

THE VIRGINIA APPRENTICESHIP COUNCIL MINUTES

The Virginia Apprenticeship Council met on Thursday, June 17, 2021

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Dudley Harris, Chairman
Laura Duckworth, Vice-Chair
Christopher Cash
Todd Estes
Ellen Marie Hess, VEC Commissioner
Steve Martin
Michael Mays
Dr. Latitia McCane
Dr. Ken Nicely
Dr. Jameo Pollock
Gerald Simpson
Ray Davenport, Commissioner

STAFF PRESENT:

Patricia Morrison, Director
Kathleen Eddington, Assistant Director
Sean McCusty, Craft Grant Alignment Director

CALL TO ORDER AND INTRODUCTIONS:

Chairman Dudley Harris called the meeting to order at 10:08 am and welcomed the council.

PUBLIC COMMENT:

No public comment.

COUNCIL COMMENTS:

Chairman Harris stated:

Last year the governor's orders allowed us to have electronic meetings. We will discuss having in-person meetings shortly because when you read the Freedom of Information Act we have to have an in-person quorum to have a vote. The September council meeting is scheduled to be a virtual meeting, and moving forward, we need suggestions for new meeting locations. We want to keep the meetings around the Richmond area because it's more centralized for everybody on the council. Chairman Harris had all the council members introduce themselves before starting the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Section 2.2-3708.2(d)(7), Code of Virginia, requires that "votes taken during any meeting conducted through electronic communication means shall be recorded by name in roll-call fashion and included in the minutes." It also requires that "For emergency meetings held by electronic communication means, the nature of the emergency shall be stated in the minutes."

Chair Harris asked the Council if there was any discussion on the March 18, 2021 minutes. There was none. Chair Harris asked if there was a motion to approve the minutes. The motion was made, properly seconded and the roll call vote was conducted. The motion carried.

Approval of Minutes	Yea	Nay	Abstain	Absent	Other
Dr. Ken Nicely	1				
Christopher Cash	1				
Ms. Laura Duckworth	1				
Mr. Dudley Harris	1				
Dr. Jameo Pollock	1				
Mr. Gerald Simpson	1				
Mr. Steve Martin	1				
Mr. Michael Mays	1				
Dr. Latitia McCane	1				
Ms. Ellen Marie Hess	1				
Mr. Todd Estes	1				
TOTALS	11	0	0	0	

CORRESPONDENCE:

Commissioner Davenport received an inquiry from the honorable Israel O'Quinn, the Honorable William C Wampler III, and the Honorable Todd Pillon state delegates, reaching out to discuss the vacancies in the southwest Virginia area. DOLI researched the region through our workforce development, Executive Director Partnerships with Marty Holiday and Alita Spicer. DOLI responded with a letter that gave them the resources of what they could do to reach out to the

designated people helping with workforce shortages that's not quite in the scope of what the Department of Labor and Industry does.

OLD BUSINESS:

Chairman Harris stated the exemption from the examination subcommittee had made some recommendations for the program. All council members received a copy of the exemption packet and the procedures for a sponsor to get exemption from the exam for their apprentices, which is then forwarded to DPOR when apprentices complete their apprenticeship program. Vice Chairperson Laura Duckworth did give us an outline of what the subcommittee found and suggested, and we still need to discuss keeping or to end the program. Chairman Harris opened up a discussion on the Exemption process.

Laura Duckworth and Chris Cash both agree the outline provided to the subcommittee was excellent, and the subcommittee felt comfortable moving forward. Chairman Harris suggested we bring the process up for a vote next meeting. Kathleen Eddington proposed that the council also develop ideas and a plan for when the companies would come in and present the council, how the format and schedule would take place. Commissioner Davenport wants to ensure that any process in the future is fully transparent. Everybody knows what the process is. Everybody is entitled to apply to meet whatever the requirements are. Director Morrison suggested coming up with a plan if an exemption does not get approved. Maybe coming up with an appeal process.

NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Harris stated he received the 17 page Freedom of Information Act to review. The council must discuss whether the council can and cannot have electronic meetings, and a decision should be made in the next three months. The council must have a quorum. The second item of business the council needs to decide if we want our bylaws to stay at seven members to have a quorum.

Kathleen Eddington informed the council the 2022 meetings, any suggestions on a meeting place are welcome because the current state facilities typically used are booked. Dr. Pollock offered up some space at the VDOT Sandston location. Laura Duckworth offered to host at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

Chairman Harris asked Director Morrison about the 2021 Virginia Outstanding Apprentice Awards. Director Morris let the council know that the Awards will continue this year in November again, and this year's theme is "Apprenticeship Renaissance." More information will be coming to Sponsors at a later time by DOLI.

REPORTS:

Virginia Employment Commission (VEC):

Commissioner Hess reported the following:

Virginia's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate fell four tenths of a percentage point to 4.7 percent, which is 6.6% lower than the rate from one year ago. According to household survey data in April, the labor force decreased by 12,422 to 4,225,614 as the number of unemployed residents decreased by 17,097 to 197,338. The number of employed residents rose by 4,675 to 4,028,276. Virginia's unemployment rate continues to be below the national rate, which increased to 6.1 percent

It's been quite a year for my agency, for the nation and indeed the world. In fact, for VEC this year has felt like quite a decade. The VEC received more than 10 years' worth of claims during the first twelve months of the pandemic, more claims than the agency received in the last 3 recessions combined, more claims than any one year since the agency began keeping records in 1970.

I know you have read a lot about the issues some folks experienced dealing with the VEC over the past year but what you haven't read about is the selfless and dedicated service of some of the finest public servants with whom I have ever had the honor of working. To simply do their jobs, the staff at the VEC faced COVID outbreaks, verbal abuse and even death threats. The agency received more than 1.6 million claims and paid benefits of more than \$13 billion more than 1.4 million claimants. The staff worked tirelessly putting in incredibly long hours to make sure that benefits went out in a timely manner. As a result Virginia ranks 6th in the nation and first in the Mid-Atlantic region for sending benefits to eligible claimants on time. The agency has added hundreds of additional staff to process the 1.6 million claims that the agency received. We are working as quickly as possible to resolve the claims that still have issues.

It may take years to assess the impact of the pandemic especially the impact that has been suffered by some groups. But even a cursory review of the unemployment data reveals that economic disruption caused by the pandemic has been felt by women and communities of color at a greater rate than men and white communities. Jobs held by women and people of color were more likely to be affected by shutdowns and social distancing requirements than those held by white men. For example the closures of restaurants, schools, and hair salons had a disproportionate impact on women because women work in those occupations at a much higher rate than men. Additionally school closures and online schooling forced many women out of the workforce for the duration of the pandemic. Just as the employment data was worse for minority groups, particularly women of color during the early days of the pandemic, the recovery has been more sluggish for them too.

Despite the incredible volume of work processing unemployment claims and the challenges caused by the pandemic, VEC has continued to provide job services. The agency has held or participated in 39 virtual hiring fairs with hundreds of employers and thousands of job seekers. The agency has 9 more virtual job fairs planned between now and the end of July. I encourage anyone who is looking for their next career to go the VEC website and sign up for a virtual

hiring event. The agency will continue to provide job services as the work search requirement has been re-imposed on unemployment claimants and the economy continues to reopen.

We are processing the last of the pandemic unemployment claims, we are reopening our economy and we are providing job services more aware than ever that we can be an instrument in raising up families and communities. As the world tiptoes towards a new normal I am reminded of a quote by Winston Churchill after the British defeated Rommel at El Alemein, “Now is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is perhaps the end of the beginning.” I fervently hope that we are at the end of the beginning of a very dark period in our history.

