



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

55 Utley Drive, Camp Hill, PA 17011

Voice: (717) 975-2004 or (888) 250-5175 TTY: (717) 737-0158 Fax: (888) 524-9282

Email: parc@parehabilitationcouncil.org Website: parehabilitationcouncil.org

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes for April 23, 2024 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM

Committee Members (P = Present) (NP = Not Present)

Paul Fogle (P)	Susan Tomasic (P)	Michelle Mitchell (P)
William Del Toro Vargas (NP)	Michele Leahy (P)	Lynn Heitz (NP)
Julia Grant Barol (NP)	Andrew Pennington (P)	

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Present: Chris Harbert, Russ Goddard, Audrey O'Connor

Staff Present: Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions.

MOTION was made by Mr. Susan Tomasic to approve today's agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Michelle Mitchell seconded the motion. All were in favor.

AGENDA ITEMS

CHAIR REPORT – Mr. Paul Fogle

Finalize Agenda for Full Council meeting on May 08, 2024

PaRC Budget FY 2024-2025

Review Executive Committee goals for FY 2024-2025

- Members reviewed the draft agenda for the May 8th Full Council meeting. Mr. Paul Fogle inquired about stakeholder reports.
- Ms. Susan Tomasic informed attendees that she will provide an announcement about the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) State Plan. Mr. Andrew Pennington reported that a stakeholder report may be provided by the Client Assistance Program (CAP) but will follow up. Ms. Michele Leahy informed members that the Employment First Oversight Commission (EFOC) is not meeting until May 15th and will inquire with their Chairperson on what updates would be provided.
- Mr. Chris Harbert informed members that Ms. Dana McKinney's job title is Business Services Outreach Division (BSOD) Division Chief. Altoona District Office will be attending the Full Council meeting virtually.

MOTION was made by Ms. Michele Mitchell to approve the Full Council meeting agenda. Mr. Andrew Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- Members were provided their 3rd Quarter Fiscal Report and budget. Ms. Michelle Gerrick (staff) informed members that now is the time that members would review their budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025. The Council is on track to meet each of the Small Diverse Business (SDB) goals except for Bender Consulting Services. That goal will not be met unless the Council thinks of something to meet that goal by the end of the FY. When the Commonwealth provides the contract renewal the Council will most likely be required to indicate if they will be using the same SDB vendors for FY 2024-2025 and inquired if members had any ideas. Informed members that the Council budget is on the State Fiscal Year which begins July 1 and ends June 30 of each year. The change from a Federal FY to a State FY was made around 2018-2019 to stay within the same FY as OVR. The Council has until June 30, 2024 to execute the contract with Bender Consulting.
- Mr. Paul Fogle reported that the Council is satisfied the website maintenance and publications vendors. Inquired if members had input on how to meet the goal for the line item attributed to Bender Consulting Services for FY 2024-2025.
- Mr. Pennington inquired if Bender was provided a topic prior to the end of the FY, would the vendor be able to execute their end of the contract beyond the current FY.
- Ms. Gerrick explained that as long as the Council makes an effort to fulfill the contract within the current FY there should not be a problem with Bender completing work that filters into FY 2024-2025.
- Mr. Chris Harbert explained that he has been following up with legal on two projects that were discussed with Bender Consulting and PaRC Legislative Committee regarding educational outreach for Schedule A, which could use the definition of Schedule A proposed in Legislation by Senator Robert Casey. Is aware that the Council has requested final approval to move forward on that topic. Office of Chief Counsel and OVR have been very cautious about providing verbal approval for the projects. Legal has concerns with the other project as it was framed regarding the elimination of sub-minimum wage.
- Mr. Pennington inquired why the project isn't rephrased to elevation above sub-minimum wage instead of elimination of sub-minimum wage. Explained these topics should be a Full Council consideration and not within a sectioned off public meeting. Each member should be polled on these topics. Schedule A is currently up in the air. Senator Casey has introduced legislation with their definition of Schedule A and if enacted outreach regarding that language may be appropriate after that bill is passed. Regarding the elimination of sub-minimum wage OVR would essentially be asked to go against something that is a legal practice throughout the state and create further tension with having to execute the Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) grant and outreach and interface with those entities. Explained that these topics should be discussed publicly during a Full Council meeting. All members should be given an opportunity to provide an opinion which should be weighed equally.

