



Washington State Rehabilitation Council
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WSRC FULL COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Friday, July 17, 2009

9:00 am to 4:00 pm

Heathman Lodge

7801 NE Greenwood Dr.

Vancouver, WA 98662

In Attendance: Jerry Johnsen, Jeffry Abe-Gunter, Sharey Cleveland, Rudy Hernandez, Joanne Butts, Bill Murray, Don Brandon, Martin McCallum, Jim Larson, Joelle Brouner, Lynnae Ruttledge, Kelly Franklin, Sandra Carr, Bob Roberts, Carol Maher, JoAnne Lang, Bob Huven, Paul Vertrees, Trisha Brown, Karen Heater, Jessica Rusch, Susan Kelsey, Cindy Williams, several counselors and staff from the Vancouver DVR office, two interpreters, Sarah Rasmussen and Cathy Richards.

9:00 a —9:05 a Mr. Larson welcomes everyone to the meeting of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC or SRC). Jerry Johnsen asks if we can speed up the meeting today by working through lunch. Joelle Brouner mentions that the interpreters and JoAnne Lang have to work and so might not get the opportunity to eat if we work through lunch. A compromise is made where we decide to work through half of the lunch period.

9:10 a —9:20 a **Remarks from Chair** – Jim Larson—Indicates where the restrooms are, and points out his role as the Meeting Manager, he explains that he sees his role as meeting facilitator and will try to move it along. He will not cut you off unless we are too pressed for time.

9:20 a —9:30 a **Remarks from Executive Director** – Joelle Brouner—The period of the year between April and July is a very busy time for DVR. Summertime is so busy, and she appreciates everyone attending because it is hard to balance schedules. Bill Murray, John Harrison, Joanne Butts, Lou Colwell, Kris Tefft and Carol Maher are all terming off of the Council and this is their last meeting. Jeffry Abe-Gunter and Martin McCallum are re-upping their membership to the council, and we thank them for that. We have a lot of new people coming on to the council, the Governor has not made the appointments yet, but when she does we will have new members.

Secretary Dreyfus is the new Secretary of the Department of Social and Health Services, (DSHS) and we have had correspondence with her. As a

rule, for accessibility's sake, we do not pass out handouts at meetings. But Ms. Brouner did send an email notifying the Council that she would be bringing an additional packet to the meeting for people, and she has handed it out. It contains a copy of the correspondence addressed to Jim Larson from the Susan Dreyfus, some information from Ms. Ruttledge about Project HIRE, and some information from the Research and Data Analysis unit on the Needs Assessment. Ms. Brouner points out about the Needs Assessment that she thinks the SRC should be proud of their work on engaging more Washington Businesses and increasing employer response in a survey for the needs assessment through leadership provided by Kris Tefft and which may continue if Mike Hudson of the Association of Washington Business is appointed to the Council in October.

Ms. Brouner appreciates that the Council has the opportunity for a budget negotiation with Lynnae Ruttledge, and the quality of that negotiation between Ms. Ruttledge, Ms. Brouner and Mr. Larson about our budget. She welcomes the Council's strategies over the next year on cost effectiveness.

She thanks JoAnne Lang for having completed her first year as the Executive Assistant for the Council.

She thanks people for the surveys on her personnel review. She looks forward to serving the Council in the coming year. At this time there is a confluence of factors effecting DVR and she finds the big picture with the new state plan, and implementation, and increased opportunities to serve people with ARRA moneys, she hopes to keep focused on our core mission, and factor in the budget and any increases in the system.

She also recognizes Sandra Carr's family and their loss of a granddaughter in an accident this quarter.

MOTION: Motion to approve the minutes made by Bill Murray, Seconded by Carol Maher. Motion passed unanimously.

9:30 a — 10:30 a Remarks from DVR Director – Lynnae Ruttledge

Review of Agency Performance—The performance through May in the notebook is not quite up to date. Key time points: beginning of state fiscal year, beginning of the federal fiscal year, Close of state fiscal year, and close of federal fiscal year. So, DVR is looking at nine months worth of data. Comparing that to one year ago, we have gotten through the bulge accompanied with coming off of Order of Selection. They have managed the rate of growth and at the same time working with the hiring freeze has been difficult with that, but there was one time period where they were able to fill some positions and address vacancies and capacity issues. Application rate is holding steady at about 1000 per month. This is totally doable. She is concerned about other programs reducing revenue, staff, and resources, which may lead people to seek services from DVR. This may create an influx of applications, but we are up to the challenge.

Determining eligibility, we have increased the capacity of the program to do that quickly. The area of concern in our performance is our Rehab Rate. The federal minimum standard is 55.8 percent. We have had times when we were not meeting that. Are people being provided with the services they need, and how can we provide those services? As people get served, are we providing the services they need to be successfully employed? They are attempting to maintain a commitment to service for people with the most significant disabilities. So the rates are shifting slightly from Most Significantly Disabled (MSD) to Significantly Disabled (SD), but not enough to be concerned about not serving the MSD. She now asks Ms. Franklin to elaborate on any comments she has regarding agency performance.

Kelly Franklin says that she thinks Ms. Ruttledge pretty much covered it. She just is very impressed looking at numbers at this point in the year. Eligibility determination is up 85% and so there is a tremendous rise in eligibilities. She is proud of DVR staff getting through the bulge, which a year ago was DVR's largest concern. There are three people left from the original Order of Selection waiting list, and those three cases have been reviewed by Kelly Franklin, and found to be in exactly the place in their process where they should be.

