

Georgia Council on Developmental Disabilities (GCDD)

July 2024 Council Meeting Minutes

July 11-12, 2024

Thursday, July 11, 2024

Attendees: Tianna Faulkner, Maria Pinkelton, Fanta Mitchell, Lisa Eaves, D’Arcy Robb, Charlie Miller, Harry Nelson, Charlotte Densmore, Felicia Dillon, Tonya Fair, Isabel Knofczynski, Eric Foss, Nandi Isaac, Starr Bruner, Tamika Woods, Jennifer Snyder, Leslie Thornton, Jessica Winowich-Cowell, Dorothy Harris, Sharia Stripling, Ganesh Nayak, Mark Crenshaw, Elana Meyers-Taylor, Lisa Newbern, Melissa Barwick, Jeff Allen, Shaun Owen, Brook Kubic, Sharifa Peart, Wesley Ford, Zolinda Stoneman, Martha Haythorn, Dayna Holbel, Tais Keyser, Evan Nodvin, Yolanda Powell, Devika Rao, Jabari Butler, ASL Interpreter Eunique Banner, Rena Harris, Ann Searcy, Karen Graham, ASL Interpreter Elijah Izaguirre, ASL Interpreter Monique Johnson, Bonnie Seery, Michelle Schwartz

Lisa Newbern begins the meeting. D’Arcy Robb shared that currently there is not an ASL interpreter on the call, but one will be on the call later this morning or by this afternoon. Maria Pinkelton goes over housekeeping rules. Attendees asked to keep their cameras off during the meeting until the ASL interpreter joins the call. Lisa Newbern apologizes about not having the ASL interpreter and reassures that she wants to make sure the call is accessible. Lisa Newbern restarts the meeting and lets attendees know that the pending newly selected council members are on today’s call. Brian Dowd is no longer serving on the council. Taesha Ward is the new replacement for Brian Dowd. Evan Nodvin, Dorothy Harris, and Nandi Isaac will stay on the council one more year. Lisa Newbern reads opening statement. Meeting introductions begin starting with D’Arcy Robb. Introductions have been done. Sharia Stripling will introduce herself when the ASL interpreter joins the call. Lisa Newbern opens the floor for anyone in the group to make an announcement. Tamika Woods shared that she started a new job. Harry Nelson announced his daughter got engaged. Other announcements can be made in the meeting chat.

Lisa Newbern does a quick overview of the meeting's agendas for both days and opens the floor for questions about the meeting agenda. D'Arcy Robb and Lisa Eaves present Council business updates. Corrective action plan, membership, and staffing updates, executive director role, and the Spirit of Kim Award. The final materials were submitted this past may and confirmed plan has been ruled satisfied as of June 2024. Anticipating formal paperwork for new council members any day. Nandi Isaac, Evan Nodvin, Dorothy Harris will serve for another year on the council. Official appointments will come from the Governor and a new member session virtually and an official swearing in. New members will not be able to vote unless they receive their official paperwork beforehand. Lisa Newbern thanks D'Arcy for her leadership in getting the corrective action plan submitted and finalized. ASL Interpreter Eunique Banner is now on the call. Sharia Stripling is now ready to introduce herself to the group. GCDD is having technical issues with screensharing, issues resolved at 11:30 AM. D'Arcy proceeds with her presentation about staffing updates without her slides. The first supervisory change, Harry Nelson, Deputy Director, now supervises Lisa Eaves, Senior Director of Operations and Contracts, Felicia Dillon, Grants Manager, and Tonya Fair, Fiscal Manager. The second supervisory change is that Starr Bruner, Inclusive Post-Secondary Education & Employment Director, is no longer being supervised by D'Arcy Robb and is temporarily being supervised by Harry Nelson and transitioning to supervision from Charlotte Densmore, Public Policy Director. D'Arcy Robb talks about the new IPSE Fellow Jordan Winfrey who works closely with Starr Bruner. The meeting will take a break for 15 minutes and continue at 11:30 am with D'Arcy Robb and Lisa Eaves their presentation. There will be a switch in presentations with Charlotte Densmore and Charlie Miller presenting after D'Arcy Robb and Lisa Eaves' presentation. Harry Nelson will give his presentation after the lunch break.

