

# **VIRGINIA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND AND VISION IMPAIRED (SRC)**

## **Quarterly Meeting**

### **Draft Minutes**

**May 8, 2026**

**The Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)**

**397 Azalea Avenue, Richmond, VA 23227 and via Zoom**

#### **SRC Members in Attendance**

- **Amaan Karim**, Richmond, Business/Labor/Industry Representative (virtual)
- **Beth Klein**, Stafford, Representative of the Client Assistance Program (CAP) (virtual)
- **Christine Appert**, Charlottesville, Current/Former Recipient of Rehabilitation Services
- **Gary Talley**, Petersburg, Statewide Independent Living Council Representative (SILC)
- **Heidi Lawyer**, Henrico, Representative of Parent Training & Information Center (PEATC)
- **Jeffrey Sluss**, Salem, Workforce Council Representative
- **John Leopold**, Richmond, Business/Labor/Industry Representative
- **Kendall Morris**, Mechanicsville, Business/Labor/Industry Representative
- **Lasonya Jackson**, Crozet, Rep. of a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Ex-Officio Member
- **Mark Roane**, Richmond, Current/Former Recipient of Rehabilitation Services
- **Rebecca Ceja**, Richmond, Representative of the Virginia Department of Education
- **Susan Bowmaster**, Annadale, Representative of a Disability Advocacy Group

#### **SRC Members Not Able to Attend**

- **Chanthen Nene**, Manassas, Rep. of an Applicant or Recipient of Rehabilitation Services
- **Gerald Meredith**, South Chesterfield, Representative of a Disability Advocacy Group
- **Rick Mitchell**, Richmond, Commissioner, DBVI, Ex-Officio Member

#### **DBVI Staff Present**

- **Kathy Malone**, Bristol, Deputy Commissioner of Services (virtual)
- **Maggie Mills**, Executive Assistant to Commissioner Mitchell
- **Megan Hall**, Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services
- **Rachel Dancy**, Executive Assistant, Commissioner's Office – Recorder of Minutes

#### **ASL Interpreters**

- **Carrie Humphrey**
- **Elaine Hernandez**

#### **Public**

- **Ginger Barbour**

#### **Call to Order / Welcome and Introductions**

Vice-Chair Appert called the meeting to order. Ms. Rachel Dancy conducted roll call. Quorum was met.

#### **Adoption Agenda**

Mr. Sluss moved to adopt the proposed agenda; Mr. Leopold seconded the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously.

#### **Adoption of February 20, 2026, Meeting Minutes**

Ms. Lawyer moved to adopt February 20, 2026, SRC Quarterly Meeting minutes as amended, Mr. Sluss seconded the motion, and the motion passed unanimously.

## Public Comment

None.

## Commissioner's Report – Megan Hall (in Dr. Mitchell's absence)

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows:

- Due to the dissolution of the US Department of Education, there is a possibility for all VR programs to either move under the US Department of Labor or US Health and Human Services. The Rehabilitation Services Administration is awaiting the final decision and will update VR agencies as soon as possible.

## Deputy Commissioner's Report – Deputy Commissioner for Services Kathy Malone

Written report provided. Updates to Regional Office Staffing are as follows:

- Bristol Fully Staffed
- Fairfax Filling a VR Counselor position
- Norfolk Fully Staffed
- Richmond Fully Staffed
- Roanoke Recruiting for 1 Rehabilitation Teacher
- Staunton Recruiting for Wage ASL Interpreter
- Headquarters Fully Staffed
- Business Relations Fully Staffed
- VRCBVI Recruiting Assistive Technology Instructor
- LRC Recruiting for Operations Manager

## VR Program Update– Megan Hall

Written report provided. Additional comments are as follows:

- The agency has been busy with student programming this spring, offering programs such as Spring Into Success, Financial Realities and Entrepreneurship Development for Gainful Employment (EDGE). June starts the busiest time of the year for the student team as they develop, plan and support two in-person programs (Cyber Space and Launching Point at JMU) as well as 5 virtual Cyber Warriors programs.
- The DBVI business relations team, in collaboration with VRCBVI, hosted the annual Elevate Your Career program this past week. This two day in-person program focuses on employment readiness skills such as resume development, elevator pitch, interviewing and more. The culmination of the program was a Reverse Career Fair where participants set up a table and presentation to market themselves to businesses as they moved from table to table.
- Five individuals have been hired for summer work experiences at Massanutten Resort. These individuals will live on the resort during employment and will also learn life skills like grocery shopping, cleaning, and living independently. Each experience is directly related to the individual's vocational goal and can be added to individual's resumes as prior work history in their field of choice.
- The agency celebrated Public Service Week with activities and staff appreciation.
- VR Director Megan Hall attended the DARS statewide Pathways to Careers conference in VA Beach this week. She shared powerful messages from keynote speakers about hope, opportunity, and the importance of helping people overcome challenges. Director Hall was able to learn more about the outcomes of the Pathways to Careers grant and networked with DARS management staff to set up meetings to discuss the adaptation of the grant activities for the DBVI population.
- The Pathways to Careers grant ended, but it led to strong improvements in apprenticeships, job skills programs, and hiring opportunities.

- VR Director Megan Hall plans to create more programs for youth to prepare for adulthood, especially as they age out of student services at 22. This additional programming is intended to prepare students for moving from student services programming to adult VR services. Topics will include working with a VR Counselor, their role in their VR services and the importance of appropriate self-advocacy, how to locate a peer group that they can engage with for support, etc.

#### **Renewal of Hearing Officer– *Megan Hall***

The council voted to approve renewing contracts for three impartial hearing officers:

- Rhonda Mitchell- 3<sup>rd</sup> of 4 renewals
- Regina Kane- 1<sup>st</sup> of 4 renewals
- Kennington Ball- 1<sup>st</sup> of 4 renewals

All contracts will run from October 1, 2026 to September 30, 2027.

Mr. Talley moved to approve the renewals; Mr. Sluss seconded the motion, and the motion was passed unanimously.

#### **Old and New Business**

##### **Term Expiration for SRC Members – *Megan Hall***

- Seven members' terms will end on September 29, 2026. They can reapply using the state appointments website. Rachel will send the link to members with approaching term expirations.
- Current vacant seats include:
  - Parent/guardian of a person with a disability
  - Business/labor/industry representative

#### **Adjourn**

Mr. Roane moved to end the meeting. Mr. Talley seconded the motion. All were in favor and the meeting was adjourned.

**Next SRC Quarterly Meeting will be held in person on August 14, 2026.**