Carol Maher mentions, there is a program called Cash for Clunkers. It dawned on her that there are a lot of people out there who may have old vans, and if DVR could do a Cash for Clunker program for those, it might be beneficial for DVR customers if DVR did a program like that. She also asks if the staff feel appreciated for their hard work in such high amounts. Ms. Ruttledge answers that she hopes they do. She also is doing an annual employee recognition activity. Ms. Maher also asks, do the staff know what the plan is for the recovery dollars. Ms. Ruttledge answers that no, they really do not and she will go into that further during this meeting.

Jim Larson asks the difference in MSD from before, and now. Lynnae says she can't say exactly but it was probably around 55% and now it is probably between 47-50%

Sandra Carr asks, even though DVR does not have a wait list, it is possible that people do not know that. She has encountered people through her work who still think there is a waiting list.

Carol Maher mentions a really bad weather month in April, so people do not go out much during weather problems. Yesterday we spoke about the Legislature and getting the full match, the numbers on the Government Management Accountability and Performance (GMAP) data helps a lot so that the Council can educate legislators on that issue.

Ms. Ruttledge says that they are going to look at getting it to Council members in a more concise and up to the minute way. She points out they did active recruitment for technicians and counselors, very little office assistance or administrative staff. The last week in June, the Governor said

that we should hire people who were slated for layoff. We were to identify a 2% reduction in FTEs. DVR were asked to develop a hiring plan, which Ms. Ruttledge did. She would be reporting to the DSHS Secretary. The Secretary was hiring a new Chief of Staff, and was forming the DSHS leadership team. This prompted discussion of who DVR would report to and where it would be placed within DSHS. Because of all that, we were unable to start hiring staff. As of two days ago, Ms. Ruttledge was able to meet with the new Chief of Staff. Their original plan was to hire twenty people, and that got scaled back to sixteen, and now they have approval to hire four staff. She will meet with the head of human resources to move through the list of hiring, so we can get the other key positions filled. DVR is proportionally treated the same as other administrations, but since our capacity is lower, where other agencies like the Economic Services Administration is able to hire 45 people when they need to hire 400, DVR is only able to hire 4 people, when they need to hire 40.

Ms. Brouner points out, Secretary Dreyfus has accepted our invitation to the SRC meeting in Spokane in October. We would like to make the best use of her time, if we can strategically advocate around service delivery please let us know.

Ms. Ruttledge answers yes, across DSHS funds are expected to be reduced by 5% and FTEs by 2%. This is catastrophic for DVR. It means that DVR will take another million dollar reduction, is going to help DVR for the WSRC to do education to the legislature on behalf of DVR and the customers they serve. And Ms. Ruttledge looks forward to working with the SRC on encouraging Ms. Dreyfus to seek appropriate funding for DVR. Assuring that the legislature knows that there has to be sufficient resources in the second biennium to have the available funds to get the federal match.

Mr. Larson asks, there are 20 non-permanent people, how long can they be in that status? Ms. Ruttledge answers 12 months. He asks about strategies to move people from non-permanent to permanent. She says that it is possible to move them from non-perm to perm, but it isn't a great way to do it because that circumvents the hiring process, since there are no requirements about hiring a non-perm person. It is expedient but it doesn't vet the staff very well.

Sandra Carr asks, she used to work for Employment Security as an interim employee, and she had a choice to work nine months, get laid off for three months, and then hired again nine months. Is that something that DVR can do? Ms. Ruttledge answers, they are supposed to be emergent or urgent situations, or for special projects.

Ms. Carr also mentions that, if people here could announce who is talking before they start speaking so that the interpreters can let her know who is speaking, it would help Deaf and hard of hearing people here to have equal access to the information being shared in this meeting.

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act outcomes—There are concerns about DVR staff being uninformed about the recovery act monies. The reason for this is that several things happened at once. 1) Ms. Ruttledge met with Governor Gregoire, and the Governor's expectation for the recovery money was that things would be done in new and innovative ways. 2) Also, the department changed its leadership. 3) Also there was communication from DSHS and the Governor's office saying that they wanted to review the plans for recovery moneys before they were implemented. 4) While strategizing, DSHS directed that she hire no new staff to do any of this. She decided to develop contracts with workforce partners in order to achieve these innovations. DVR is obligated to talk to the union when they contract out, or issues regarding 'shared work'. They had to propose it to the Union, to make sure there was no conflict or objection. The Union had concerns and demanded to bargain. The bargaining session was not scheduled until July 7th. In the mean time, she did not have the latitude, because of the demand to bargain, to talk with anyone about what they were doing or how. She was in a very difficult place, and it was very hard for her because she always has tried to be as transparent as possible. If she could have talked about it, she would have.

The issues raised by the Union were that DVR was going to allow outside contractors to determine eligibility. That practice would be illegal and so her intent was never that, the intent is to have DVR counselors determine eligibility and then refer people to the recovery act contractors.

They were unable put contracts together by July 1st, because the Demand to Bargain Session was not until July 7th, but it looks like the majority of the contracts started July 15th and the rest will be active by the first of August. They will meet locally with staff and contractors to talk about how customers will be successful. Two community based organizations, six Workforce councils and three colleges partnering with DVR, and using 1.9million dollars in federal fiscal funds over the next six months. This will result in more than 200 people becoming employed. They have committed to revisiting the results in the fall to see how well it worked, and how we can do better for the second round. This will include a partner-wide forum, with all the contractors so that they can learn from each other.

Martin McCallum answers, on page three of your handout from this morning, you can find the list of agencies, colleges and councils that are being used. What is the average cost of placement?

Ms. Ruttledge answers that they figure since they are using 9 million dollars and are trying to place 1000 people, they anticipate spending 9,000 per person.