Break

The meeting continues with D'Arcy Robb speaking on her role as executive director and how council members will be asked to give feedback in a confidential process. Lisa Newbern will get all feedback about D'Arcy Robb's role and performance as GCDD's executive director. The specific areas of D'Arcy's job are: 1. To manage Council,

programming, and administrative functions. 2. To oversee public policy and programs. 3. To manage staff. 4. To focus on training and development. D'Arcy opens the floor for anyone to ask questions about her presentation. Lisa Eaves gives her update on the Spirit of Kim Award, of which an extensive presentation was given at the January 2024 council meeting. Fanta Mitchell, Office Manager and Membership Coordinator has a copy of the presentation if anyone would like to see it. The council has approved the establishment of the Spirit of Kim Award and are moving forward with administering this award's program. Criteria and preliminary eligibility and budget have been discussed. Gabby Melnik has been considered for the award. She knew Kim Hudson very well. GCDD Staff and Council Members are not eligible to be awarded this award. The budget for this award is \$500 to \$750. Kim Hudson worked for GCDD for 19 years. The timeline to open applications for this award begins August 1, 2024. The goal is to present the award at the October council meeting on October 24-25, 2024. Everything is submitted to the executive committee for approval. Kim Hudson was born in October, which Lisa Eaves explains would be a great opportunity to present this award. Lisa opens the floor for questions. Lisa Newbern suggests the application submission timeline will be extended two weeks to allow the executive committee the opportunity to approve and to allow adequate promotions for the award. D'Arcy Robb shares information about the NACDD national conference scheduled for July 23-26, 2024. Also the next council meeting will be in person at the National Center for Civil and Human Rights October 24-25, 2024 and the January 2025 council meeting will be virtual and is scheduled for January 16-17, 2025.

GCDD is going on what D'Arcy Robb calls a budget diet for the next few years. The 2024 budget is over \$31,000 and 2025 over by \$140,000. GCDD has three years to spend all funds received from federal partners. However, GCDD doesn't directly administer funds, this is done by their partner agency, DBHDD. They realized that at the end of the 2022 Fiscal Year they went over their budget and weren't aware. GCDD now has better budget tools with real time access to view the location of funds. This issue should never happen again. Because of that issue GCDD's budget will be over in Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025. D'Arcy Robb opens the floor for questions.

Harry Nelson gives his presentation on GCDD policy and procedures and Bylaws changes. Article 5 section C, the language be updated at the end of the statement. Article 7, Section B, to change the majority of the language to reflect 51%. Article 9, Section B, there will be one chairperson from each standing committee. The final change to Bylaws, “agency representatives cannot be committee chairs,” to “A chair of a standing committee shall not be a federally mandated State agency representative, as defined in Article 5. Mission statement document is not updated and will be updated to match the mission statement on the GCDD website. Also update the council history regarding the developmental disabilities concept. That information has changed. There was a revision regarding membership of who can be a member to reflect plain language for the plain language version of the DD Act. Other policy changes include policy and procedures for conflict of interest for council members, removing advisory members from some of the language in certain policies, and policy and procedures for executive committee members and council members regarding attendance, travel, and elections. Harry Nelson opens the floor for questions. Lisa Newbern allows the floor to share any comments or questions before we break for lunch. D’Arcy Robb explains the Bylaws will be voted on by members and explains the policies and procedures are changed by the executive committee. The group raises hands approving the presentation. Lisa Newbern puts her comments in the chat before the lunch break for the group to discuss after lunch.

LUNCH

Meeting begins. Lisa Newbern shares comments about the policies and bylaws and opens the floor up for discussion about the 51% bylaw update. Harry Nelson addresses Lisa Newbern’s comments and concerns about the 51% regarding time put in for planning meetings and attending meetings or being present at meetings. D’Arcy Robb also addresses Lisa Newbern’s comments and concerns and Lisa Newbern opens the floor for questions and comments from other members. Harry Nelson made another suggestion. D’Arcy Robb’s power went out and she will rejoin the meeting as soon as possible. D’Arcy rejoined 10 minutes later. Lisa Newbern suggested a revised wording be submitted later today to be voted on tomorrow. Lisa Newbern’s other comment wanted to clarify the

language about substitute members, which should only be allowed by state agency members. Harry Nelson addresses Lisa Newbern's concern about substitutes. Lisa Newbern opens the floor regarding comments or questions about the substitute topics. Executive committee will approve the update.

