

Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services

Board Meeting Summary

ZOOM or Teleconference

Thursday, June 11, 2020

Call to Order:

Mr. Eddie Williams, board chair, called the regularly scheduled open public meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

Prayer:

Dr. Graham Sisson, Jr., executive director of the Alabama Governor's Office on Disability (GOOD), opened the board meeting with prayer.

Verification of Quorum:

Board members present: Mr. Eddie Williams, board chair; Mrs. Penny Foster, board vice-chair; Ms. Michelle Glaze, Mr. Mitch Strickland, Mr. Jimmie Varnado, and Mr. Charles Wilkinson. A quorum was declared.

Verification of the Open Meeting Act Notice:

For the health and safety of the public (including the effectiveness of COVID-19 mitigation strategies), and in accordance with Section III (Open Meetings Act) in the First Supplemental State of Emergency: Coronavirus (COVID-19) Proclamation signed by Gov. Kay Ivey, Governor of the State of Alabama, on March 18, 2020, the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services regularly scheduled board meeting was conducted virtually (live) via ZOOM or teleconference and was open to the public. American Sign Language interpreters were provided via ZOOM.

Mrs. Karen Freeman verified that the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services meeting for June 11, 2020, was initially posted on the Alabama secretary of state's website on Jan. 14, 2020 with the final revision for the public on May 13, 2020. The following link was provided for registration purposes with a deadline of June 2, 2020: <http://rehab.alabama.gov/meet-our-board>

Approval of Agenda:

Mr. Williams asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion to approve the agenda was made by Jimmie Varnado and seconded by Mitch Strickland. The agenda was approved unanimously.

Approval of Minutes for March 5, 2020 Meeting:

The minutes from the March 5, 2020, meeting were mailed prior to the board meeting. Mr. Williams stated that if there were no corrections, the minutes would stand approved as presented. The minutes were approved by unanimous consent.

Mrs. Leah Patterson Lust

Jan. 14, 1971 – April 25, 2020

The Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services observed a moment of silence in memory of Mrs. Leah Patterson Lust, Congressional District 4, Cullman. Commissioner Burdeshaw noted that Leah passed away Saturday, April 25, 2020. Leah will always be remembered for her cheerful attitude and advocacy for people with disabilities. Leah was a former Cullman County Probate Judge and served on several nonprofit boards in Cullman County. She will be remembered by her friends and family and those who worked with her for her “perseverance” and “forward thinking.”

New Business:

Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Service Duties Presentation

Mrs. Ashley Hamlett, General Counsel, provided an overview of the duties of the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services. The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services and the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services were created by state law to provide services to Alabama’s children and adults with disabilities to enable them to achieve their maximum potential.

Commissioner’s Annual Performance Appraisal

Mr. Williams and the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services expressed their individual appreciation to Commissioner Burdeshaw as she continues to manage all levels of the department during the COVID-19 pandemic. Commissioner Burdeshaw and the Executive Leadership Team ensured that services continued to be provided to consumers across the state of Alabama.

Mr. Williams reported the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services reviewed and appraised Commissioner Burdeshaw’s performance in the last year. Therefore, Mr. Williams moved to increase the Commissioner’s annual salary by 2.5% adjusted to the dollar amount closest to a figure divisible by 24 to be effective July 1, 2020. Mr. Strickland seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Burdeshaw expressed her appreciation to the board for their continued support.

Board Member Questions and Division Updates

The Executive Leadership Team members were provided an opportunity to answer any questions and give updates to their written reports.

Commissioner's Comments & Legislative Update

COVID-19 – Impact on ADRS Operations

ADRS, as has the entire world, been impacted by the pandemic. The primary goal of ADRS has been continuity of services for Alabama's adults and children with disabilities and to minimize the risk for ADRS staff and the families that are served. This effort required a tremendous amount of time and resources. In addition, the situation is fluid so plans must change as often as new information is received. The department's IT, accounting, and shared services staff have been the true heroes. The IT staff worked diligently to increase access to technology for the staff. Accounting obtained a waiver to purchase PPE and cleaning supplies outside of the state purchasing guidelines. ADRS would not be in the position it is today without their support.

ADRS Budget Requests for FY 2021

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported that at the last board meeting on March 5, 2020, all appeared to be on positive track for the entire Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services budget, including the additional \$1,666,824.00 for Alabama's Early Intervention System (AEIS). This was before the COVID-19 pandemic and once the full scope of the economic impact to the state and our country was evident. The Education Trust Fund (ETF) budget chairs stated that thanks to past legislation meant to guard against proration, the budgets would not require reductions this year. After additional time passed during the legislative shut-down, ADRS learned there may be small increases for some programs, but cautioned not to expect the total amount requested. This is a total increase of \$250,000.00 for AEIS and level-funding for our other programs. While we are appreciative of additional funding for AEIS, this will not meet our projected need. Unfortunately, AEIS will likely require some of the previously discussed systemic changes.

Announcements:

The next quarterly board meeting(s) will be:

- Thursday, Sept. 17, 2020, at 10:00 a.m., TBD.
- Thursday, Dec. 3, 2020 – 10:00 a.m., TBD.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:13 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Karen Freeman

Commissioner's Executive Assistant