Mr. McCallum points out that the costs of tuition rise, do they anticipate that?

Ms. Ruttledge answers that they anticipate that and expect that people are also plugged into workforce investment resources as well.

Mr. Larson asks how this compares to what is happening now, how much of this is training and how much is placement, and how will it impact VR Counselors, in determining eligibilities. Ms. Ruttledge answers that they are describing it as encouraging the counselor to move along at the speed the customer wants and is ready for. They hope to determine eligibility and place a customer in plan, and then they move along at the speed they are ready to move at. Job development and Job placement are the key services. There can be short term services in the mean time, but it is about making the process move faster, *depending* on the barriers you have to employment. The populations are going to be people who are interested in working full time, and want to be employed in demand occupations.

Mr. Larson asks, can someone be in-plan right now, and move back and forth from recovery act money activities to regular DVR activities? Ms. Ruttledge answers that theoretically, yes. DVR has chosen not to do that early on, because they have higher than usual accountability expectations from the governor and from congress. Trying to figure out how to commingle moneys from general funding and from the recovery act is too difficult. Placement is the most appropriate service that they can provide with the recovery act moneys.

Don Brandon asks, for people who are getting community college services, or technical college services, will they still be eligible for the full battery of DVR services, if they need? And how are we involved as an advisory Council in helping out with that?

Ms. Ruttledge answers that they are making some assumptions in serving these customers, that assumption is that they will not need other VR services, but if it turns out that they do, their plan will then be amended and DVR will then serve them in-house, because eligibility has been determined. They will start to develop a GMAP and federal performance measure tracking.

For the second question, she would like for the Council to look at the data that DVR presents in October, and to see how things are going.

Larson: Do we have a lead staff?

Ms. Ruttledge answers that yes, DVR has an ARRA Czar, and that is Peg Evans-Brown. She reports to Kelly Franklin and they are identifying the team and the tools that the team will be using to get these rehabs happening. She asks Kelly Franklin to talk about the conversations she has been having with staff about how they are going about this business so far.

Ms. Franklin says that she has visited as many offices as she can every six months, and has been asking how do we do outreach to those populations

that have not been served under Order of Selection? How do we get out of the mindset of Order of Selection? How do we be more efficient and effective in promoting and doing outreach to the populations that have not been served? They are obligated to serve a whole new group of people now, any eligibility who walks through the door. The stimulus dollars may really help the agency to come into this new mindset of working outside of Order of Selection. In asking these questions to different staff, they have found that these activities are something that they would do anyway, but now have an extra incentive and opportunity to do. It is anxiety producing, but will also help DVR change their mindset about how they can serve the broadest possible population rather than what the law requires is first on the list to receive services.

Ms. Ruttledge also tells the Council that The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has been interested in how we are utilizing our Recovery Act money. They want to hear success stories. In a conversation with Special Education in RSA, they asked if we would share our progress with the White House. Our strategies are different than other states, and they want to know what we are doing. Many state VR agencies are using the money to patch holes in their budgets, or training, or assistive technology, or case management systems.

Ms. Brouner asks for clarification, if person who needs DVR services in the ARRA, does this mean post employment, or in-plan. Ruttledge answers that the ARRA funds are focusing on people in-plan, not post employment services. The second point of clarification she would like is, what kinds of barriers to employment does DVR anticipate addressing, what populations of people will be served? Will the population served with ARRA funds consist mostly Not Significantly Disabled, (NSD) customers?

Ms. Ruttledge answers that as an example, a person who has received extensive services, has gone through a paid internship, and still struggles to have full time employment because of the nature of his disability. There are probably hundreds of people who still need to figure out how to approach employers, how to sell themselves to employers, people who are underemployed. She also says that she has great ideas and has made this up as she has gone along, but that she does not have all the answers.

Mr. Abe-Gunter points out that as a union guy, having been a shop steward, his first take is that it does seem like they are DVR is outsourcing, taking away Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) jobs, supplanting work that someone else is doing. It is bad timing, it is innovative but could you not purchase more non-perm VRCs?

Ruttledge answers, these dollars are to supplement what DVR does, not supplant. The state has a restriction on how many FTE's DVR is allowed to have. In this effort they have created up to 125 new jobs, while still retaining the VRCs that they currently have and in addition trying to hire more VRCs. If she has the ability to fill any vacancies, she will. DVR has so

many vacancies, that every resource possible is going to that. Also, DVR has already been purchasing VR services for customers from private contractors like Community Rehabilitation Partners (CRPs) for many years. Mr. Abe-Gunter asks, you might want to reassure your current employees through the union that they are not getting rid of anyone because of this, and that it is not about reduced costs of having others doing the job.

Mr. Brandon asks for clarification, if you find someone needing more extensive services or assessments, those people will be rolled back into the VR program. Intensive services are still going to be provided for people who need them. Who will contractors ask for guidance or a consultation, if they do find someone with needs that the contractors are not able to provide?

Ms. Ruttledge answers that there is a part in each contract that identifies a local counselor and a local team that will meet with the contractor for monthly progress reports, and for coaching.

Ms. Franklin also answers that there will also be a Desk Guide, and a state office team who will go out per request to consult on issues.

Mr. Brandon says that it seems that DVR is almost becoming a technical assistance provider for those contractors.

Ms. Ruttledge would describe it more as a team than as technical assistance.

Mr. Huven asks, if a customer who has been working with DVR for a while, say a year, and is thinking of working or is working with a CRP, finds out about these contractors, would they be able to switch what they are doing to go to one of these independent contractors?