- Mr. Fogle explained that discussion of these projects or topics began at the Committee level and were suggested by Legislative Committee. They were intended to reach the level of Full Council review however, there needed to be clearances from OVR, and legal counsel previously outlined today by Mr. Harbert.
- Mr. Pennington explained that we have less than 3 months before the end of the FY to come up with and agree upon topics for these projects and would like to be judicious with everyone's time to meet that goal.
- Mr. Harbert explained that he tried to wordsmith and reframe the subminimum wage topic as successful outcomes, subminimum wage to CIE, doing an educational piece on the SWTCIE grants, and has not received approval.
- Ms. Tomasic explained that you can never have a Committee that sets the policy for the full Board to follow. A Committee may suggest a policy to the Executive Committee which debates it and if agreed upon moves to the full Board. These topics can only be suggestions from the Legislative Committee.
- Ms. Mitchell explained that regarding the topic of Schedule A, she thought that the conversation for the project went beyond Legislative Committee and may have been discussed during a Full Council meeting and that it was also something that was recommended by the EFOC.
- Mr. Harbert inquired if Bender Consulting would be willing to change topics before the end of the FY to at least purchase the services and have the Council meet the fiscal goal.
- Mr. Pennington explained that he finds both topics to be very beneficial and that he appreciates the clarification regarding the projects. Explained that legislation introduced by Senator Casey on Schedule A would need to be enacted before anyone would receive education on how that would work. Still believes that the topic regarding subminimum wage is an important topic that should be explored it just needs to be rephrased. All Council members have great ideas that need to be heard.
- Ms. Susan Tomasic explained that we have a Direct Care worker crisis right now and can not think of a more immediate need that we need to educate about.
- Members agreed to invite Bender Consulting to the May 8th Full Council meeting to discuss potential projects.
- Mr. Harbert shared that inviting Bender Consulting to the May 8th meeting when Executive Director is in attendance would be a good opportunity to discuss and agree upon potential projects. Office of Chief Counsel's main concerns with the projects are in regard to language that may suggest lobbying.
- Members agreed to include a general topic for the Full Council meeting so that all members can suggest topics for the projects with Bender. Mr. Pennington suggested polling for topics in advance of the meeting so that members are better prepared to discuss and share their ideas.
- Mr. Harbert will check with the procurement office on requirements. He believes that as long as the money is spent within the current FY the goal should be met. Members agreed it is important to have a topic agreed upon and making a commitment to Bender Consulting as soon as possible to meet the goal.
- Members reviewed the Executive Committee goals and provided two additions for Goal #2: Continue to provide leadership and guidance to new and all members

and committees in accordance with the mission and bylaws of the Council and the Rehabilitation Act as amended by WIOA 2014. The following sub goals were requested:

- Administer an evaluation method such as a poll or survey to identify training effectiveness and member's understanding of their new roles
- Develop a mentoring program that supports new members and Committee Chairs transitioning into their new roles

MOTION was made by Ms. Tomasic to approve the Executive Committee goals and to make additional edits in preparation for discussion during the May 8th Full Council meeting. Mr. Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- Mr. Pennington inquired how the new member training has been received. Suggested polling new members after the training to ensure new members are fully understanding of their role.
- Ms. Mitchell reported the training was a good recap to the online SRC training. Would be curious on how to implement a mentoring support system tailored to how the Council operates in Pennsylvania as there are many differences to each state's VR programs
- Ms. Michele Leahy reported that her term on the Council ends in July. There has been a struggle at times to recruit members for the Social Media Committee and has concerns with the important work of the Committee continuing with her scheduled departure from the Council. Suggested that mentoring for future Committee leadership is very important and having a requirement for some members to join non-preferred committees with less membership.
- Mr. Pennington inquired about a transition program for Committee leadership to provide guidance on how the meetings and Committee work are carried out. Members agreed to add a subgoal for a mentoring program for new members and a mentoring program that supports transitioning for Committee leadership. Members agreed for the Governance Committee to take on the mentorship training development.

