula grant. He reiterated that the emphasis is on the recycling centers focusing

on getting a network for people to receive disability equipment. They currently have three new potential sites.

External Affairs Committee

Committee Chair Chet Avery reported that the triennial needs assessment prepared by the Center for Rehabilitation Science and Engineering of Virginia Commonwealth University is being finalized and the final report will be sent to the SRC when completed.

Contact has been made with four of the Disability Services Boards to partner with DRS on next year's State Plan public hearings. It was suggested that DRS develop an executive summary of the State Plan to share with consumers and advocates prior to the hearings. The Alexandria Commission on Disabilities will hold a public hearing in March targeted towards employment issues and DRS will be in attendance at that public hearing.

The Committee discussed the content and theme of the 2006 SRC Annual Report. The Committee liked the idea of once again featuring selected vocational rehabilitation consumers and the theme of "opening doors". The next draft of the report will be shared with the SRC at the November meeting.

Application materials on current SRC members who are eligible for reappointment to the SRC, and a few new interested individuals, have been sent to the Secretary of the Commonwealth for consideration by the Governor. The SRC members should let the Commissioner know of citizens of the Commonwealth who would like to serve on the SRC.

Internal Affairs Committee

Committee Chair Marianne Moore reported on the contract renewals for the vocational rehabilitation hearing officers. The Committee recommended a one-year extension for the hearing officers. A motion was made, and passed unanimously, to renew the existing hearing officer contracts for another one-year term.

John Phelps distributed copies of the Field Rehabilitation Services Division Performance Measure for Federal Fiscal Year 2006, Month ending July 2006.

Old Business

Ernie Steidle provided an update on the DRS budget as of July 2006.

New Business

Mable Fleming, Senior Research and Evaluation Analyst, provided a report on the results of the 2005 Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer Satisfaction Survey. The survey was conducted with a random sample of consumers who had been successfully rehabilitated

and those who had not been successfully rehabilitated. The report contained the results for Federal Fiscal Year 2005 and vocational rehabilitation consumer satisfaction trends for the past seven years. For 2005, the survey was mailed to 1,810 consumers with a 47% response rate. The overall satisfaction with DRS was 81% for FY 2005. A copy of the report will be placed on the agency's website.

Mr. Simon questioned whether the satisfaction rate should be higher, 90% or above, and suggested that DRS look at other states to compare their satisfaction rate. Ms. Smith informed the SRC that the agency is interested in looking at some enhancements to the consumer satisfaction processes, both for vocational rehabilitation and WWRC. The Council members requested that the agency be prepared to make recommendations to the SRC at their next meeting.

Mr. Nicely presented Mr. Simon with a Certificate of Appreciation on behalf of the Council for his dedicated service as Chairperson during 2005-2006. Mr. Simon thanked the Council for allowing him to serve as Chair for the past year and welcomed Mr. Nicely as the incoming Chair.

Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 3:40 p.m.