Ms. Ruttledge answers that as of now, no. It is one of the things we are working on.

Mr. Huven asks does that eliminate choice for customers?

Mr. McCallum asks, when congress passed this, the rehab moneys, did congress make changes to rehab law before they passed it to make it allowable under the law?

Ms. Ruttledge answers, yes.

McCallum suggests that the Workforce Development Council that is contracted local to Spokane come to our October meeting in Spokane, so that the Council can learn more about what they are doing.

Ms. Ruttledge answers that she would be happy to have them. Also she points out that that particular council has been focusing on green jobs, so they have a good point of view on that aspect too.

10:30 a —10:50 a CAP Report—Jerry Johnsen—

There is a tension that exists in this business. The law has not substantially changed in thirty years, except in small ways to favor the customer. As a culture though, we are more conservative. He gives Ms. Ruttledge credit for pulling this together and all the pieces that are put into play. He has to wear his CAP hat though, and look at the law and see what jumps out. The law is clear that the VR customer has impediments to employment, and ARRA funds are designed to work within the existing law. Are we creating a two tiered system with a front door and a back door, are we shuffling resources? Also, does rehabilitation take place? Job placement is one piece of that. It is clear that customers that go to Worksource to find work are different than VR customers. Reorganization might eliminate VR and make one big employment pool. The argument there is we provide special services which set us apart. He does not want to see DVR to be doing that again. Revisiting and checking in and making sure this works. On one hand people and staff are going to see it making sense, moving people through, getting jobs, statistics going up. But, the program was created to provide services to disabled people, especially the Most Significantly Disabled. If you do not have enough resources then you have to focus on the population that is most significantly disabled.

CAP works on relationship building. The federal law charges them with Dispute Resolution. In Washington State they have been very effective at that because they have access to people, and have discussions, at the time and development of policy but also in daily workings.

What is frustrating lately is that the effective exchange that existed with Area Managers is muted by our ability to communicate and get timely dialogue. At the moment, Area managers are very busy. It is a problem for CAP but it is also a problem for VR Supervisors who are looking for mentoring and coaching. Mr. Johnsen has met with Ms. Ruttledge about this, and has her cell number, so he is assured that he can call with those questions.

When you rise through VR as staff, do you stop needing training? DVR focuses energy a lot on training counselors to understand the law. If we identify a disconnect in law, how do we identify and intervene and have a dialogue about this? Is this a training issue?

The right place, right time philosophy: DVR customers have many challenges and barriers. We are charged with helping customers to identify and plan around the barriers they face to employment. It is possible that sometimes a barrier to employment is identified and the determination is that the person with the barrier is simply not ready to go to work yet. So that's a tension.

Bob Huven says, you know, the new ideas and the ARRA funding and activities are great, from the president downward. As a Rehab Counselor and a Rehab Tech, vocational rehabilitation for him has always been like a moving target. Area managers going back to their local office supervisors for mentoring and coaching, which will benefit the whole unit.

10:50 a—11:00 a B R E A K

11:00 a — 12:00 a State Plan follow up—Tab 6 in the Meeting Mailing

Reviewing State Plan Forum feedback--

Paul Vertrees talks about the State Plan Forums, which happened in May. Jeff Abe-Gunter attended in Spokane; Jerry Johnsen and Joelle Brouner and Jim Larson attended in Seattle; and Jim Larson, Joelle Brouner and Martin McCallum in Tumwater. They had 70-80 participants, from many different stakeholder groups. There was a lot of input and suggestions to sort out which allowed them to develop a draft to submit to RSA. Martin McCallum was impressed by the messages that were brought by stakeholders. As we study the summaries of the forums, He would like to make a motion:

MOTION: Mr. McCallum moves that the Council encourage DVR's leadership team to revisit the three state plan forum summaries on a periodic basis. Mr. Roberts seconds the motion.

Discussion: Mr. Brandon asks, is this customer feedback? Vertrees answers, it was public feedback, there were stakeholders from CRPs, colleges, customers and potential customers. Mr. Brandon asks, how does this relate to how VR works? Mr. Vertrees, the law requires us to garner public input from stakeholders. We also gather input in other ways, data analysis, needs assessments, and then it is submitted to RSA, waiting for approval. Mr. Brandon asks how it will be applied to the state plan. Mr. Vertrees explains that the input gathering and incorporation into the plan has already happened, and has been submitted in State Plan form to RSA for approval, which DVR still awaits. They expect a reply from RSA as to whether that will become the state plan beginning October 1, 2009.

Mr. Larson asks, do we have opposition discussion? Mr. McCallum thinks that there are important messages in the state plan summaries, and since it is information that comes from individual perspectives, just as it influenced DVR to assemble their plan, it can be useful advice from the public for the near term, it has been sent to RSA, it could be a good idea to review the advice of the public.

Mr. Johnsen asks to reiterate the motion, The Motion is that we encourage DVR to review these goals frequently.

Mr. Vertrees adds that DVR is required by law to review these goals annually. In one year they will have to report to RSA on the state plan and how they are addressing their goals and priorities.

Ms. Brouner says that for clarification, the goal for this block of time on our agenda was because now that the state plan is sent to RSA, it is the Council's job to track and follow the implementation of the goals and strategies that DVR has adopted in their state plan. Now that the state plan is developed, if it is a living document tied to the concerns of real people, it should be implemented and consulted on a regular basis. Perhaps Inviting DVR to consider these summaries again with fresh eyes is a good idea, because there was a lot of duplication in the plan about the goals and strategies piece and the innovation and strategy piece.

