

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

For the

State of Delaware, Division for the Visually Impaired

**MEETING MINUTES**

**December 12, 2016**

**9:30am - 1:00pm**

**Location: Appoquinimink State Service Center**  
**122 Silver Lake Road, Middletown, DE**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mr. Garner called the meeting to order at 9:57am

**II. ROLL CALL**

Mr. Garner requested a roll call for the purpose of the minutes. In attendance were: Darryl Garner, Chair, Kevin McAllister (Co-Chair), Suzanne Howell (Member), Walter Harper (Member), Deb Bradl (Member/DVI), Elisha Jenkins (DVI Director), Dava Newnam (Deputy Director DVI), Shirley Bryson (Member/DVI), Sonya Lawrence (Member), and Amber Mangini (Admin).

**III. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS VRAC MEETING**

The minutes would have to again be bypassed due to lack of quorum and some members could not open the PDF file format in which they were sent. Ms. Mangini stated that she would re-send all of the previous minutes in both PDF and Word formats; as well as continue to send both formats in the future. Mr. Garner opted to approve November, October, and September at the next meeting after the Members have had a chance to review.

**IV. OLD BUSINESS**

*A. Letters to the Legislators and Governor* – A small group got together on November 7<sup>th</sup> to draft a letter to the Outgoing Governor and the Incoming Governor which outlined the strategic

plan among other things. They also drafted a separate letter to the Legislators containing some of that information as well. They hoped to have the main advocacy groups review the letters and get their Chairperson to approve and endorse them before they are sent to the Governors and Legislators. The goal is to accomplish this by the end of the year. Regarding the letter to the Governor, Ms. Lawrence suggested that Governor Elect Carney be the primary addressee and Governor Markell be carbon copied on the letter. The council agreed to change the primary addressee to Governor Elect Carney.

*B. Strategic plan send-outs* – Ms. Lawrence inquired about having volunteers get the strategic plan booklets sent out to the legislators. She stated that there were over 150 that needed to be put into envelopes, labeled, and sent out. Mr. Garner offered to get a few people together to fold and stuff the envelopes, Mr. McAllister offered to get the legislators information and have the labels made, and Ms. Jenkins offered a space at DVI for the volunteers to work. The council agreed that Mr. Garner’s volunteers would fold, stuff, and seal the envelopes while Mr. McAllister’s volunteers would label and send the letters out. Mr. McAllister would have the labels completed and ready by next Monday 12/19 and Mr. Garner would schedule his volunteers for Wednesday 12/21 to stuff and seal at the DVI Biggs building location. Ms. Howell offered to assist as a volunteer.

## **V. NEW / SPECIAL BUSINESS**

*A. Moment of Silence* – The Council shared a moment of silence to remember and reflect on the life of Debbie Briddell, who was an advocate and friend to many on the Council.

A discussion took place amongst the members about the need for steady funding for the Council. Mr. Garner stated that he would reach out to Kat (NFB) to invite her to the next meeting to help her understand the situation.

Ms. Howell stated that the DE Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired hasn't done well since the passing of Ms. Sutlic. They haven't been meeting at all and she plans to call the others involved in it to find out whether or not they will even keep the organization going at this point.

*B. Annual Report* – Ms. Lawrence stressed the importance of getting the annual report information together as quickly as possible. The report should show how the council has influenced the employment outcomes in DE, the outreach that was done, and if there were any consumers to be highlighted. Ms. Lawrence stated that the report should reflect that the VRAC is a viable council and deserving of the funding that comes through the Federal Government to DE.

Ms. Lawrence suggested that someone from the council should be present at the next meeting in April 2017 when the other SRC's are coming together. This would help keep the council informed and current.

Mr. McAllister suggested trying to collaborate with NFB to get a key-notes and things because it would open more doors if the council had a not for profit on board. He said that there are 4 major events this coming year to prepare for; JFC in February, Retreat in March, Healthy Vision Month in April, and White Cane Day in October.

Mr. Garner stressed the importance of informing people about DVI's computer lab. He stated that DVI has very nice, high quality equipment there for all clients to use- and yet there's barely ever anyone there and so it's another good resource being wasted.

*C. Election for VRAC officers* – Ms. Lawrence gave each member a "token" that would serve as a ballot to vote on the Chair and Co-Chair Positions.

The tokens were as follows:

- Lollipop – Mr. Darryl Garner
- Candy Cane- Mr. Kevin McAllister
- Mentos- Mr. Blake Roberts

Ms. Lawrence then collected the ballots for the Chair position. It was a tie for the winner with 3 Lollipops and 3 Candy canes and 1 Mentos. The council decided to call Ms. Debbie Harrington to give her vote via telephone to break the tie. Ms. Harrington got on the line and casted her vote for Mr. McAllister. Mr. McAllister was named Chair of the VRAC and Mr. Blake Roberts as his Co-Chair beginning in January 2017.

## **VI. DVI**

A. *DVI-VR Administrator Report* – Ms. Bryson reported the following data:

- 30 successful closures
- 20 Individuals who are ready to work
- 11 employed less than 90 days employed
- 61 currently in a training program
- 67 are transition age 14-21 YO
- 84 transition aged 14-24 YO

Ms. Bryson also reported that one young lady was starting her own braille teaching business and another young women who is a ballet instructor. Ms. Bryson also reported that VR has recently made some potential business partnerships with Suitable Men, St. Francis Hospital, Goodwill (Kirkwood Highway), Kohl's, Bank of America, Mill croft Manor, and others. VR's business consultants have been working really hard to make these potential partnerships.

Ms. Bradl explained that she and Ms. Bryson will begin to go through and break down the cases to try to find out the reasons for the unsuccessful closures that money was invested in. There are reason codes, we hope to get those together by the next

meeting. They also explained that currently their programmer (who no longer works for VR) is helping with their reporting and therefore they have to work around her schedule.

*C. DVI Director Report* – Ms. Jenkins was happy to report that DVI has a potential candidate for a principal. They have not made an offer yet, but he is authorized and has all of his certifications in the state of Delaware. DVI has followed up with HR for his salary info and they are awaiting a response. There is another person interested in the position and the position is still currently posted. The anticipated start date for this position is January 9<sup>th</sup> 2017 with a one year probationary period.

DVI is also meeting with the DOE in January to begin implementing the DVI strategic plan.

## **VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS/PUBLIC COMMENTS**

The council members all thanked Mr. Garner for his commitment and service to the VRAC. They also welcomed and congratulated Mr. McAllister on his new role as Chair. Mr. Roberts was not present.

## **VIII. ADJOURNMENT**

Mr. Garner adjourned the meeting at 12:00pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Amber Mangini