

**GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR EXCEPTIONAL CITIZENS (GACEC)
GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING (ZOOM MEETING)**

9:00A.M., October 10, 2020

ZOOM MEETING

MINUTES

MEMBERS PRESENT: Sue Campbell, Al Cavalier, Karen Eller, Ann Fisher, Terri Hancharick, Tika Hartsock, Mary Ann Mieczkowski, Beth Mineo, Robert Overmiller, Jennifer Pulcinella, Stephanie Ramirez on behalf of Laura Waterland and Lindsay Williamson.

OTHERS PRESENT: Cindy Brown/Delaware Department of Education (DDOE); Maria Locuniak/DDOE; Jalee Pernol/DDOE; Erik Warner/Capital School District; Lisa Lawson/Brandywine School District; Elyse Baerga/Woodbridge School District, Erika Powell/GACEC applicant and Cory Gilden/GACEC applicant.

STAFF PRESENT: Wendy Strauss/ Executive Director, Kathie Cherry/Office Manager and Lacie Spence/Administrative Coordinator.

MEMBERS ABSENT: Nancy Cordrey, Matt Denn, Bill Doolittle, Thomas Keeton, Trenee Parker, Jill Scannell and Brenn  Shepperson.

Chairperson Ann Fisher called the general membership meeting to order at 9:06am. Ann welcomed everyone to the October general membership meeting portion of the Annual Planning Retreat. Ann reminded members to keep themselves muted when not speaking. A **motion was made and approved** to accept the October agenda. Ann and Wendy reviewed the schedule for the day. Ann then asked for a **motion to approve** the June meeting minutes. The **motion was approved**. A **motion was made and approved** to accept the June, July and August financial reports.

PUBLIC COMMENT

There was no public comment for October.

CHAIR REPORT

Ann reviewed the dates for next year's meetings and asked for a **motion to approve**. The **motion was approved**. No date has been selected for next year's Annual Planning Retreat at this time. We will attempt to hold the 2021 retreat at Dover Downs next year, but the venue is not planning that far in advance. A **motion was made** to approve the comments on the Disabilities Law Program (DLP) 2021 priorities. The **motion was approved**.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Wendy let Council know that she is hoping to have some Special Education Strategic Plan Advisory Council (SESPAC) members come to speak at the November meeting about the

Division of Visually Impaired moving to DOE. Wendy stated that she recently spoke with Lisa Lawson regarding the newspaper article about Brandywine School District building a new pre-school on the Campano grounds. Lisa reviewed the survey results which determined that the pre-school would be for children with special needs and/or low income. There would also be an equal amount of “general population” students who may be required to pay tuition. Wendy would like to have Lisa come present at the November meeting to update us on this project. Wendy let Council know that DOE presenters have been scheduled for this year’s meetings. Wendy asked that when committees meet in their groups today that they think of presenters they would like to hear from this year. Wendy reminded everyone that October is Disability History and Awareness Month (DHAM). She is hoping to get information out to the schools in reference to celebrating and discussing how far we have come and the work that still needs to be done. The poster contest will not be happening this year due to COVID-19. Wendy said that each year someone from Child Care Licensing reaches out to us, so we offered to have them put in their monthly newsletter that the first 50 callers would receive a copy of our book, “All My Different Friends.” This way teachers can share the book with their students virtually. Kathie stated that about 22 books have been given away thus far and the teachers have been extremely appreciative.

Ann then **asked for and received a motion to approve** the 2020-2021 Council Goals. Ann let Council know that tributes from Governor Carney and Lt. Governor Hall-Long will be mailed to members who have left the Council this year. The members receiving these tributes include Dafne Carnright, Cathy Cowin, Emmanuel Jenkins, Danna Levy and Howard Shiber. Long time members will also be receiving plaques to acknowledge and celebrate their years of service. Dafne Carnright and Cathy Cowin each served on the Council for 10 years and Danna Levy was with the GACEC for 24 years. Ann expressed that we are sorry to see them go. Ann then asked members to be sure to complete their retreat evaluation forms.

GUEST SPEAKERS

Guest Speakers included Cindy Brown, Maria Locuniak and Jalee Pernol, all from DDOE. They presented on Early Childhood Inclusion, Parent Survey Results, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) update; Regulations Status and Target Setting for Indicators 5, 6,7,8,15 and 16. The PowerPoint is attached for your reference.