Mr. Vertrees answers that there was a lot of duplication in the strategies around innovation and the use of Title 1 funds. The Council wrote a letter to DVR, which DVR responded to. Part of the reason why they did not spend a lot of energy on innovation in the State Plan, is because they

are spending a lot of time innovating with the ARRA funds right now. But they are committed to revisiting the strategies next year, to see how things are working and determining if there are new strategies that they have not already utilized that may be helpful.

Mr. Larson says that he hears several different motions going on at the moment. Are we asking, given the spirit of this, how do we track the progress toward the goals? This is different from having DVR revisit.

Mr. Brandon asks for a restatement of the motion.

Mr. McCallum answers, the planning and policy committee will continue their work discovering how the State Plan is implemented, and it is the responsibility of the Council to promote accountability, but this is separate. There is useful information in these meeting summaries. The motion is just to encourage DVR to revisit the comments from the state plan. He thinks there is value in the meeting summaries, and he hopes that the information not be lost.

Mr. Johnsen appreciates what the motion is about, but thinks that voting on encouraging DVR to revisit these summaries isn't really a good use of our time, because DVR will consider it as we do, when they choose, and the Council can revisit it with DVR whenever we choose.

Mr. McCallum accedes that as long as it is a part of the Council's public record that we encourage DVR to keep the stakeholder comments in mind, a motion is unnecessary and so he therefore withdraws the motion.

The motion's second, Mr. Roberts, will withdraw the second as well, if Mr. McCallum wants, but that he also believes that it is important to stay mindful of what the customer and stakeholder feedback is, from all sides. He thinks the reminders are important to have.

Ms. Brouner would like to make a suggestion. She thinks that everyone in the room has faith in DVR and that the state plan is a very small piece of what actually happens in the world. It would be very helpful for the Council if DVR could let the council know at given junctures, what DVR is doing to link the goals and strategies, to a positive impact on customer experience. The reason those comments are useful is that it is a customer perspective.

For the public record: we would like DVR to revisit those comments and keep peoples comments in mind as they do their business.

Reviewing draft State Plan in relation to Council's feedback—

The SRC offered comment on the goals that were laid out in Draft by DVR and sent to RSA. The Planning, Policy and Advocacy committee sent a Memorandum on April 17th offering comment and suggestions on the goals. See tab 6 of meeting mailing. DVR did respond to the memorandum.

Under Tab 7, we find the goals and priorities in the new state plan, which starts October 1st and goes for three years. We need now to discuss what the Planning and Policy committee should do between now and October, to continue to learn from DVR, CAP and stakeholders on how the Division is doing in implementing the goals of the plan. Mr. McCallum asks, are there any comments or discussion on the State Plan.

Mr. McCallum asks if Joelle Brouner has a vision for what is next. It is a three year plan. There will be a chance each year to update the plan. Ms. Brouner suggests rather than a quarterly review of each goal per year, perhaps reflecting on the goals over two years, and then the third year, ramp up for building the new one.

Mr. Larson clarifies that the Council will review the state plan and re-examine the goals every six months. Start discussing how the Council will track DVR's progress toward the implementation of State Plan goals.

Jeffry Abe-Gunter Reports on the Behavioral Healthcare Conference—

Mr. Abe-Gunter says the conference was a bit dry this time, held in Vancouver, Washington. He has been to this conference a few different times. It was about building hope and a path to wellness. His expectation was that there would be a presenter in lecture form. There ended up being nice conversations, not as much presentations as forums, with participation and discussion. There are always people there with mental health concerns, and so he was able to learn from real people, who are peers. Mr. Abe-Gunter enjoyed the first speaker Tonya Cane, about trauma. She opened with a photo of herself as a child, and progressed to a photo of herself in a mug shot. She focused on the stigma associated with psychological disabilities, and the problems associated with that stigma. She talked about the sexual abuse she experienced, and the abuse associated with many people who have psychiatric disabilities. Overcoming her problems came when someone believed in her and understood what happened in her life. Person specific planning and focusing on the whole individual is something that DSHS employees can do to really help people.

Mr. Abe-Gunter also learned about some symptoms of mental health issues, like smoking cigarettes. People with psychological disabilities, statistically smoke about half of the cigarettes consumed in the U.S. Bipolar, schizophrenia and agoraphobia are the highest percentages of people who smoke. People with smoking addiction die an average of 25 years earlier than the general population. Smoking is a stigma, causing a barrier to community integration. And, smoking is linked to a high prevalence of suicide. It may be useful for people to have referrals to smoking cessation programs, if they smoke, so that it does not interfere with the rest of their life, meaning employment and family life.

Clubhouses were also a big thing at the conference. Mr. Abe-Gunter asks Ms. Ruttledge, is DVR still funding clubhouses? Ms. Ruttledge says that they fund Independent Living centers, which support clubhouses. People think that clubhouses are stigmatized, and that the vision is to graduate from clubhouses, so that a person does not just stay and stagnate.

There was a Benefits Planner with a workshop as well. Disclosure was a big issue, to tell or not to tell with mental illness. Should agencies know about your mental illness?

Mr. Abe-Gunter concludes, that he thinks that mental illness is still stigmatized. The systems still fail people with psychological disabilities. The ability to sustain employment is a big issue.

Ms. Carr asked for the source of the statistics Mr. Abe-Gunter presented from the conference, Mr. Abe-Gunter replied that there is some research he can share with Ms. Carr but that he cannot be sure of the sources of the statistics.

