

Vermont Developmental Disabilities Council

Draft Executive Committee Meeting Minutes ~ August 7, 2023

On-line meeting / Approved September 11, 2023

Present:	Anastasia Douglas, David Frye, Michelle John, Steve Kieselstein, Candice Price.
Absent:	Crista Yagjian, Lindsey Owen
VTDDC Staff:	Kirsten Murphy, Chelsea Hayward

1. Welcome and Adopt Minutes:

The meeting began at 10:02 am. Anastasia reminded everyone that there was no July Executive Committee Meeting which is why the minutes were from June’s meeting.

Motion: David made the motion to approve minutes from June 5, 2023. Steve seconded. There was no discussion.
Motion approved: 5-0-0.

2. Report from the Florida Travel Team:

As attendees to the annual National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities conference, Anastasia, David, and Michelle talked about their educational trip in Florida. Amanda had also gone with them.

David felt travel could have been better, but the conference itself was very informative. He was especially impressed by a workshop that showed a video of families and individuals in the community.

Michelle joked about how she “dove into the deep end of the pool” by attending the conference. She filled her notebook with thoughts and ideas from the workshops that she attended. She would like to use her notes as a springboard for future projects with the Council. She especially enjoyed the Language Access presentation, because she had the opportunity to experience “roles reversed.” The workshop was presented in Spanish with English-speakers accessing a live translation through headphones.

David praised Kirsten for speaking up at the conference about the need for more plain language information during a session with a FEMA official. David was part of a team from GMSA worked together to quickly craft and distribute an informational flyer about boiling water after the Vermont floods because the FEMA notice had not been accessible for those with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Kirsten hopes to revisit the “Medicaid claw back” rule for Able accounts in Vermont. This has been done in 20 states and Kirsten spoke with several national leaders who promote policy improvements to ABLE savings programs. The “claw back” rule allows Medicaid to take money from an ABLE savings account after the owner of the account passes away. Kirsten will speak with Vermont’s Treasurer and legislators about partnering together to remove the rule for our State.

Anastasia flew down to Florida a couple of days before the rest of the travel group. She spent an entire day learning about Chair duties, including what needs to be recorded in the minutes and how to conduct votes. She heard about the issues that other states face. Roughly half of the chairs were self-advocates, she reported, but the presentations and materials were not accessible for everyone. At the Chair’s workshop they discussed meeting roles and being strict about repeating motions before a vote. Anastasia is interested in the Council working on emergency preparedness. She looks forward to a follow-up meeting online in September for Chairs.

Anastasia shared a handout prepared by the Texas DD Council called “bill of the week.” She wondered if it’d be possible to create infographics about bills VTDDC had interest in that answered basic questions, like how it affects the DD community if enacted. She also learned about a phone app that connects direct support providers to families and individuals who self-manage their services (New Jersey).

David said that he really enjoyed the Self-Advocates Breakfast meeting at the Conference. He learned about a new toolkit for self-advocates who become Executive Directors of organizations like DD Councils. He learned about it from well-known self-advocate Tia Nelis, Director of Policy and Advocacy at TASH.

Committee members discussed waiting lists and combating the work force shortage. Steve wondered if it’d be possible to reach out to past Council Member,

Mike Gruteke, to discuss how serving the Council prepared him for other roles in the community.

All sessions at the Conference were videotaped. Kirsten will share those resources with the full Council as soon as they are available.

3. Report from the Chair with Anastasia Douglas:

- New Committee: As Chair, Anastasia may appoint working groups to focus on key issues taking place in Vermont and nationally. She proposed assigning four people to research and draft ideas around addressing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). She shared her proposal (attachment A) and encouraged the committee to make suggestions. There were four tasks.

The group would look at VTDDC's diversity policy and compare it to other states policies. VTDDC's current diversity policy is over a decade old and does not mention plain language or accessibility. She asked for a member of the Executive Committee to volunteer to chair the group. David and Candice agreed to co-chair together.

Anastasia suggested including in the policy that we would not give money to businesses that were not handicap accessible.

4. Executive Director's Report with Kirsten Murphy:

- Temporary re-location of the Office. Kirsten explained how VTDDC staff had been unable to return to their offices in Montpelier since the flood. They are going to be temporarily located in the State offices at National Life in Montpelier. The Council would also be reimbursed for rent while their building was repaired.
- Review of VTDDC's Designated State Agency (DSA): The DSA is the agency within State government that hosts the state's DD Council. In Vermont, this has been the Agency of Human Services since the VTDDC was established. VTDDC's memorandum of understanding and its signed assurances ensure that the Designated State Agency may not interfere with the Council's advocacy and systems change work.

Kirsten shared that last spring the Secretary of AHS and the Deputy Secretary each asked Kirsten to a meeting where they expressed their disapproval of two actions by VTDDC: They were concerned that VTDDC had opposed AHS in legislative testimony about the creation of a locked “forensic facility for certain Vermonters with I/DD. In addition, they expressed serious concerns about the fact that VTDDC made a public records request to obtain information that about quality assurance issues in Developmental Disabilities Services.

Kirsten reported the facts surrounding these two meetings to our liaison at the Office of Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (OIDD), seeking guidance as to whether this constituted interference with VTDDC’s advocacy work. Kirsten followed up by meeting with our federal contacts at the NACDD conference.

OIDD is preparing a letter for Vermont expressing concern that interference has taken place. They encouraged Kirsten to review whether the VTDDC is best served AHS as its DSA. Under the DD Act, Councils are required to review this periodically.

Kirsten reported that there are also concerns about AHS taking funding from VTDDC’s grants for “overhead” and about fees for services like Information Technology and Human Resources that used to be provided in-kind.

She said that she will prepare a report for the Executive Committee on this matter by next spring. The full Council could vote at the June meeting whether to continue its relationship with ASH or seek a new host agency.

5. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:50 am.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chelsea Hayward
Coordinator of Communication