

**MINUTES**  
**DBVI REHABILITATION COUNCIL**  
**Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired**  
**Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind & Vision Impaired**  
**401 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, VA**  
**September 13, 2019**

**SRC Attendees**

Christine Appert, Charlottesville, Vice-Chair, Former Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Tammy Burns, Midlothian, represents Virginia's Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center; Irene Conlin, Virginia Beach, Representative of an Individual who is blind, has multiple disabilities, and has difficulty representing him or herself or is unable due to disabilities to represent him or herself; Wanda Council, Newport News, VA, represents the Virginia Department of Education; Justin Graves (via phone), Chair, Fredericksburg, represents Business, Industry and Labor; Ray Hopkins, Richmond, Commissioner, DBVI, Ex-Officio Member; Ken Jessup, Virginia Beach, represents Disability Advocacy Group; Gina Koke, Richmond, Representative of Disability Advocacy Group; Jenny McKenzie, Roanoke, Business, Industry, and Labor; Shelesha Taylor, Richmond, represents the federally mandated Client Assistance Program (CAP); Megan O'Toole Hall, Montpelier, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor; Mark Roane, Richmond, Former or Current Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services.

**Members Absent**

Julie Akers, Ashland, Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor; Larysa Kautz, Alexandria, Representative of Community Rehabilitation Services Program Provider; Raymond Kenney, Richmond, Representative of the Statewide Independent Living Council; Jill Nerby, Charlottesville, Former Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services;

**Members of the Public**

Charlotte Arbogast, DARS.

**DBVI Staff to the SRC**

Jessica Collette, Staff Assistant, DBVI; Pam Hinterlong, Director of Workforce Services, DBVI; Maggie Mills, Executive Assistant for Services, DBVI; Dr. Rick Mitchell, Deputy Commissioner for Services, DBVI.

**Call to Order**

Vice-chairwoman Christine Appert called the meeting to order.

**Welcome and Introductions**

Vice-chairwoman Christine Appert asked members to introduce themselves and welcomed everyone.

**Adoption of Agenda** *(Action Item)*

Mr. Mark Roane moved to adopt agenda; Ms. Irene Conlin seconded and motion passed unanimously.

**Approval of June 2019 Meeting Minutes** *(Action Item)*

Mr. Ken Jessup asked for the date of the next meeting included at the end of the minutes to be update to September 13, 2019. Mr. Mark Roane moved to accept the June 2019 meeting minutes as changed; Ms. Irene Conlin seconded and motion passed unanimously.

**Public Comment**

No comment.

**Commissioner's Report** – *Commissioner Ray Hopkins*

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows:

The Commissioner reminded members about the new monthly reporting system. Members will receive a monthly report to keep up-to-date about happenings at DBVI. Any questions about items in these reports will be answered.

The RSA Commissioner candidate, Mr. Mark Schultz, was finally approved by the Senate and was officially appointed in August 2019. Many agencies hope that with this appointment it will move items forward that have been on hold. One such item is in regards to Pre-ETs services and reporting. Another item relates to prior approval for use of funds. For over two decades there had been an exemption for this prior approval requirement. The argument is that WIOA changed this requirement and the exemption has ended. Since other areas still have this exemption the hope is that the exemption will be executed again.

The Commissioner spoke about the different decision packages that the Agency has submitted for approval to the Governor's Office. A line of credit has been requested for VIB which will ensure funds are available for large orders without impacting budget. Another request is specific to software for VIB operations. The current software is at the end of life and a new platform needs to be purchased. The last request is for marking the centennial of Virginia providing services for individuals who are blind or vision impaired. DBVI is beginning to prepare now as this milestone will be in March 2022.

**Deputy Commissioner's Report** – *Dr. Rick Mitchell*

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows:

There are currently two Regional Manager positions that are vacant. Applications have been submitted for these positions in Norfolk and Staunton with interviews scheduled for early October. These offices are being covered by the Senior Regional Managers, in addition to other Headquarter leadership members alternating a visit to the offices at least once a week. Another vacancy is coming up on October 1, 2019, Marge Owens, the Director of Low Vision will be retiring. Marge has been with the agency for over 45 years and worked within Low Vision. Dr. Mitchell and the Commissioner will be meeting with staff members that are certified in Low Vision Services and Senior Regional Managers to plan how to provide these services.

At the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI), the LIFE program, focused on high school students, ended in August. This five week program allows students to learn skills of blindness and the last three weeks the students completed an internship. This year we had the highest number of employers that hosted interns. Many of these attended the graduation ceremony. VRCBVI will be looking at how to provide these types of opportunities to students in the residential program. Planning is taking place for the LEAP program in 2020 at Virginia Tech. Historically this program has been held at VCU in Richmond. By holding the program at Virginia Tech, the students will have the opportunity to live in dorms.

Dr. Mitchell spotlighted Ms. Megan Hall as she will lead the state drastically in successful closures for getting people back to work.

VRCBVI has resumed their residential program. The Center has been busy with nine new students beginning their training this week.