DOE REPORT

Please see the attached PowerPoint for the full DOE report. Maryann asked Council if there are any stakeholders that are not already included that should be added to the Access to the General Education Curriculum (AGEC) group. Robert recommended adding representatives from Positive Outcomes Charter School. Kathie suggested that someone from a special program in each county be added, such as the Charlton School in Kent County or the Consortium in Sussex County. It was also suggested to add representatives from parent councils, alternative school settings and the Network program. Terri added that things to consider for an increase of offerings outside of the regular setting would be to think outside of the box for hybrid models or

distribution of support. Members also discussed potential strategies to improve parent participation in surveys. Ann thanked the DOE for their reports.

DISTRICT PERSONNEL REPORT

There were guest speakers from each county that presented on how COVID-19 has impacted education and what their districts are doing to address these challenges. Elyse Baerga, the Special Education Director of the Woodbridge School District, informed us that there is still a lack of internet access to many children in the district. One of the issues is there are no wi-fi towers in many areas of the district, so even if children obtain a hotspot for internet access, it still may not work. The district is working diligently to ensure that children can get the access that is needed. Elyse informed Council that 85 percent of students are still participating in their supportive services at school and virtually. Woodbridge is currently practicing an alternating week schedule for their hybrid model. She has found that this model will work great in the event that students need to quarantine; they already have a built-in time period in which they would be working remotely. Despite the many barriers, Elyse advised Council that all Woodbridge's Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) are currently up to date.

Erik Warner, 12th grade teacher from the Kent County Community School in the Capital School District, shared his personal experiences and what he has been doing to manage his classroom throughout the many hurdles that have been caused by COVID-19. Erik stated that it is rare that his class attendance is not 100 percent. He and his team make learning fun and engaging which allows students to look forward to going to class and keeps their interest. Erik's class appoints student leaders to be responsible for taking the lead in various aspects of the class. By keeping the structure of the class consistent, students can be better prepared to take on these roles. Fortunately, all of the students in this class have access to internet and computers at home. Erik stated that the school district's policy does not require students to keep their cameras on during Zoom classes, but this is not a point of contention in his class. The students are being taught how to use email and other useful applications on the internet, as well as how to manage a bank account. Students are expected to show photos or videos of non-electronic family fun and vocational skills that they have been doing at home. The class then completes a self-assessment form regarding their performance. Currently, students are getting speech and occupational therapy virtually. Erik stated that parents sometimes have less computer skill than the students themselves, which can be a challenge when students need assistance. Erik and his team allow time each week to work with parents and teach them some of the computer skills that are needed, as well as assisting parents in filling out required paperwork.

Lisa Lawson, Assistant Superintendent from the Brandywine School District, spoke with Council on how her district is working to improve the new normal and learning to adapt and evolve. In Brandywine School District, devices have been purchased for all students and there are very few dead zones that do not have internet. The district has been hand delivering jetpacks and mobile hot spots to students who need them. Lisa shared video clips of the creative ways that administrators and teachers in different schools are using to better connect with families. Lisa stated that the district is encouraging teachers to share new ideas and techniques that have worked well and spread their knowledge by teaching each other. Lisa pointed out that one

positive aspect is that parents have had the opportunity to bond with their children more and be present for activities that they may not have been able to before. Social and emotional needs are areas that Lisa feel need to be improved upon within Brandywine School District. Some students have thrived in the virtual learning environment and Lisa noted that many families may want to continue the virtual learning model even once the pandemic is over. Borderless Classroom is a tool that some teachers are using which allows them to see what other windows students may have open during classes and close those windows if needed. Lisa is anxiously awaiting when students can return to school in person. Council member Tika Hartsock commented that she asked the team at her son's school if a video could be created for her son to prepare him for the return to the classroom and was pleased with what they came up with in a timely fashion. She did note however, that there was not ample notice to prepare, which would be helpful in the future. Lisa agreed that communication is something that the district is working to improve.

Ann thanked our presenters for attending and sharing their perspectives.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

There were no Committee reports for this month.

Ann thanked all members and guests for attending. **A motion was made and approved** to adjourn the meeting at 3:30pm.