

**(FULL) Vermont State Rehabilitation Council (VT SRC) held on Thursday, February 7, 2019 held from 12:30 pm to 3:30 pm**

**LOCATION: State Office Complex, HC 2 South 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT Conference Room ASH.**

Meeting called by:

Brian Smith, Co-Chair, at 12:30 pm.

Members Present:

Max Barrows, Courtney Blasius, Jessica Brennan (VR), Sherrie Brunelle, Maria Burt (VR), Diane Dalmasse (VR), Martha Frank, Marlana Hughes, Robin Ingenthron, Christopher Kane, Sam Liss, Rose Lucenti, Bill Meirs, Brian Smith, Olivia Smith-Hammond, Deb Tucker Boyce (via conference).

Members Absent:

Nick Caputo, Cari Kelley, Sarah Launderville, Calla Papademas, Michelle Paya.

SRC Liaison:

James Smith, DVR Budget and Policy Manager.

SRC Coordinator:

Debra Kobus.

Interpreters:

n/a

Speakers/Presenters:

Rocko Gieselman, David Mann (via conference call).

Guests:

Nancy Dwyer (VR RM), Lee Reilly (Max Barrows' assistant), Bill Sugarman (VR RM).

1. Introductions (Brian Smith):

Discussion:

Members and guests present went around the room and introduced

themselves!

Conclusions:

Thanks everyone!

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

## 2. Approval of Agenda (Brian Smith):

Discussion:

Brian asked for any proposed additions or changes to the agenda. There were none. Sherrie moved to accept the agenda and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved - Vote unanimous 13-0-0.

Conclusions:

Today's agenda approved.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

## 3. Open for Public Comment (Brian Smith):

Discussion:

There was no one from public in attendance.

Conclusions:

None.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

## 4. Approval of Minutes – December 6, 2018 SRC Meeting (Brian Smith):

Discussion:

Brian asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the December 6, 2018 Full SRC Minutes. There were none. Sam moved to approve the minutes and it was seconded. No discussion. All approved Vote unanimous 13-0-0.

Conclusions:

December 6, 2018 Full SRC Minutes were approved.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

Upload approved minutes and report to SRC website, Debra Kobus,  
2/12/19.

5. Consent Agenda – Approved Minutes (Brian Smith):

Discussion:

Brian asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the following consent agenda items:

- AOE Committee – November 1, 2018
- Performance Review Committee – December 6, 2018
- Policy & Procedures Committee – November 1, 2018
- Steering Committee – November 1, 2018
- Coordinator’s Report – February 7, 2019

There were none. Sherrie moved to approve, and it was seconded. No further discussion. Vote unanimous 13-0-0.

Conclusions:

Consent agenda items approved.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

Upload approved minutes to SRC website, Debra Kobus, 2/12/19.

6. Order of Selection (James Smith):

Discussion:

No changes are requested at this time.

Conclusion:

n/a.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

7. Presentation on Gender Identity and How It Can Impact Employment (Rocko Gieselman):

Discussion:

Rocko Gieselman presented on Gender Identity and How It Can Impact

Employment. The presentation itself is on Prezi which is a web-based platform. Here is the link:

[http://prezi.com/so1h\\_r66chx8/?utm\\_campaign=share&utm\\_medium=copy](http://prezi.com/so1h_r66chx8/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy)

Rocko also distributed the following:

- [Do Don't-Handout](#)
- [Gender Vocab for SRC](#)
- [LGBTQIA Resources List](#)
- [Outright One-Sheet](#)
- [Outright Rack Card](#)
- [pronouns](#)

The presentation included the following:

- Disclosure
- Subtle signs of allyship
- Describe your gender on a post it note
- Self-advocacy
- Intersectionality
- We won't be sharing, this just for you
- Best Practice
- Families
- Resources
- AWARE
- Mistakes
- Supporting Trans Consumers
- Employers
- Fluidity
- Example: I am a cisgender man and I enjoy feeling feminine when I wear floral prints.
- We all have gender!
- Confidentiality
- How do we capture gender demographics?

