

Oklahoma Rehabilitation Council Policy and Legislative (P&L) Committee Meeting Minutes

The Committee met on Thursday, January 21, 2021, at 10:45 am, via Zoom.

Participants: Tim Yeahquo, Jeff Newton, Kevin Nelson, William Ginn, Tonya Garman, Linda Jaco, and Carolina Colclasure.

Discussion Items

Legislative Report – Kevin Nelson

The legislative year is going to be focused on two key issues, COVID and the budget.

The budget hearings have started; DRS had its hearing on Tuesday, January 19. It was short; the legislators only had two general questions.

The Senate budget hearing will be on February 25; it is expected to be a difficult meeting. The governor and the legislature, particularly the governor, believed the budget would be lower than the current fiscal year by about somewhere between \$1 and \$1.2 billion. That was predicated on COVID numbers and economic developments that COVID severely impacted. The Oklahoma economy is opening up, some say a little earlier than it should, but it is opening up. At this time we are probably looking at a deficit somewhere more around \$400 million.

Given what Oklahoma has dealt with regarding budget deficits of the last ten years, it will still be difficult, but it is also potentially doable. The legislature is watching to see what will happen with the COVID release and the additional COVID relief bill President Biden is proposing. The proposal has somewhere around \$200 to \$250 billion for relief to the States. It is hard to say how much of that will be COVID specific and how much is to fill budget holes.

As far as legislation goes, all of the House Bills were drawn last night at midnight. It is expected that there will still be stragglers coming in, but the good news is that there is nothing too concerning, at this point, with the disability community for DRS. There are a few bills that affect the workforce system, but nothing overly concerning.

There are a few bills that need to stay on the radar. DRS is working on two Bills with Representative Kay (HB 1792) and Senator Montgomery (SB 582). These Bills are an attempt to remove 'handicap' from a statute. It does not remove it everywhere; for example, the handicap parking spaces and offices with that

name like the Library for the Blind and Physically Handicapped, DRS would consider changing the name if it passes.

DRS has requested a couple of Bills for this year. Senate Bill 67 is a Deaf Education Bill and the same as last year for the profoundly deaf. The second is Senate Bill 75, and it would exempt certain divisions from security audits because Social Security Administration already does those audits. Both Bills passed the Senate without any opposing votes last year; DRS expects the same outcome for this year.

Lastly, one of the significant issues since November 2020 was the lack of availability of virtual meetings under the Open Meetings Act. A couple of Bills introduced on the Senate side, reintroduce virtual meetings' capacity, and will probably be passed.

People with Disabilities Awareness Day (PWDAD)

PWDAD will be virtual this year and will take place on March 9th. During the Executive Committee Meeting, Director Fruendt shared that DRS is planning to have a Social Media event, and the Communications Unit is in charge of it. She also suggested to the P&L Chair that the Committee could support PWDAD with a training focused on the Do's and Don'ts of Social Media and Advocacy through Social Media.

The Committee decided to reach out to the Employment Committee and include them in the project. The ORC Program Manager (PM) will explain during the Employment Committee Meeting and will report back to the Committee.

2021 DRS Policy changes

The majority of the changes in Chapter 10 had to do with policy footprint reduction and updates to the language to match the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

The DRS Division Administrators and Field Coordinators went back through those changes and approved them.

DRS will have public hearings coming up on February 8 and 9 about the changes.

2020 ORC Legislative Primer

The ORC PM emailed the P&L Committee members a draft of the 2020 Legislative Primer for review before the meeting.

The primer's objective is to share it with other disability-related organizations so that when they advocate at the capital, they would have this information and would be more knowledgeable about DRS services for individuals with

disabilities. This year it will be shared digitally with all the ORC Members and other partnering councils like the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) because of the pandemic.

Transit Plan information/update

The Oklahoma Department of Transportation (ODOT) had an event in December at the Casino in Shawnee, where the plan's final version was presented.

The budget needed for the implementation of the plan is still being worked on; Carol Busch is the representative that brought it forward.

The plan is designed to:

1. Establish standards and protocols for agencies involved in the delivery and funding of public transit services.
2. Set the foundation for policies guiding transit and investments statewide as well as establishing programs and strategies to enhance transit services.
3. Aid the development of a policy that addresses the transit challenges of today while providing a strong and enduring vision for Oklahoma.

The complete copy of the plan and more information can be found on [ODOT's Transit Plan Website](#)

State Legislator Visits

The Committee will share the 2020 Legislative Primer and previous Success Story flyers with State Legislators via email.

Strategic Plan (SP) Review

The Committee reviewed the SP, and objectives 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, and activities 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 4.4, 4.5, 4.6, and 4.7 are ongoing.

Time and location for the next meeting/discussion

ORC Quarterly Meeting – Thursday, February 18 – 9:30 am via Zoom

P&L Committee Meeting – Thursday, March 18 – 10:45 am via Zoom