Ms. Brouner, having worked with survivors of sexual assault, learned that there was a higher instance of smoking among survivors. Tobacco and coffee have an impact on the efficacy of certain psychiatric medications, and for some people experience unpleasant side effects, some people say that cigarettes dampen those unpleasant side effects. Also people have expressed that smoking involves breathing, and because of that, lessens their anxiety. Also there is a social aspect to smoking.

Mr. Abe-Gunter wanted also to point out that in 2007 people with mental illness had a poverty rate of 31.7%, which can be compared with the 24% of people with disabilities, and 9% of people with no disabilities. People with mental illness have the highest rate of poverty out of any other disability group listed in the American Community Service Database in the 2007 U.S. Census.

- In 2007, 28% of people with mental illness were employed.
- In 2007 36% of people with any disability were employed.
- In 2007, 87% of people without a disability were employed.

12:00 p—1:00 p L U N C H (provided)

The council has a working lunch today, with a half hour of eating and a half hour of eating and meeting.

Martin McCallum – Workforce Board

During lunch, Mr. McCallum gives his Agency Report of the Workforce Board.

Sharey Cleveland – Section 121 Tribal VR

There are 7 nations within Washington State who receive “121 grants”. They operate on a five year budget plan. They are pretty flexible in service delivery, in comparison with State DVR, in that they are actually set to provide culturally relevant services to their customers. They are more flexible in their ability to provide their services. They have been cooperating with the DVR offices in the Colville area. The Colville Reservation is located within three counties, so they are able to work with several different offices. They develop IPEs together and do cost sharing. It has been a good partnership.

Jerry Johnsen asks when their funding cycle is up. They are entering the fifth year of their grant, and Ms. Cleveland is going to be learning how to

write a grant, to re-fund the Colville Confederated Tribe's Vocational Rehabilitation program.

Sandra Carr—State Independent Living Council (SILC)

She was unable to meet with the State Independent Living Council at their last meeting, but she will distribute the minutes from that meeting.

Valerie Arnold—Valerie is the candidate for Council Membership put forward by OSPI for Lou Colwell's vacated position. She will presumably give us a report when she is appointed as a Council Member.

1:00 p —1:30 p

**Perspectives from the field— Michelle Rhuman,
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Kelso**

Ms. Rhuman joins us from the Kelso Office, and many of her colleagues join her from the Vancouver office. She thanks everyone for the invitation to present at this meeting. She would like to share with the Council what drew her to Vocational Rehabilitation and her philosophy to counseling and guidance. She grew up in California with a deaf family member. She trained to be an ASL interpreter. She worked on a bachelor's in Deaf Studies. She went on to a master's program at Western Oregon University.

She job shadowed in the North Seattle office for ten hours. They did not sit still for a moment. She was accepted into the Governor's internship program and did an internship at the Vancouver office. She became a permanent VRC in Vancouver and worked there for three years. She learned about the Kelso office needing a counselor qualified to work with people who are Deaf or hard of hearing. Her caseload in Kelso is varied, and she covers five counties from there. She is the Liaison for the local Worksource in Kelso.

Her personal philosophy is that everyone can work, as long as they have the right support. She likes to start fresh, with a clean slate, with each customer. She does not make decisions for her customers, or have all the answers, but she tries to team up with the customer and decide together what is best for them. She likes to help them learn through experience. She likes to find ways for people to job shadow in order to find out for themselves if they can do the job that they want. She meets each customer once per month, sometimes every two weeks. She works with them on job searches, paperwork, and tries to do that herself, but if she needs help that is when she refers customers to CRPs. She is currently working through the Motivational Interviewing training. She believes she was doing the things in that training before she started the training, but was doing them without realizing it. She believes in the ability to be empowered and to change.

Anecdotal: A couple months ago, she had a customer with the ability to find a job, but he needed counseling, and he was a good fit for on-the-job training. She met with the employer that her customer wanted. This

employer was very happy with the work of the person she placed with him, and he had four more vacant positions to hire for, in addition to her customer. Ms. Rhuman was able to refer four more DVR customers to this employer whom he hired.

Ms. Lang asks what the size of Ms. Rhuman's caseload is. Ms. Rhuman says that it is between 70-80 customers.

Ms. Brouner asks, in the five counties, is it rural, and is the area economically depressed? Ms. Rhuman responds that Kelso is smaller and has less people with education. They want money to provide for their families. People do not want education as much as they want just a job to pay the bills.

A colleague mentions that Michelle Rhuman is also a Benefits Specialist. How does she find that work?

Ms. Rhuman says that she has learned a lot about that, and she will talk with her customers when they have questions about their benefits. She does feel more confident and that she can answer their questions, which also helps to streamline the process, because she does not have to set them up with a benefits planning appointment. This also helps because customers often really fear losing their benefits.

Ms. Carr asks sometimes, people start thinking about getting a job, then when they realize that they may lose their benefits, they stop participating in vocational rehabilitation, because they do not want to lose the benefits.

Ms. Rhuman has found that only one person has declined to continue with the VR process, out of about three hundred people that she has provided services to. Most customers will get past their fear and go for the job, specifically because they will always make more money working than they will with SSI.

Motivational Interviewing... Mr. Larson would like to hear more about it.

Michelle Rhuman explains that it was originally designed for people with substance abuse, but it works for anyone with cognitive disabilities.

Kelly Franklin and Lynnae Ruttledge both reiterate that Motivational Interviewing is evidence based, whereas traditional rehab counseling is not evidenced based, so it is a good tool that is scientifically proven to work to motivate people.

Lynnae Ruttledge asks about Project Search.