Question: How do you handle a situation where someone means well but doesn't know how to navigate a situation?

Answer: Coming at it with a kind and understanding approach helps.

People understand mistakes happen and for the folks that do get offended, honor that as well as it can really hurt constantly having to explain to everyone.

Related to employment, going to an interview for some trans folks and buying a whole new wardrobe is expensive. Trans folks are marginalized in a lot of ways, housing, employment, etc. In addition, some of the clothes that they do have an option to purchase do not fit right. In addition, it is tough for employers to manage the pronouns as it is new territory for them.

Related to discrimination, it isn't always obvious. It is not legal to discriminate gender presentation in Vermont. Helping people through unstable housing situations is important for us to consider as their gender may be a factor and we should assist.

Question: People come out at different times of their lives. We ask this information only when they first enter our system. How do we handle this?

Answer: When you notice subtle changes such as their hair cut changes, their clothing changes, to ask, "What kind of pronouns are you using?" and inviting space them to self-identify.

Being community savvy is important as it means to have a pulse on what the local labor market is.

A story was shared about a granddaughter that decided she should be male and wanted to be referred to as Andy. Andy was very offended when the pronoun her was used. Andy's license now says male and the photo shows a full beard. Rocko said that the important thing when someone is coming out is to express love and support.

Transition doesn't necessarily mean going through some medical process. It could mean coming out to yourself, a name change, coming out to family and friends. It is good for all of us to know that many people feel they can ask them what procedures a person has had done and trans people are very offended by this as this is very personal. Employers should be aware that if someone is going through a medical procedure, more time off may be needed.

Activity: Everyone should write one sentence about their gender. Something that you love about your gender. A gender memory.

Question: Is it okay to interject humor?

Answer: Related to comfortability of humor depends on what someone has shared so far. Listen to the humor of the person and proceed with caution.

Question: If someone shares with you that they have transitioned, is congratulating them okay?

Answer: Congratulations certainly can be in order depending upon what they have shared with you.

Not everyone is out or wants to be out.

Conclusion:

Thank you Rocko for the very informative presentation!

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

8. Committee Chair Updates (Sam Liss, Sherry Brunelle, Marlana Hughes):

Discussion:

**Advocacy, Outreach and Education Committee:**

Sam Liss provided the update for the AOE Committee meeting.

The Card Room Event is on March 14, 2019. The theme will be Career Pathways and will be attended by some AOE committee members, VR staff, and three members of the Youth Panel that Martha will be bringing. In addition, people will also mingle in the cafeteria and actively hand out packets. It might also be a good time to do testimony.

Legislation: Short term reauthorization of the Money Follows the Person legislation was funded through the end of March. We know that a long-term reauthorization bill is going to be introduced most likely by the chief sponsor in the Senate, Senator Portman. Senator Bob Casey appended two work incentive bills to the long-term reauthorization of the Money Follow the Person bill which would eliminate work dis-incentives. Senator Casey has already reintroduced the legislation.

Congressman Bobby Scott (VA-03), chairman of the Committee on Education and Labor, Senator Bob Casey (D-PA), and Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (WA-05) introduced the Transformation to Competitive Employment Act, which provides states, service providers, sub-minimum wage certificate holders, and other agencies with the resources to help workers with disabilities transition into competitive, integrated employment. The Transformation to Competitive Employment Act is designed to strengthen

and enhance the disability employment service delivery systems throughout states while sub-minimum wages, which are currently allowed under Section 14(c) of the Fair Labor Standards Act, are phased out over a six-year period. Vermont does not have any sheltered workshops.

ABLE Age Adjustment Act amends the Internal Revenue Code, with respect to qualified ABLE programs, to increase the age threshold for eligibility for such programs from 26 to 46. (Tax-favored ABLE [Achieving a Better Life Experience]). The Able Adjustment Act will be introduced by Senator Casey next week.