Harry Nelson goes over the annual budget presentation for the upcoming year. The budget begins with GCDD 5-year plan that goals have to support. October 2021 began the 5-year plan of current budget. GCDD gets approximately 2.1 and 2.2 million dollars each year. The federal government gives the agency three years to spend this money, but actually only have two years to spend and a third year to clean up whatever needs to be completed. The budget was discussed in the last two council meetings. Harry Nelson then goes over the current 5 year budget (budget overview), including the \$224,000 deficit, which the agency was able to rectify. Currently there is a possibility of \$31,000, \$142,000 totaling \$173,000 deficit year two and three and use year four funds to cover that. The executive committee is fully aware of this. Harry Nelson goes over the plan to manage and overcome the deficit moving forward. The plan also includes right sizing, cutting budgets for projects where money is not being spent. It has been decided that there will be a 10% deduction for remaining projects on average and based on budget trends, which is explained in the budget sheet shared with the members. None of this affects the state budget. The overall plan, GCDD will size down responsibly and intentionally potentially reduce a deficit of \$173,000. Forty-two thousand is projected to help reduce the deficit to \$131,000 in year four. Harry Nelson opens the floor for discussion about the budget presentation. Lisa Newbern also asks if anyone has any questions. Mark Crenshaw wanted to review the previous slide. Lisa Newbern said D'Arcy Robb and Harry Nelson brought the issue to the executive committee where they have ensured GCDD can get back to its balanced budget. D'Arcy Robb asks the group again if anyone had any questions about the budget presentation. Lisa Newbern said this presentation will be voted on tomorrow. Lisa Newbern closes this discussion.

Charlotte Densmore and Charlie Miller begin the public policy presentation, which will include an update about the Lead Summit this past June. The policy team conducted this

event to try and reduce silos in the industry. Twelve focus groups were invited to attend to discuss topics, including HCBS, transportation, the IDD commission and mental health policy, diversity and disability work. Charlie Miller then gives his presentation about what the policy team's agenda during their summer advocacy as they prepare for the 2025 session. He talks about the public policy survey and watching what is going on currently with aging caregivers and services. Nine council members took the survey. The top three topics: reducing the waitlist, creating IDD innovation commission, ending 14C, and ensuring individuals with IDD/ID had adequate protection from abuse and neglect during services, and last was police training. Charlotte Densmore shares during the presentation about how surveyors had the opportunity to put in the surveys that were top priorities for them which the policy intends to address this year and during session. They divided the public policy agenda into three categories: Lead, partner, and engage. The top three items include increasing funding to reduce the waitlist. Second, they will create an intellectual developmental disability innovation commission. Lastly, ending subminimum wages in Georgia. They are advocating around these items this summer and going into the next session. Charlotte Densmore talks about the partnering policy agenda, ensuring that people with IDD are protected from abuse and neglect. She is working with Rena Harris with the Georgia Advocacy Office. Second they want to improve police training to protect individuals with IDD. Charlie Miller spoke about the ACUPPI committee about how they want more people in general to be engaged in our advocacy. Charlotte Densmore explains that the public policy agenda is determined by those who took the survey. Charlie talks about the ACUPPI committee and how they are looking for new members and what the criteria is to be on that committee. Charlie Miller opens the floor for questions. Lisa Newbern reads a question from the chat and Charlie Miller addresses the question by Martha Haythorn. Lisa Newbern compliments the public policy team's new agenda and makes a pitch to connect with GCDD on the agency's social media. Charlotte Densmore shares that GCDD Advocacy Days during the legislative session is a great way to get involved and engaged in GCDD's advocacy. Charlie Miller shares how people and members can get involved. Wesley Ford has a question about the committees and would like an

overview. D’Arcy Robb posted in the chat who is on each of the committees. Mark Crenshaw talks about the DEI committee (goals, criteria, activities, etc.) hearing from and representing diverse voices across Georgia. All of their efforts are done in alignment with GCDD goals and priorities. Rena Harris talks about the state plan committee which is charged with making sure its activities are aligned with GCDD’s 5-year state plan. Lisa Newbern said that during the Friday meeting members can attend the committees of their choice and the committees will be determined afterwards. Lisa Eaves also shared that the state plan committee is charged with identifying grantees for projects, interviewing, selecting, and reviewing applications. D’Arcy Robb asked that members put in the chat what committee they would like to serve on. She also shared that DBHDD today announced that NOW and COMP rates will be increasing and opened the floor again for anyone who had questions about the public policy presentation.