**VR Program Update** – *Pam Hinterlong*

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows:

At this time, DBVI is still operating under an Order of Selection. There are currently 231 eligible clients in delayed status. At this time DBVI is serving individuals with applications dated in or before September 2018. Individuals are being moved off the waitlist as the funds are available.

On December 10<sup>th</sup>, DBVI will be participating in the 2<sup>nd</sup> IT credential fair. Due to the great turnout previously, the fair will focus on students in the morning and adults in the afternoon. During the morning session, there will be two speakers who have both received services from DBVI.

VRCBVI will be hosting its Friends and Family Day on Saturday, October 19, 2019. Everyone is invited to attend. It is requested council members RSVP if interested in attending.

Pam shared of some changes that are forthcoming for the 2020 Robotics Academy. The date will be the last week in June (Saturday – Thursday). The curriculum will change to focus on a different coding language. This has been vetted for accessibility and both DBVI instructors and NICER staff are excited for this change.

**Old/ New Business** – *Vice-Chairwoman Christine Appert*

**Hearing Officer Renewals** – *Charlotte Arbogast, DARS*

Ms. Arbogast shared that DARS handles the hearing officer contracts for DBVI. These contracted hearing officers serve both agencies (DARS and DBVI) in their roles.

From the FFY 2018 RSA-722, DARS had one hearing request carried over from FFY 2017 and received 4 new hearing requests during FFY 2018, for a total of 5 active hearing requests. Three of the cases were resolved without an impartial hearing officer decision. Two cases resulted in decisions favoring the agency. DARS received one request for a review of the impartial hearing officer decision. In that case, the designated reviewing officer sustained the decision that favored the agency. It was not reversed.

The Commissioner mentioned that these are specific to DARS. DBVI received one request for fair hearing and the decision will be sent via email after this meeting.

For the upcoming FFY 2019, DARS plans to move forward with:

- Renewing the contracts for B. Byers and R. Kane. This is the last eligible renewal for their contracts. The contracts expire 9/30/2020.
- Renewing the contract for D. Hand. This will be the second renewal, leaving two potential more after that. The contract will not expire until 9/30/2022.
- Not renewing the contract for B. Holmes. The contract will expire 9/30/2019.

The DARS SRC approved this action at its August 2019 meeting.

Next year, DARS will go out for IFB (invitation for bid) for 2 hearing officers (to maintain a total of 3). A representative from the DBVI SRC usually serves on the committee tasked with the selection of new hearing officers. DARS anticipates that work will begin in the spring 2020.

Mr. Ken Jessup moved to approve to renew the Hearing Office Contracts for B. Beyers, R. Kane and D. Hand; Ms. Gina Koke seconded and motion passed unanimously.

Member Spotlight – Gina Koke

Ms. Gina Koke shared her background and her interests that brought her to the SRC.

NCSRC/CSAVR/ NSCAB representation – Vice-Chairwoman Christine Appert

These meetings are coming up on October 26 – November 1, 2019 in Jacksonville, FL and the SRC is able to send a representative to attend. Anyone interested in attending can email Jessica Collette before Wednesday, September 18<sup>th</sup>, and Justin Graves will review at those interested.

Chair & Vice-Chair Elections – Vice-Chairwoman Christine Appert

Chairman Justin Graves spoke about these positions that are open for elections. Chairman Graves nominated Ms. Christine Appert for Chairwoman; Mr. Ken Jessup seconded; Ms. Christine Appert accepted the nomination. Mr. Mark Roane motioned to close nominations, Ms. Irene Conlin seconded and Ms. Christine Appert is elected by acclamation.

Mr. Ken Jessup nominated Mr. Mark Roane as Vice-Chairman; Ms. Irene Conlin seconded; Mr. Mark Roane accepted the nomination. Ms. Gina Koke moved to close nominations; Ms. Irene Conlin seconded and Mr. Mark Roane is elected by acclamation.

Dates of 2020 – Vice-Chairwoman Christine Appert

The SRC normally meets quarterly on the second Friday of March, June, September and December. Below are the proposed dates for 2020.

March 13, 2020

June 12, 2020

September 11, 2020

December 11, 2020

Ms. Jenny McKenzie asked if members would entertain meeting on a different day of the week. Members stated multiple reasons to keep the schedule as proposed. Mr. Mark Roane moved to accept the proposed dates for the SRC meetings in 2020; Mr. Ken Jessup seconded and motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Jessica Collette mentioned to the Council that a new Executive Assistant has been hired for DBVI. Ms. Maggie Mills will be the logistic contact for the Council in the future.

Working Lunch: Update on Annual Report – Vice-Chairwoman Christine Appert

At this time, most of the components have been gathered for the Annual Report. The missing items are involved in the closing of the Federal Year. Once the year ends, Ms. Deborah Collard has been asked to send the data to the Council. Also, please note a photo will be taken at December 13<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Discussion took place in regards to which success stories to include. After deliberations, it was decided to include Narratives 1,4, 6, 8 and 9 from the document previously sent to Council members.

Date of next meeting – December 13, 2019

Adjournment

Ms. Gina Koke moved to adjourn the meeting; Ms. Wanda Council seconded; motion passed unanimously.

Meeting adjourned.