PaRC COMMITTEE UPDATES

CAREERLINK – Mr. Andrew Pennington, Chair

- Mr. Pennington reported that the next Committee meeting is May 21st.

GOVERNANCE – Ms. Susan Tomasic, Chair

Ballot of PaRC Officers FY 2024-2025

Recommendation of election/voting procedures of in-person and virtual meeting attendees

Recommendation of revised PaRC Bylaws

- Ms. Tomasic reported there is a slate of officers for the upcoming Fiscal Year elections which includes Mr. Paul Fogle and Mr. William Del Toro Vargas for Council Chair, Ms. Passle Helminski and Ms. Michelle Mitchell for Vice Chair, and Ms. Julia

Barol and Mr. Andrew Pennington for Member at Large. Provided instructions for voting by secret ballot, included with pre-meeting materials. To abstain a member would not cast or turn in a ballot. Members discussed concerns with casting a ballot physically for those with a mobility issue. The cards could be collected by a member or staff with the card sitting upside down on the table. This may still result in someone seeing which numbered card was cast. Voting procedures will be adjusted to make accommodations as needed. Bylaws revisions were discussed and approved by Governance Committee and include:

- Officer Term Limits - no member may serve more than two consecutive times in any one office.
 - Removed language that allowed for State Board calling for Special Meetings
 - Increasing maximum Committee membership from 7 to 9 members
 - Monitoring of Committee waitlist to be conducted by Governance Committee
 - Increase in member requirement, members must attend at least one meeting with Legislators per Fiscal Year
- This information was provided prior to the meeting. With the lack of quorum at this point in the meeting voting was no longer allowed. Bylaws will not take effect until they are voted upon. Mr. Fogle would be grandfathered in under current Bylaws and would be eligible to run for a 3rd consecutive term as Chair. Members discussed having the Bylaws go into effect at the beginning of the Fiscal Year as Officers being elected begin their term July 1st. This information will be provided during the Full Council meeting.

POLICY – Ms. Lynn Heitz, Chair

Recommendation of OVR Audiological Services Policy

- Ms. Tomasic reported that the Policy Committee has reviewed and approved the OVR Audiological Service policy which has brought a lot of issues regarding Hearing Aids purchasing and technology to a much more current point. Mr. Russ Goddard reported that he is proud of their team and the Rehab Council's participation in the workgroups and meetings for the policy. This has been a significant undertaking and reported that Council members shared the policy is more readable.

MOTION was made by Ms. Tomasic to approve the OVR Audiological Services Policy draft. Mr. Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.

SOCIAL MEDIA – Ms. Michele Leahy, Chair

- Social Media is scheduled to meet prior to the Full Council meeting to review brochures that could be presented during the Full Council meeting.

AD HOC COMMITTEE OVR HEARING OFFICERS & MEDIATORS – Mr. Andrew Pennington, Chair

- Mr. Pennington reported that Committee has made a lot of headway in regard to the process and is currently polling for next meeting.

OVR UPDATES

- Mr. Harbert reported that he welcomes receiving all feedback regarding the document that was provided to PaRC members regarding Council and State Board roles. Looks forward to working with Council members to make any corrections that are requested. Statewide CAC meeting is scheduled for July 9, 2024, members are welcome to provide input for the meeting agenda and attend. Zoom information will be provided upon availability. 2 PaRC member applications were moved forward by Department of Labor and Industry and are awaiting approval from the Governor's Office.
- Mr. Pennington explained that a State Board Annual Report is listed as a requirement within the State Act and inquired if the Board has reports available for review. Suggested that the document provides a history of the Board being developed prior to the approval in the Rehab Act is significant as it is why the Board is currently utilized in Pennsylvania.
- Ms. Tomasic explained that she has some hesitation about holding discussion on the document regarding Council and State Board roles during the upcoming meeting. Suggested tabling the topic to hash out language within a workgroup and address the topic prior to presenting publicly.
- Mr. Fogle explained that he appreciates Mr. Harbert's efforts and agrees with Ms. Tomasic to begin work on the document within a workgroup.

Adjourn

MOTION was made by Mr. Del Toro Vargas to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded by Ms. Mitchell. The meeting was adjourned.