Lisa Newbern talks about the items on the consent agenda and for the members to be prepared to vote on this tomorrow and asks the group if anyone has any question about any of the items on the consent agenda. The vote happens early in the meeting on Friday. Now D’Arcy Robb does a quick review of the GCDD programmatic dashboard and opens the floor for anyone who may have any questions. D’Arcy Robb shared with the group a private message she received about having a meeting prior to the council meeting to go over meeting items. Lisa Newbern asks the group if they would like to have a premeeting before the council meeting. Several people raised their hands. Pre-meetings were done with the previous executive director and Charlie Miller. D’Arcy Robb ask the group when they are available to attend the pre-meeting. Lisa Newbern shares once the dates are set for the pre-meetings, attendees will have well enough notice to plan to attend. Charlie Miller also offered to host the meetings again or do a second meeting. The project search presentation will be at 3pm with the Uniting for Change presentation at 3:30pm. Lisa Newbern opens the floor for any last-minute questions before the break.

Break

The meeting has started and Bonnie Seery and Jeff Allen proceed with their presentation on Project Search. Bonnie Seery gives a little brief history about Project Search, including Georgia's long history with Project Search. There are 716 sites globally, including 33 sites in Georgia. There are 48 states and 11 countries that are serving 43, 976 individuals in the program. The average hours worked 24.8 per week, with \$11.96 for a wage in Georgia and the average hours worked in Georgia is 28.44. Georgia overall according to the data collected has done exceptionally well regarding the program. The majority of the sites are hospitals. Manufacturing and university sites in Georgia are also a part of the program where individuals are learning skills that are transferrable. There are some government and school sites as well and Project Search plans to get into Hartsfield Jackson Atlanta Airport and plans to be back in Emory Midtown by this fall. Bonnie Seery names other sites including hybrid sites and shared that Project Search is built on interns mastering transferable skills for employment. She also shares a list of Project Search partners, including GCDD and GVRA. Bonnie Seery opens the floor for questions and shared that people can google Project Search for more information. Jeff Allen, Provider and Strategic Relations Administrator for GVRA now gives his presentation. D'Arcy Robb reached out to Jeff Allen this past January to see if GVRA could take over this work. Budgets and models have been considered as well as contractors and vendors to partner with. They are also looking to bring on a full-time Project Search Coordinator. July 2024 funding transition begins. School cohorts begin August 2024. They are looking to develop a 3-year Project Search strategic plan and completes his presentation of the timeline for Project Search activities. He then goes over the adult site funding model, including wages for adult workers and interns. He said GVRA is looking into other partnerships to help with the products, including DBHDD. GVRA has a model for adults and interns to start work. He has seen the growth of Project Search over the years where he has been involved since around 2010. Jeff Allen opens the floor for questions and he and Bonnie Seery address questions. Jeff Allen and Bonnie Seery shared their email addresses in the chat for the group to ask questions and continue the conversation if needed. D'Arcy Robb thanks Jeff Allen and Bonnie Seery and spoke briefly about Dottie Adams.

Michelle Schwartz of Uniting for Change, a grantee of GCDD, begins her presentation about the organization. She did not anticipate her presentation being long so she did not have any slides, but created a document that went to the council members and she talks about the work of Uniting for Change and the Sangha Unity Network her organization. She highlights Dorothy Harris and Nandi Isaac are a part of the leadership collective and Martha Haythorn is a part of Community Strong. Since COVID, Uniting for Change has been meeting via zoom which has been very helpful. The group does a variety of workshops, including voting, HCBS settings rule, and supportive decision making. Events are promoted through social media. Self-advocates throughout out the state are an important part of the group and providers seeing what more is possible through their advocacy. Sangha Unity Network also has received funding from DBHDD. Network areas include Metro Atlanta, South, middle Georgia. Priorities over the past few years have been around transportation and affordable housing. Michelle Schwartz encourages all of the self-advocates on the call to comment about their experiences being a part of Uniting for Change. Their annual reports and their calendar for events and updates are on their website. Uniting for Change is very active in legislation, from writing letters to creating videos helping to support and advocate for the rate increase. She shared that legislatures have been a part of Community Strong. She shared that self-advocates contribute to GCDD's Making a Difference Magazine depending on the topic. D'Arcy Robb shared that Uniting for Change's work is a part of GCDD's 5-year plan and a big part of GCDD's work. Lisa Newbern opens the floor for any questions and comments. Michelle Schwartz shares that she is grateful for the opportunity to continue this work and shares that Dorothy Harris leads a lot of their workshops. Lisa Newbern opens the floor for any questions before ending today's meeting. Lisa Newbern gives reminders about tomorrow's meeting. Nandi Isaac motions to end today's meeting. Dorothy Harris seconds the motion to end today's meeting.

