



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 September 23, 2024, 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM

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

William Paz De Melo (P)

Susan Tomasic (P)

Michelle Mitchell (NP)

Lynn Heitz (P)

Joan Goodman (P)

Passle Helminski (P)

Andrew Pennington (P)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Present: Chris Harbert

Staff Present: Michelle Gerrick, Christopher Todd

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions.

MOTION was made by Ms. Passle Helminski to approve today's agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Joan Goodman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

AGENDA ITEMS

CHAIR REPORT

Discussion – Julia Barol's membership

Recommendation: draft letter to the Governor

- Ms. Michelle Gerrick, PaRC Personnel, reported that Ms. Julia Barol was replaced on the Council by Ms. Julianna Rodrigues in July 2024. This was not the intent when Ms. Rodrigues was put forward to represent the same category as Ms. Barol. OVR reached out to their contact at the Governor's office to inquire about resolving the issue of having Ms. Barol reinstated to the PaRC and there have been no responses from the Governor's office or updates on the status of this request since that time. Members agreed to have a letter drafted to ask the Governor and PA Secretary of Labor and Industry to have Ms. Barol reinstated immediately. Members discussed that the language in the Rehab Act states "at least one" for this category of representation with the interpretation there can be multiple members allowed to serve simultaneously under one category of representation and agreed an alternative route may be to ask Ms. Barol to submit

a new application for membership under a different category of representation if the letter to the Governor does not resolve this issue. The letter should include member's interpretation of the Rehab Act and inquiry about how this may affect future applicants to avoid a similar situation moving forward. The letter needs to clearly state that the Council is not asking that the current member be replaced by Ms. Barol.

MOTION was made by Mr. Andrew Pennington to draft a letter to the Governor regarding the reinstatement of Ms. Julia Barol. The motion was seconded by Ms. Lynn Heitz. Ms. Passle Helminski abstained. The motion passed.

Discussion – Full Council Virtual meeting on November 13, 2024

Recommendation: Presentation from New Castle District Office

Identify questions/topics to provide to DAs in advance

Other agenda topics and / or speakers

- Members reviewed questions to be provided in advance of the Full Council meeting to the OVR New Castle District Administrator and did not have additional questions for the District Office staff that has confirmed availability for the November 13th Full Council meeting.

Discussion – Committee Structure

- Members reviewed the current Committee roster. Members discussed having the Committee roster shared in an email with Full Council and were informed that this was previously sent to all members with a request to review and select Committee membership for the current Fiscal Year. The newly approved CTI at HGAC, Standing Committee does not have the minimum required number of members to move forward. Members discussed merging the CTI at HGAC committee with the Transition & Education Committee. Members agreed to have this topic discussed by the Governance Committee.

MOTION was made by Mr. Andrew Pennington to move the topic of merging the CTI at HGAC committee with the Transition & Education Committee for discussion to the Governance Committee. Ms. Joan Goodman seconded the motion. Ms. Tomasic abstained. The motion passed.

Michelle Mitchell, Member at Large

2023-2024 PaRC Annual Report member story

- Members requested that this topic be discussed during the next Executive Committee meeting.

MOTION was made by Ms. Tomasic to table the discussion of 2023-2024 PaRC Annual Report member story. Mr. Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

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

- Mr. Pennington provided upcoming dates and discussion topics for the CareerLink Committee and the Transition Committee quarterly meetings. Impartial Hearing Officer/Mediator Ad Hoc Committee is meeting in October and will be setting their goals.

GOVERNANCE – Ms. Susan Tomasic, Chair

Recommendation: Revisions to the PaRC Member Handbook

- Ms. Tomasic reported that Governance Committee meets again in October and will continue to update the Member Handbook, work on Bylaws revisions, formalize selection process for conferences, workgroups, etc. and work on a draft agreement and description language for the Council’s mentoring program.

LEGISLATIVE – Ms. Passle Helminski, Chair

- Ms. Passle Helminski reported that there are meetings with Legislators scheduled for October 3, 7, and 10, 2024.

POLICY – Ms. Lynn Heitz, Chair

Recommendation: Amendment to Description (a) – Council’s input in the 2024-2028 State Plan to re-instate the Order of Selection

Recommendation: Goal and objectives to increase Customer engagement and ensure Customer Satisfaction Surveys are fully accessible

- Ms. Lynn Heitz reported the Policy Committee worked with Mr. James Whitonis, OVR on amendments to Description (a) of the State Plan regarding the Order of Selection. The Committee also created a goal and objectives regarding the OVR Customer Satisfaction Surveys. Committee discussed working on a survey project with Bender Consulting to perform research and identify external entities that could complete surveys and help meet goals/objectives recommended by the Committee. Ms. Heitz reported that during the last Policy Committee meeting Mr. Ralph Roach, OVR suggested PaRC research availability of its funds for the survey project to be completed by an external source. Members agreed that using PaRC funds to complete the surveys has not been previously discussed. Ms. Gerrick, PaRC Personnel explained that Mr. Roach may have been referring to a previous project in which the PaRC funded an external entity to assist with the development of survey questions for Transition surveys. Members discussed the importance of the surveys being fully accessible.

MOTION was made by Ms. Susan Tomasic to accept the goal and objectives created by Policy Committee regarding the OVR Customer Satisfaction Surveys. Ms. Joan Goodman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

MOTION was made by Ms. Susan Tomasic to accept the amendment to Description (a) Council input in the 2024-2028 State Plan to re-instate the Order of Selection. Ms. Passle Helminski seconded the motion. All were in favor.

SOCIAL MEDIA – Ms. Joan Goodman, Chair

- Ms. Joan Goodman reported that PaRC brochures have been printed and asked that members distributing them do so in-person with an explanation. Committee has received contacts regarding the protection of Service Dog legislation. Ms. Helminski will send information regarding other states' legislation regarding Service Dog Legislation.

OVR UPDATES

- Mr. Chris Harbert provided updates on his continued work with the State Board of VR, work regarding OVR's flat funding, Direct Care Workers Crisis, Community Advisory Committees (CACs) statewide meeting, Financial Needs Test (FNT) policy, OVR Annual Report, Bureau of Central Operations re-organization, Employment First Oversight Commission (EFOC) goals and recommendations.
- Mr. William Paz De Melo requested a written report with updates for the next Executive Committee meeting so that members may provide questions in advance of the next meeting.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz inquired about PaRC member involvement on the Order of Selection. Mr. Harbert will follow up on this and Mr. Paz De Melo explained there will be a special meeting held regarding the Order of Selection.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Mr. Paz De Melo reported that he recently attended the State Board of VR meeting held in September and was very disappointed to find that there were no meeting materials provided in Braille or other accessible formats.
- Ms. Passle Helminski explained that she would like to have all reports previously provided during Full Council meetings reinstated including Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services, and other reports the previous Chair discontinued. Mr. Paz De Melo agreed it was important to receive reports from across the board and would like to see reports from the Department of Human Services. Members agreed to work with PaRC Support Personnel to determine which reports will be requested for the November Full Council meeting.

Adjourn

MOTION to adjourn was made by Ms. Lynn Heitz. Ms. Joan Goodman seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.