Virginia Community College System (VCCS):

Mr. Estes reported the following:

Mr. Estes informed the Council of the last state expansion grant effort results, which VCCS investigated back in the April timeframe. VCCS at the system level has now convened a working group around apprenticeship and apprenticeship potential expansion to develop some shovel-ready projects. When funding opportunities come along, we're not trying to generate ideas at the last minute. VCCS convened a group from across the system from multiple colleges, including the system level. VCCS will start collecting information now and when grant opportunities come along there will be more prepared to response with projects that VCCS had developed.

The big news for VCCS is the G3 program. The student aid package will be available on July 1, 2021. Ultimately, there will be student aid or students attending programs in specific areas deemed as high value for the state for the Commonwealth, and so manufacturing skilled trades at public healthcare safety early childhood education. Students who attend those programs are less than 400% of federal poverty, so it is considered a low and middle-income grant or aid program that can ultimately help those access the programs for free. VCCS certainly sees this as an essential package that can also be leveraged to support apprenticeship related instruction. Assume there are employers currently working in community colleges in those areas. The aid can be leveraged to reduce or even eliminate the cost of instruction or for their apprenticeship programs and future employers who may want to work with the colleges for their RTI.

Division of Registered Apprenticeship (DOLA):

Director Morrison reported the following:

The Division is glad to be back doing Registered Apprenticeship business. Even though we are still not seeing the volume of past years, everyone is trying to meet the needs of Employer/Sponsors and apprentices. Add on to that the requirements of the Apprenticeship State Expansion Grant. From FY 2020 to FY 2021, we are on track to still show contraction. I anticipate fewer Active Apprentices and fewer Completions, still due to COVID 19 and the extensions we granted. The Employer/Sponsor numbers are stable. However, the

contraction is not only in our existing programs, but all those areas we targeted through the Grant are some of the ones most marginalized by the virus crisis.

Commonwealth Registered Apprenticeship Future Talent (CRAFT) Grant

We had targeted two Sectors almost in tandem: the Hospitality Sector and the Agriculture/AgriTourism/Food and Bev Manufacturing industries. We had previously rolled out a Brewmaster position; COVID stalled that out until recently, and we have now signed O'Connor Brewing Company out of Norfolk.

We had also been exploring culinary opportunities, many of which are associated with breweries. Additionally, we were working on the link with Youth RA with their CTE Culinary, but they all shut down for over a year. We have seen good results in the CS/IT/Cyber sectors and have had a few Health Care successes.

I want to commend Shannon Crooks as the Lead Generation Specialist who is promoting and administering the Grant. Her primary duties are to be hyper-focused on the statement of work of the grant narrative to expand in the noted sectors.

Additionally, I have taken the lead on the Returning Citizens Registered Apprenticeship Initiative. We have had a success story there in the Norfolk area. A small electrical company has hired a newly released individual who worked with Tidewater Community College and Maynard Stowe of our field office to make the connection.

Another significant milestone is with the Department of Human and Resource Management. The focus to encourage state/county/city governments to adopt the RA model is another grant initiative. A survey has been issued to all the Executive Branch agencies to derive baseline information on their program knowledge.

Brown Bag Series

In April, the topic was hospitality. It featured Jim Wilson from the Virginia Lodging Restaurant Tourism Association and Chef Robert Patton from the Old Dominion University food service program. In May, we featured "Ask a Tradeswoman," and our former member Dr. Keisha Pexton was one of the esteemed panel members, as were two of UVA's tradeswomen. All did a great job of discussing the features and benefits for them to choose their trade.

June's Brown Bag on Monday, the 28th, will feature Related Technical Instruction with Dr. Tom Cecere, Caly Emerson, and special guest Dr. Jameo Pollock.

We are currently finishing the third quarter in our Federal FY which applies to our RAPIDS database and to date we have:

10943	Active Apprentices
2628	Active Sponsors
425	Employers (being served through Group programs)

Additionally, I can pull some demographics, which I recently did for Sean McCusty's presentation to the Equity sub-committee of Virginia's Workforce Board.