Friday, July 12, 2024

Attendees: Tianna Faulkner, Maria Pinkelton, Fanta Mitchell, Lisa Eaves, D'Arcy Robb, Charlie Miller, Harry Nelson, Charlotte Densmore, Felicia Dillon, Tonya Fair, Isabel Knofczynski, Eric Foss, ASL Interpreter Laura Clark, Taesha Ward, Nandi Isaac, Tamika Woods, Jennifer Snyder, Leslie Thornton, Jessica Winowich-Cowell, Sharia Stripling, Ganesh Nayak, Mark Crenshaw, Elana Meyers-Taylor, Lisa Newbern, Melissa Barwick, Jeff Allen, Shaun Owen, Brook Kubic, Sharifa Peart, Zolinda Stoneman, Dayna Holbel, Tais Keyser, Evan Nodvin, Yolanda Powell, Jabari Butler, Rena Harris, Karen Graham, ASL Interpreter Elijah Izaguirre, Eric Naindoubu, Kim Shoaf, Brooke Baumgardner, John Wight, Wesley Ford

Lisa Newbern begins the meeting by going over the day's meeting agenda and asks if anyone has any questions. Fanta Mitchell gives a presentation on the council election prep and an overview of the roles, responsibilities, and criteria of council members, including the council chair, vice chair, and the executive committee. She also gives a review of the council election process. She asks for current members to talk about their experiences serving on the council and executive committee. Current members talk about their experiences serving on the council and executive committee. Fanta Mitchell asks if anyone has any questions and hands the meeting back over to Lisa Newbern.

Now is the time in the meeting to vote and Lisa Newbern goes over the items to be voted on, including the April meeting minutes, quarterly financial report, bylaws changes, public policy agenda, the programmatic dashboard, and the budget update presented yesterday by Harry Nelson. Lisa Newbern shares that all of the documents are presented as one. People can vote for, against, or abstain from the vote. The vote now begins for official council members. Nandi Isaac makes a motion to approve the consent agenda. Evan Nodvin gives a second motion to approve the consent agenda. The vote proceeds among the current council members. The consent agenda has passed with 11 "yes" votes.

State Agency Updates:

State agency updates begin with Shaun Owens, Superintendent of Federal Programs for the Department of Education. All their allocations are going through and will go to the board next week by July 17th. Once they are approved by the board, the districts will be able to access them for additional funding to sort out for students. There are two funding streams currently that they will approve for special education. A bulk of the funding will go to students up to age 22 with disabilities, another amount to preschoolers. The large funding came from the US Department of Education through Congress. The Department of Education had two-day trainings for new leaders, where there are up to three-year cohorts to support them, reducing the turnover rate in education leadership. These cohorts are designed to focus on new leaders in the field of special education. There has been a high turnover rate in past years regarding special education leadership roles. They just wrapped up the federal programs conference. Elana Meyers Taylor and Eric Naindoubu both had questions that were addressed.