Ms. Rhuman was approached by her supervisor in Vancouver, Cindy Williams, to be the Project Search Liaison. She went to Ohio to see where it all started and be trained about it. She worked with High School students,

to support them to do different jobs like clerical jobs, cleaning, cafeteria work, and to achieve experience by working. At least one of the students that she worked with on that project continues to work where they did their Project Search work experience. They are now continuing that work in Kelso and different parts of the state.

Ms. Rutledge says that Project Search focuses on people with the Most Significant Disabilities. They had a video about parents and what their expectations were for their kids. The parents were hugely surprised at what they found their sons and daughters do.

Michelle Rhuman asks the Council if they are all volunteers. Yes, and Ms. Brouner points out that between all the exiting members there are 3800 hours of public service to the State of Washington.

Ms. Brouner asks, can you think of ways that we could share our work with DVR staff?

Many people suggest that email is a good communication tool for letting Counselors know who the WSRC is.

1:30 p —2:15 p

Exiting members panel discussion—facilitated by Joelle Brouner

Ms. Brouner asks that this piece of the meeting is about Institutional Memory. Perhaps there has been something a Council Member has known or felt passionate about. In the meeting preparation packet there is some info about it, and it is an opportunity for the exiting members to let us know for the public record what works or does not work about the Council.

Mr. Murray shares his thoughts: What has serving taught you about VR? A few he reflects on, that access was a significant problem, and has been addressed in Order Of Selection ending, and other positive ways. That VR is flexible but still not enough. It is a big system, and the same message is not expressed the same way across the state. That the VR system is made up of highly trained, caring and hard working people, but that consistency is a challenge. He is impressed by how highly trained they are.

What does he want the SRC to pay attention to? In reflection, he thinks it is important to continue to meet the needs of customers with major mental illness and developmental disabilities. These groups are such a large portion of customers, and need to be paid more attention to, and he would pay attention to them if he were still here. He would also ask people to pay attention to Transition Students. The division of responsibilities for OSPI, DVR, and Parents, whatever we can do to enhance the transition of young people he thinks is important despite that division of responsibility. There are significant problems in preparing students with disabilities for the workforce.

What one thing could you pass on to the governor or the person in charge? He could not pick one. He has found the Council to be very rewarding. He feels like he has helped effect positive change at DVR. He felt that Lynnae Ruttledge and DVR paid attention to pertinent issues as change occurred. He felt that he affected policy nationally when he went to CSAVR. During his tenure, it has not moved along as significantly as he had hoped, but he hopes it will continue. He loved working with different members of the council, and built relationships with colleagues.

Ms. Brouner thanks Bill Murray for his service.

Ms. Butts was unable to read the questions that were posed to the members terming off, but she found her experience so positive. To hear about individual customers of DVR at forums was informative and rewarding. Yesterday at the public forum, about Assessments, and how people often feel like the assessment process is redundant and unnecessary, she almost always filters things through working with her son who has disabilities. She has found that testing does not always identify the problems or good information. Tests often search for the deficits in a person's abilities. That is not necessarily always good information. She also loved being able to take the SRC information back to PAVE and share what was going on in VR statewide. Ms. Butts also agrees with Mental Health being so important, and any other disability that is not a visible disability. There is such a wide variety of people served by DVR, it can be so overwhelming.

Ms. Brouner asks for Carol Maher's perspective. Ms. Maher mentions that when they do assessments on people with mental health issues and those people ask for a reasonable accommodation, it is marked with an asterisk in their case file to indicate that they had an accommodation made. Edmonds is not accessible, and General Administration did not hire anyone to do her job when she left. They will still do building inspections, but not until right when the building is ready to be built.

One committee that we are losing, is the Employment Partnerships, at least in the mean time, while the Council waits for the appointment of new members. She would like people to pay attention to those partnerships. She would like for the Council to know who the Senior Leadership team is at DVR and to keep tabs on them.

Ms. Maher would also like to see the WSRC be a separate entity from DVR because even the appearance of coerciveness is detrimental to effectiveness. She thinks CTED would be a good location for the WSRC.

Ms. Maher also would like to see someone on the SRC from Disabled Student Services at colleges. This brings a college perspective.

Ms. Maher, reflecting on her service, is proud that she learned so much. When they started on the council, the members all looked around at each other with no clue about VR. She finds it amazing that we now have these

sophisticated conversations. It is amazing how far we have come as a group.

2:00 p — 2: 15 p

B R E A K

2:15 p —

Needs assessment—employer survey results summary—presenter to be determined This conversation is tabled until October.

2:15 p — 3:30 p

Committee Reports

Executive Committee—Jim Larson

Susan Dreyfus will be joining us in October in Spokane. We are looking at the Budget Cycle, and we will continue to work with DVR on behalf of customers in keeping the autonomy of DVR.

Customer Satisfaction & Program Evaluation—Jeffrey Abe-Gunter

Quarterly customer forums, and summarizing feedback. Needs assessment is happening. Committee meetings and the needs assessment. Mr. Abe-Gunter would still like to try focusing on Transition kids. Polling teachers might be a good idea.

Employer & Rehabilitation Partnerships—Carol Maher

Carol has no new news.

Member Recruitment & Participation—Bill Murray

Since this committee is put on hold until new members are appointed, there is no new news, except that the committee is on hold.

Planning Policy & Advocacy—Martin McCallum

For the agenda, we may not need a committee report section of the Agenda, unless there is some follow up that we may need to have.