On the State level, advocates are making a push this year to unfreeze general funded Attendant Services Program (ASP) (AKA PDAC – personally-directed attendant care) to allow more qualified people to apply and receive services. People are being funneled into the Medicaid-funded Attendant Services Program. There is no income or asset limit to it and compromise will be needed. Retired Representative Bill Botzow said advocates should formulate something rather than the legislators.

For everyone's awareness, February 27, 2019 is Disability Awareness Day. It has an inclusive theme, there will be testimony, an announcement in house, and a presentation. In the morning the Governor's Council for People with Disabilities (GCPD) will be holding a workshop at Capitol Plaza which will also consist of the awarding of Spirit of the ADA Awards to employers who have been cited for hiring people with disabilities. The GCPD will also be entertained by the Governor. Representative Michael Marcotte, Chair of House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development has graciously agreed to read award winner names.

Disability Transportation Summit brings together many disability groups, provider groups, and consumer groups to hold a transportation summit. We don't know when exactly this will be held but most likely late fall at the Double Tree/Hilton. It has morphed into more than just transportation. VTrans has offered to sponsor at the least the morning. We are thinking about a luncheon and the afternoon would be a broader presentation with a key note speaker with hopefully Connecticut State Senator Ted Kennedy Jr. The next meeting will be with relevant VR staff.

Diane said December 2 has been reserved at the DoubleTree and VTrans needs official approval for sponsorship. If they cannot, we can still proceed. We have reached out to the Governor's Office and would like his support and attendance at events. If we get a go ahead, we will start talking with Senator Leahy's office to assist us in reaching out to Representative Ted Kennedy, Jr.

**Policy and Procedures Committee:**

Sherrie Brunelle provided the update for the P & P Committee.

As chair of the committee, Sherrie appreciates the individuals who come to the meeting and feels the committee would benefit greatly if some additional SRC members would choose to participate in this very active committee. Such participation results in the development of positive employment outcomes of people with disabilities.

Sherrie reported that the committee has reviewed, developed, or revised lots of policies and procedures over the past two years that she has been on the committee.

Sherrie met with the Senior Counselors to get their input on a handout about the Rights and Responsibilities for Consumers.

There was a CAP concern about how cases were being closed so we have been working on creating better guidance on closing cases. Part of that will be creating some form letters for Aware so when these notices go out counselors are not creating letters from scratch.

In response to requests from the counselors, we are changing short term training lengths removing the six months limitation.

We also started some discussions around transportation. James is working on a draft for our next meeting in terms of how we might want to deal with transportation. There are a lot of vague provisions in the chapter. The offices are constantly addressing this issue and we will flesh it out in detail when we get to discussing it. The priority is to have clear and consistent processes in order to make a decision.

There was a committee vote via email on Chapter 209: Casework Practices Under WIOA, where most voting members approved the proposed changes. This chapter then went out for public comment. James reported that public comments were received and we will discuss at the next meeting.

We have invited Rocko Gieselman, VR counselor, to come in and talk to the committee about policies related to gender identity,

We will be looking at Case Closures and will start a periodic review of all the chapters. Debra provided dates when each policy was last updated and we created a time line for when we will address them in the committee.

**Performance Review Committee:**

Marlena provided the update for the PR Committee:

We discussed Voc Rehab's brand-new Case Review Process ranging from the micro to the macro. It is working very well. At the last meeting we

looked at and provided suggestions on the VocRehab Consumer Satisfaction Survey being performed by the Market Decisions Research. In addition, James provided a presentation on the Impact of WIOA and the Loss of Re-allotment on DVR Services (which will be brought to the Full SRC later).

Conclusions:

Thanks everyone for the updates!

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

#### 9. Director's Report (Diane Dalmasse):

Discussion:

Budget: We are on track and looking good relative to our revenue and expenditures. SSA shutdown ticket payments for a few months but have reopened and the payments are flowing in.