Melissa Barwick is the Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Finance with the Department of Human Services which is comprised of several divisions that include the office of child welfare and child protective services, foster care and child abuse, neglected prevention, the office of family independence, which does eligibility, determinations for Medicaid, food stamps or snap, the division of family and children services and the division of aging services and they administer child support services and refugee assistive services. She works with the department of early childcare and learning for childcare subsidies eligibility, and with Department of Health for WIC benefits and also cash assistance to the temporary assistance for needy families program. They also have the division of aging services, which includes both kind of administration of Medicaid, what they call non-Medicaid waiver services, and also older Americans Act services which are available to individuals. They have been reviewing everyone on Medicaid and the redeterminations that ended this past April. There are administrative processes going through the end of the calendar year. They will kick off soon finalizing the procurement process, diversify resources for determining for permanent disability. In the budget this year, general assembly appropriated additional dollars for the Georgia Memory Net, where they are partnering with Emory University and so

they are now increasing those services and working to evaluate and detect scientific advances in dementia care. With early detections in the scientific advances and Alzheimer's and dementia care they are hoping that will have a really positive effect on families and individuals across the State of Georgia. Director Boatwright, who knows D'Arcy Robb, was at a training last week where they had a panel and a discussion on the issue of aging caregivers specifically for individuals with dementia and individuals with down syndrome, who are outliving their caregivers, or their caregivers aren't able to care for them as they get older or be able to support needs in that way. Director Boatwright is really interested in connecting. Tianna Faulkner with GCDD was able to join Melissa Barwick earlier this month for a meeting with the Atlanta Regional Commission, where they kind of walked them through the different assistive technology options available at their senior center. DHS secured additional pay raises for case workers and child welfare services. Melissa opens the floor for questions.

Mark Crenshaw, Assistant Director for Center for Leadership and Disability at Georgia State University and over the LEND Program. Erin Vinoski Thomas is the new Executive Director for CLD. Administration on Community Living renewed UCED funding for another five years which was announced earlier this week. Thanks to D'Arcy Robb and Rena Harris for supporting documentation that helped get it approved. Getting ready for the fall to welcome back students for the IDEAL program which has enrolled 26 students, the highest number of students in the program so far. They had 60 applicants. They will begin with its 14th cohort in the LEND program, disability family members, advocates, and graduate students. Two pediatric psychologists from the Morehouse School of Medicine will be participating in the LEND program. Lisa Newbern opens the floor for any questions for Mark Crenshaw.

Zolinda Stoneman of IHDD at the University of Georgia. Fall semester is coming up and there is a lot of excitement in their planning. Within the DD Act group, the 2 UCEDDS, the DD Council, and the Georgia Advocacy Office. The Georgia Disability History Alliance has grown into a large partnership, creating an archive of incredible work of advocates of people with disabilities in Georgia. They have a great relationship with the Russell Library at

the University of Georgia who is holding documents from throughout the state of Georgia. She speaks about the symposium, scheduled for October 1, 2024, at the Russell Library which will have the keynote speaker Charlotte McClain. The event this year will be hybrid. Home Grown and World Class and Georgia's Contributions to the Movement is the event title. IHDD has a grant with CLD that focuses on students with disabilities that have fully matriculated at the university into employment or graduate school. They partnered with the Emory Autism Center and have worked with a statewide partnership for the last four years. It has been evaluated by students. IHDD continues to be highly involved in public policy on 14c initiatives. Zolinda Stoneman and Lisa Newbern opens the floor for questions.

Rena Harris gives the update from the Georgia Advocacy Office. The state is starting transitions to the community from facilities again, which paused during COVID. Over 80 people still live at Gracewood, a public intermediate care facility. There are also over 100 people at a private facility, Parkwood intermediate care facility in Valdosta. There are 18 people at the Georgia Regional Hospital in Atlanta at Georgia Regional Hospital. GAO is hosting a monthly supported decision making session and encouraging people to attend. A flyer was sent to Fanta Mitchell to share with DD Council networks. GAO is working with Uniting for Change on a series of voting workshops.

Sharifa Peart, Children's Medical Services Director with the Department of Public Health. They are conducting a needs assessment and collaborating with Emory University regarding the surveys. Promotional materials will be shared with their partners, including attendees on this call. Four components in needs assessment will determine what really matters to Georgia families, including programs and services, and where the priorities should be. Partnering with partners, families, and youth individuals. Her department really wants to include youth and families in their planning to better serve the population. A work group has been established across the state. It is a seven-week program with various projects. This year they will be helping with public service announcements, including announcement on social media and working with their communications team to see and evaluate results of their social media campaign. They want to continue this campaign to better connect with their initiatives impacting families and youth. Engaging with youth, they

are starting a youth advisory council this fall. Their public health nurses and case workers see families on a day-to-day basis. Lisa Newbern opens the floor if anyone has questions.