2:25 p – 2: p

Debriefing the Customer Forum

Mr. Murray thinks it was a good forum, but the logistics of the phone could have been less awkward. He refers to the fact that we have a 1-800 call in option for customers who cannot physically attend the meeting, but have input that they would like to present. Mr. Murray suggests perhaps having one member be in charge of the phone customers, greeting them on the line and organizing it so that people can know when to talk, and when not to. Don Brandon would be a good person to do this. He suggests writing down the names of people who are on the phone on a white board, so that the audience knows that there are people there too. He thinks it looks like it can be a wonderful asset in integrating people from rural areas who are unable to attend.

Mr. Johnsen thinks we need to revisit the structure and create rules of engagement, and guidelines, and a time limit. We have to be the eyes for the people on the phone, because they are unaware of what is happening in the room.

Mr. Brandon says that there are lots of ways to make the phone call manageable. Setting time frames for people to sign in on the phone can be useful. When we reach the conclusion of people who sign in or sign up for comments, ending the discussion, or waiting for any others who want to join is helpful. Make sure that whatever phone systems you use has enough microphones around the room so that the people on the phone can hear what is going on around the room.

Ms. Lang asks how many microphones would have been appropriate for this room at the forum yesterday, so that she can get them for the next meeting.

Mr. Brandon suggests four speakers be placed around the room.

Mr. Larson also points out that having a microphone to hand over to people is useful in limiting how long a person can speak. Ms. Maher says it also keeps people from talking when they do *not* have the microphone, which is a positive thing so people do not break in.

Ms. Maher says that Don Brandon has great guidelines about how to do the phone portion of the forum, especially with his technical assistance background. Ms. Maher points out that they use it all the time in the courts and it works well when people understand it.

Ms. Carr thinks it went well for a first time effort. She felt the person on the phone had a good feeling about being heard on the phone. She thinks we should keep it up, and keep working on it until it becomes successful.

Mr. Hernandez liked having the members sit in the audience rather than up front in a half circle, because it makes the meeting feel less formal and less intimidating for the customers.

Ms. Brouner asks, what does think about the number of DVR field staff present? Did it deter customers from talking about what they were concerned about?

Mr. Larson says that he structured things in a way that was empathetic to the Vancouver office staff, because the briefing packet prepared him by pointing out that the Council had had a difficult meeting the last time they were in Vancouver, and that the Vancouver office of late has had a lot of staff turnover and problems. He just wanted to recognize that for them, and only later link it to the service provision.

Ms. Maher finds it pertinent that a woman was so put together organized, and present, yet so emotional. That is going to be an issue with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder in the future with veterans. Psychological counseling is really helpful for people.

Mr. Abe-Gunter thinks it is good for the staff and for the public or customers to hear both sides of stories. He found it very helpful to have the demographic information about the Vancouver area. It may be a good thing for customers to interact on a personal level with staff, to explain both sides.

Mr. Hernandez spoke with the father and son who attended the forum. The father said that he understood that there were budget constraints going on in VR, so he was taking that into consideration in regards to how things were going with his son. But he was more concerned with the funding issues in the Division of Developmental Disabilities. But he was aware of budget constraints though, and Mr. Hernandez thinks that's a good thing.

Ms. Lang asked is it a problem at all, if the Counselor is present, there may be people who do not want to speak in front of them.

Mr. Johnsen thinks that it is an issue, but that it has been talked about in the past. At one forum, they had the VR staff stay outside the room, separate from the forum. He thinks that there should be VR representatives at the forums. The issue of the Counseling staff might be visited, because there will be people who do not want to say these things in front of their counselors. But we do offer other ways for people to provide their comments, for instance, speaking more privately and less formally at the second part of the forum, the mingling portion of the forum.

Mr. Abe-Gunter thought that if Mr. Larson let people know there would be a time after when people could talk more privately, it would be helpful for people who are intimidated about talking about certain things in front of certain people. There was one person last night who was sitting in the back of the room who did not say anything.

Ms. Carr thinks it is also a good idea to have field staff at the forums in case there is a customer who wants information or individual case concerns addressed. But, we can point out to people who attend the forum that it is totally okay for people to pull us aside privately after the formal portion if they want to speak with someone in a less public setting.

Ms. Maher says that there was a man sitting near her that was upset that there were more DVR people at the forum than there were customers. She thinks that it may be useful to introduce ourselves as council members, and then introduce a few key staff, like the supervisor of the local office and Kelly Franklin, but then to just say "and we have a few other DVR people here, in case anyone needs any individual case needs met tonight." If we do not introduce everyone right away, it may make it so that customers do not get overwhelmed by the sheer numbers of DVR staff at the forum.

Mr. Hernandez thinks it is a good thing that the chair, Jim Larson, pointed out at the beginning of the forum that the purpose of the forum is not

necessarily to find solutions to the problems in DVR, but more just to listen about what is going on with customers.

Mr. Brandon thinks that forums can be very informative and have positive effects, and that being public and transparent helps a lot in times of economic stress. He thinks that inviting the Secretary of DSHS, not only for the meeting, but may be useful to the public forum as well.

Ms. Lang asks if the timing of the forum worked for the Council. Many Council members agree that it is easier to have the forum during the day. Ms. Brouner asks about if it works for the field staff. Mr. Hernandez says yeah, it is not as easy for the VR staff. But, it is not easy for Customers in the winter to attend at night when it's cold and dark and the busses are not running. Ms. Brouner points out that we have always checked to make sure that the forum lines up with local bus times, as a matter of public transit karma.

Ms. Carr asked usually there are more Senior Leadership at the meetings.

Ms. Rutledge answers that they are invited but they have scheduling conflicts, so they can't come. But Kelly Franklin came, to represent them.

4:00p

MOTION TO ADJOURN—Motion proposed by Jerry Johnsen, seconded by Mr. Abe-Gunter.