



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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Executive Committee Meeting Minutes for January 28, 2025, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM

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

William Paz De Melo (P)

Susan Tomasic (P)

Michelle Mitchell (P)

Lynn Heitz (NP)

Joan Goodman (P)

Passle Helminski (P)

Andrew Pennington (P)

Julia Barol (P)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Present: Chris Harbert, James Whitonis, Cheryl Novak, Ryan Hyde

Staff Present: Michelle Gerrick, Christopher Todd

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

A request was made to add a discussion regarding the current order to suspend Federal funding to all grants which include OVR, Client Assistance Program (CAP), and other stakeholders.

MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to approve today's agenda with an addition and past meeting minutes. Ms. Passle Helminski seconded the motion. All were in favor.

AGENDA ITEMS

CHAIR REPORT

- Members requested that an email be sent to Full Council to inquire if there are questions in advance of the Full Council meeting and to notify members there will be limited time available for presenters due to other important topics that require discussion time.
- Regarding a request for collaboration between the PaRC & the Parent Education and Advocacy Leadership (PEAL) Center, members agreed that the request included in the documents provided by Ms. Christie Cyktor entails in-depth support that extends beyond the current PaRC / OVR mission and the PaRC lacks the infrastructure to effectively facilitate the level of collaboration required. Members requested that Ms. Cyktor be informed that the PaRC supports the PEAL Center's

mission, does list the PEAL Center's information on the PaRC website, but cannot provide the level of support required.

Public Comment Requested on Proposed Rulemaking for State-Registered Interpreter and Transliterators Regulations

- Regarding the request for Public Comment from the Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH), members requested that a letter of support be drafted and will seek Full Council approval during February meeting.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

Action/Social Media – Joan Myers Goodman, Chair

- Ms. Joan Myers Goodman reported that the next Social Media Committee meeting is scheduled for February 5, 2025. Committee continues to check-in with contacts regarding Service Dog topics. Committee continues to provide information for social media posts including disability related webinars.

CareerLink – Andrew Pennington, Chair

- Mr. Andrew Pennington reported that the next CareerLink Committee meeting is scheduled for February 18, 2025 and will include discussion regarding the Workforce Development Board's Barrier Remediation Committee recommendations about the 14 (c) Certificate Subminimum Wage Workshops.

Governance – Susan Tomasic, Chair

- Ms. Susan Tomasic reported that she will confirm interest with the members listed that are up for reappointment and will request approval during the February 12, 2025 Full Council meeting. Ms. Michelle Mitchell confirmed her interest in reappointment.

MOTION was made by Ms. Michelle Mitchell for approval of Draft PaRC Mentoring Program Policy and Procedures. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. All were in favor.

MOTION was made by Mr. Andrew Pennington for approval of Member Handbook revisions. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. All were in favor.

MOTION was made by Mr. Andrew Pennington for approval of forwarding Mr. Dorian Rhodes application, resume, and letters of reference to the Governor for consideration of appointment to the PaRC representing the category of Veteran. Ms. Joan Myers Goodman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Legislative Committee – Passle Helminski, Chair

- Members inquired how the January 27, 2025 memorandum regarding a freeze in

funding for all Federal grants will affect OVR, PaRC, and stakeholders. Mr. Ryan Hyde reported that they have not received guidance from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). There is no additional information available on how this would affect college funding.

- Members discussed if the approval and distribution of the funding letter previously drafted should still be considered due to the implications of the memorandum. Members agreed that there should be 2 letters forwarded for Full Council review and approval. One with state specific information and one as a template for other states to consider. Members agreed to request that the Social Media Committee assist with developing a social media kit to inform and educate the public regarding flat funding be shared.

MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol for approval of the VR funding letter from the PaRC. Mr. Andrew Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.

MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to share a template of the letter with other State Rehabilitation Councils and VR programs. Ms. Joan Myers Goodman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Policy – Julia Barol, Vice Chair

MOTION was made by Ms. Susan Tomasic for approval of the Draft Financial Needs Test (FNT) policy. Ms. Michelle Mitchell seconded the motion. Ms. Joan Myers Goodman abstained. The motion passed.

Transition – Julia Barol, Chair

- Ms. Julia Barol reported that the next Transition Committee is scheduled for March 4, 2025. The Committee continues to hold discussion, receive reports, and review data and information from Bureau of Special Education, Commonwealth Technical Institute at Hiram G Andrews Center (CTI at HGAC), and Pre Employment Transition Services.

Ad Hoc Committee OVR Hearing Officers & Mediators – Andrew Pennington

- Mr. Andrew Pennington reported that the most recent OVR Hearing Officers & Mediators Ad Hoc Committee meeting was cancelled due to a delay in receiving requested document from Office of Chief Counsel (OCC). The meeting is pending and Mr. Chris Harbert reported that he will follow up with OCC and the Committee with status update.

Ad Hoc Committee to study roles of PaRC and State Board – Michelle Mitchell

- Ms. Michelle Mitchell reported that the Committee completed their research on the roles of the Council and Board. A comparison chart was shared with the Executive Committee and will be forwarded along to the Full Council. Moving forward the

Committee recognized the importance of working together with the State Board and inquired about sending monthly meeting invitations to the members of the State Board to further collaboration with the PaRC and its Committees. Mr. Chris Harbert agreed that collaboration would be appreciated by members of the State Board.

ADJOURN

MOTION was made by Mr. Andrew Pennington to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.