Taasha Ward, the new DCH representative appointed this week does not have an update today but will give an update at the next meeting. Brian Dowd is the former representative.

D'Arcy Robb addresses Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) for state of Georgia employees. This was the third year that the State of Georgia provided COLAs for all state employees. It is a common belief that all state employees receive them but that isn't true, only employees who are paid with state funds receive those approved COLAs. Most of GCDD staff are paid federal dollars and do not qualify for the COLA. However, for the last 2 COLAs provided in 2022 and 2023, GCDD was able to provide them to staff using federal funds with Council approval in the same amount as other state employees. Last summer D'Arcy Robb went to a presentation by DOAS, the Department of Administrative Services, where she learned that all GCDD staff is paid above median salary for all state employees, which was around \$50,000. Only GCDD employees whose work is covered by a percentage of state dollars will get that percentage of the COLA, but the rest of the GCDD staff will not. At the end of 2023, however, all GCDD staff did receive a bonus along with all other state employees. D'Arcy Robb has been in conversation with the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget (OPB) for ways that GCDD in the future can receive the COLA along with other state employees. There have been regular conversations with staff regarding this situation. D'Arcy Robb didn't recommend COLAs this year because she didn't see a fiscally responsible way to do so because of the federal budget situation. This isn't the happiest update however, along with staff being paid above the median, D'Arcy Robb works to provide staff with other non-monetary benefits such as hybrid work and flexible work schedules. D'Arcy Robb opens the floor for questions.

This is the time of the meeting to go into committees. The meeting is back in session. The state plan committee gives first report. Rena Harris said the Unlock grant is going from Unlock to Stronger Together. They need more representatives from self-advocates and family members. Appointed council members will evaluate and be involved in the awarding

of this grant in the next phase. Two applicants are being considered at this point. There are serious time constraints and tight turnaround on this grant and they need volunteers to be a part of the evaluation process. Maria Pinkelton had a question for Rena Harris about the grant. D'Arcy Robb provides a suggestion to Rena Harris for those who may be interested in the evaluation process. The subcommittee wants to go with one applicant over the other versus having a second-round interviews. Lisa Eaves provides clarification and Rena Harris asks the group who would like to participate in the evaluation process for Stronger Together. Potentially a three-year grant. Wesley Ford and Tais Keyser, Leslie Thornton, Tamika Wood, Brook Kubik, Ganesh Nayak, Rena Harris, and current committee members Lisa Newbern, Nandi Isaac, Evan Nodvin volunteer to assist with evaluations. GCDD staff will line up the meetings. Lisa Eaves offers to provide orientation for the evaluation process. D'Arcy Robb asks Lisa Eaves and Harry Nelson to coordinate the meetings as soon as possible.

The ACUPPI/Public Policy gives an update. Charlotte Densmore said the committee spoke about the awards they would like to give to legislators, committee members, and self-advocates. She also mentioned that they talked about the framing of the committee that they have for new members. Zolinda Stoneman brought up the Chevron case that Charlotte Densmore will bring up at the NACDD conference.

Mark Crenshaw gives an update on the DEI committee, thanking GCDD staff and council members for their contributions to their conversation. Committee members include Maria Pinkelton, Fanta Mitchell, Brooke Baumgardner and Leslie Thornton. Mark Crenshaw said they spoke about how meetings in general can be more accessible and make the content more accessible. They did a preview about the October meeting which will take place at the National Center for Center and Civil Human Rights in downtown Atlanta.

Now is the time in the meeting for public comment. Maria Pinkelton said no one signed up to make a statement. Lisa Newbern asks if anyone on the call wants to make public comment. She gave criteria for the public comment and let the group know that is no response to the current comments and that there will be no back and forth conversation.

The executive committee and staff will follow up at another time to address the comment. Harry Nelson asks if a brief meeting can be held directly after the meeting to discuss the HCBS grant. Lisa Newbern suggested he put his request in the chat.

Now is the time in the meeting to do shoutouts. Shoutouts have ended and so has public comment. Lisa Newbern asks someone to motion to end meeting. Evan Nodvin motions to end the meeting and Elana Meyers Taylor seconds the motion to end the meeting. The group raises hand to end meeting, no one opposed or abstained from voting. The meeting has ended.

October 24-25, 2025 is the date of the next council meeting.

HCBS participants to meet directly after council meeting.