



# Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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## Executive Committee Meeting Minutes for October 29, 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 (P)

Lynn Heitz (P)

Joan Goodman (P)

Passle Helminski (P)

Andrew Pennington (P)

**Ex-Officio Member Present:** Julia Barol, Pennsylvania Association for People Supporting Employment First (PA APSE)

**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. Michelle Mitchell seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

### AGENDA ITEMS

#### CHAIR REPORT

#### Review/Discussion – Full Council meeting agenda, November 13, 2024

- Members discussed time allotted for Committee reports during the Full Council (FC) meeting and suggested holding additional discussion during Council work time near the end of FC meetings. Committee action items and a brief 2-minute report would still be held at the beginning of the meeting to ensure there is quorum for voting. This may include providing meeting dates/times.
- Mr. William Paz De Melo urged members to have each Committee action item voted on separately.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz inquired about a report from the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS) and the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BVRS) Directors. It was explained that they are not available to attend the November FC

meeting due to a previously scheduled meeting with a District Office but would be available to report at the February 2025 FC meeting. Ms. Heitz agreed to provide support personnel her questions or requests for report from BBVS and BVRS in advance of the FC meeting and hold additional discussion during Council work time during the FC meeting.

- Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR reported that there were not currently any updates regarding the reinstatement of Ms. Julia Barol but has meetings planned for discussion with Department of Labor and Industry later this week and will keep members updated.

### **2023-2024 PaRC Annual Report update - Michelle Mitchell, Vice Chair / Julia Barol, Ex-Officio member**

- Members nominated Ms. Lynn Heitz to provide a Member Story for the PaRC Annual Report and Ms. Heitz accepted. A draft of the Annual Report will be provided to Full Council during the November meeting for review.

### **OVer & Above Employee Recognition Program**

- Members inquired about the costs of the employee recognition program. Mr. Harbert, OVR explained that the budget would likely be minimal.

### **COMMITTEE UPDATES**

#### **CAREERLINK – Andrew Pennington, Chair**

- Mr. Andrew Pennington reported that the next Committee meeting is scheduled for November 20, 2024, and that he would be attending the PA Workforce Development Board meeting scheduled for November 19, 2024.

### **GOVERNANCE – Susan Tomasic, Chair**

#### **Recommendation: Revisions to the PaRC Member Handbook/bylaws**

#### **Nominations for Member-at-Large**

#### **Recommendation: Applications for membership for the categories of representation of Sensory Disabilities, Young Adult, and Mental Health**

#### **Recommendation: Merge CTI at HGAC Committee with Transition/Education Committee**

- Members explained that the version of the Member Handbook they received did not include highlighted revisions. Members explained that highlights are not readable by screen reader technology and requested revisions include asterisks at the beginning and end of the changes. This discussion was tabled for further review during the next meeting.
- Members reviewed the applications for membership and stressed the importance of including an explanation regarding the number of applicants representing a category and language included in the Rehabilitation Act that would allow more

than one representative. The Act states “at least one representative” which the Committee interprets as allowing for multiple representatives.

***MOTION was made by Ms. Passle Helminski to move forward the application for membership of Ms. Elizabeth Bish for the category of representation of Young Adult. Mr. Andrew Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

***MOTION was made by Ms. Passle Helminski to move forward the application for membership of Ms. Kadie Trauger for the category of representation of Sensory Disabilities. Mr. Andrew Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

***MOTION was made by Ms. Passle Helminski to move forward the application for membership of Ms. Julia Barol for the category of representation of Mental Health. Mr. Andrew Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

- Members discussed the nominations accepted for Member-at-Large which include Ms. Christie Cyktor, Ms. Lynn Heitz, and Ms. Julianna Rodrigues. Members suggested that each nominee have their resume provided in advance of the election scheduled during the November FC meeting.

***MOTION was made by Ms. Passle Helminski to merge the duties of the Commonwealth Technical Institute at Hiram G Andrews Center (CTI at HGAC) Committee with the Transition and Education Committee. Mr. Andrew Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

**LEGISLATIVE – Passle Helminski, Chair**

**Recommendation: Letter to Governor regarding importance of VR funding / OVR flat funding**

***MOTION was made by Ms. Joan Goodman for the draft letter regarding VR funding to be moved forward to Full Council. Ms. Susan Tomasic seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

**POLICY – Lynn Heitz, Chair**

**Update on OVR Financial Needs Test (FNT) Policy**

**Update on VR State Plan Amendments**

- Ms. Lynn Heitz reported that the State Plan amendments were recently in Public Comment and the Financial Needs Test (FNT) policy changes will not be available for review until December.
- Members held discussion regarding potential project for Bender Consulting to perform research to help identify qualified vendors for PaRC to recommend to OVR for the facilitation of their customer satisfaction surveys with improved response rates and surveys that are fully accessible. Members shared that they have continued to provide OVR recommendations regarding the surveys lack of engagement and accessibility. Members questioned if their recommendations for

vendors would be taken into consideration due to the Commonwealth's procurement requirements. Members suggested the research project may help to identify responsible vendors that are capable of ensuring accessibility and implementing technology that would improve engagement. Members suggested it would be important to set a maximum cost for this project of \$5,000 and to require that the project identify at least 3 entities that could provide a survey process that meets the goals/objective set forth by the Committee.

***MOTION was made by Ms. Passle Helminski to move forward to Full Council a Bender Consulting research project to identify 3 entities that may conduct quality OVR Customer Satisfaction Surveys with a maximum cost of \$5,000 for the project. Ms. Susan Tomasic seconded the motion. A roll call vote was held with 4 members voting yay and 2 members voting nay. The motion passed.***

#### **TRANSITION – Andrew Pennington, Acting Chair**

- Members requested that Ms. Jill Moriconi be invited to the next Transition and Education Committee meeting scheduled for December 3, 2024.

#### **SOCIAL MEDIA – Joan Goodman, Chair**

**Recommendation: Action / Social Media Committee Goals for FY 2024-2025**

***MOTION was made by Ms. Lynn Heitz to move forward the Action / Social Media Committee Goals for FY 2024-2025. Ms. Passle Helminski seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

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

**Recommendation: Committee Goal and Timeline**

***MOTION was made by Ms. Lynn Heitz to move forward the Ad Hoc Committee OVR Hearing Officers and Mediators Goals. Ms. Joan Goodman seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Mr. Andrew Pennington inquired about changes made to the August FC meeting agenda and if an agenda that is voted upon by Executive Committee can be changed in advance of the FC meeting. Ms. Susan Tomasic explained that Executive Committee must vote on their FC agenda and that the Council Chair may make changes to the agenda as needed prior to the FC meeting including the addition of discussion items. Changes to an approved agenda may not include items that require a vote.

#### **ADJOURN**

***MOTION to adjourn was made by Ms. Joan Goodman. Ms. Michell Mitchell seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.***