9158	Men
1718	Women
620	Veterans
1967	African American
600	Hispanic
195	Asian
63	American Indian – AK Native (this is a first time reporting this demo)
1764	New Apprentices added since October 1, 2020 (start of the FY 21)
189	New Programs
723	Completions issued

Department of Labor and Industry (DOLI):

Commissioner Davenport reported the following:

We are beginning to see a lot more opening up as we come out of the Pandemic. I want to compliment all our Department staff, including our RA Directors and consultants, who continue to adapt and serve our apprentices and sponsors during the COVID-19 Pandemic. Many virtual meetings and any way to keep in contact were/are being employed to reach out to sponsors and apprentices. We are now meeting in a face to face meetings and graduations where it makes sense.

DOLI staff as a whole is beginning to transition from mostly telework to telework and in-office presence. We continue to encourage our staff to sign up individually for vaccinations. If there is anxiety or hesitancy, we suggest they talk to their colleagues who have received the vaccine and their health care provider. I want to encourage all who are in attendance this morning that if you haven't received your vaccine, please get it. The vaccine is the best way we can put this virus behind us.

DOLI

- As of June 11, 2021, our VOSH Program has handled 12,948 phone calls and investigated 1,943 COVID-19 complaints. 208 COVID-19 VOSH Inspections have been initiated and are ongoing.
- COVID-19 Fatality investigations calendar year 2020 were 31; YTD calendar year 2021 13 COVID-19. YTD total fatalities from all causes are 24; COVID fatalities represent 54% of the fatalities we are investigating.
- On June 10, OSHA issued an Emergency Temporary Standard (ETS), taking another step to protect workers. After extensive analysis of the science, OSHA determined that the most impactful action they could take was to issue a temporary emergency [standard \(or ETS\)](#) focused on health care settings and update their existing guidance for all other industries. OSHA stated, “the science tells us that healthcare workers, particularly those who come into regular contact with people either suspected of having or being treated for COVID-19, are most at risk.”

The OSHA ETS will be effective immediately when it is published in the Federal Register.

Employers must comply with most provisions within 14 days and with the remaining provisions within 30 days.

- Virginia is a State Plan State, and VOSH must be “as effective as OSHA” to maintain State Plan status. DOLI staff is currently doing a crosswalk comparison to determine how OSHA’s ETS compares to VOSH FPS.
- Governor has requested the SHCB to convene before June 30 to address discrepancies with the OSHA ETS and any CDC guidelines. We are at work to make this happen.
- State Minimum Wage of \$9.50 an hour became effective May 1.
- Prevailing wage, a lot of work has been done, and guidance is on our website. We have received very positive feedback from VDOT; DGS has a workgroup working on the Public Procurement piece.
- The new Virginia Overtime Wage Act will become effective July 1. Requires our Payment of Wage staff to now also investigate claims that employees are not being paid appropriate overtime compensation under the federal Fair Labor Standards Act at a rate of one and one-half times the employee’s regular rate of pay.
- HB 2321 created in the Governor’s Cabinet the position of Secretary of Labor. The bill transfers from the Secretary of Commerce and Trade to the Secretary of Labor for the Department of Labor and Industry, the Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation, and the Virginia Employment Commission. This will officially be effective July 1.

In closing, I want to thank you for your service and support to Virginia’s Apprenticeship Council and Registered Apprenticeship. We continue to live in challenging times. We also believe these times will present opportunities for RA going forward. We encourage all to continue to social distance, wash your hands frequently, employ CDC recommended guidelines, and get vaccinated!

Thank you and Mr. Chair that concludes my report.

Virginia Apprenticeship Alumni Association (VAAA): N/A

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Chairman Harris announced that the next Council meeting will be Thursday, September 16, 2021.

Chairman Harris thanked the Council, Director Morrison, her staff, and all in attendance.

The meeting adjourned at 11:40 am.

Mr. Dudley Harris, Chairman
Mr. C. Ray Davenport, Secretary