Ticket Revenue Enhancement Plan: James has organized a meeting for a team of staff to come together in early March to develop a comprehensive plan to increase our ticket revenue. We have added a benefits counselor in Brattleboro, met with a marketing professional and looked at our ticket data over the last 10 plus years. We believe we can significantly increase our revenue. Ticket revenue has very few strings attached. We must spend it on rehabilitation activities.

Development Team: This team continues to meet and are exploring several opportunities for funding. We recently submitted a proposal that went to Senator Leahy. It was competitive and we ended up in the top ten that went to the Senator from the Governor's Office. This would provide \$1.8 million dollars to jumpstart our plan to increase ticket revenue. Stay tuned.

Governor's Summit: We are working in partnership with the SRC AOE committee to plan and host a Governor's Summit on the Employment of People with Disabilities in early December. We hope to have a morning meeting by invitation to focus on transportation and a luncheon-open to the public with an emphasis on inviting employers. We have reached out to the Governor's Office for his support. After we hopefully have Governor Scott's support, we will reach out to Ted Kennedy Jr. to see if he would be willing to keynote the lunch. It will be a lot of work but worthwhile.

Careers Initiative: Our CI keeps rolling along. We will be rolling out the first piece of the dashboard next month. We have created a list of assessments,

are training counselors and ECs on them and will have training on the ethics of assessment next month. James has been busily writing policy to support this work. District Projects are well underway. We have an all staff Skype meeting scheduled for the end of March to check in on how the paradigm shift is going.

**Case Review:** We have finished the first round of case reviews. Amanda Kohle is leading this work. We spent the morning at our Expanded Management Team meeting breaking into small groups and reviewing a case and then discussing the findings. We are striving to reach consistency on case practice. Each district will go through a similar process. I would suggest inviting Amanda to come to an SRC meeting to provide an overview of the process and our results to date.

**Youth Advisory Council:** The YAC will have its second meeting next week. A few members will join the SRC for the card room event at the Statehouse in March. There will hopefully be a tour of the Statehouse and perhaps a meet and greet with Governor Scott. We have booked a date in May at VTC for a Youth Summit and Tara is working hard to engage other youth groups in participating.

**Linking Learning to Careers:** A major event was held at Lake Morey to celebrate and end enrollment and focus on the provision of enhanced services. We reached our target of 802 youth enrolled in LLC-400 in the treatment and 400 in the control group. All VR and VABIR staff are excited to begin services in earnest with a heavy focus on summer activities.

**RSA:** We will not have an RSA Monitoring Review this year.

**VR Senior Management Team:** We meet quarterly for a day to get out of the "whirlwind" of our day to day work and focus on our Wildly Important Goals (WIGs). We spent the day developing a grid of all the projects going on in the division and ended up with over 30 projects on the grid. This will be a good tool to manage progress in the coming year. I will bring a copy to pass around.

**VT Legislature:** Workforce issues have been front and center in the statehouse already in the session. Hugh Bradshaw has been testifying on CWS and business outreach and being very well received. There was acknowledgement that CWS is the "gold standard" in business outreach in the state.

**Opioid Recovery and Employment:** The US Congress has made a substantial investment in opioid treatment and recovery services. Employment is key to recovery. We are in active discussions with ADAP on the importance of

employment and hoping to expand VR services to Vermonters in recovery.

Conclusions:

Thank you, Diane, for the update.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

A presentation on CWS would be helpful to the Full SRC – put in Steering Committee Parking Lot, Debra Kobus, 2/12/19.

10. VR Regional Managers Update (Nancy Dwyer and Bill Sugarman):

Discussion:

**Nancy Dwyer, Regional Manager for Brattleboro and Springfield District Office provided the following update:**

We have been very busy in the region with hiring. A position in Brattleboro has been filled. We also have been working hard to establish a relationship with the local hospital and have placed job coach within the hospital to assist. A benefits counselor has been hired and will begin on February 25. The decision to hire this person was unanimous.

A VocRehab Questionnaire was developed that can be used in a variety of ways to help determine the steps needed to become job ready. We are continually coming up with new ideas as to how this questionnaire can be used.

In Springfield, we are using an initial assessment in our orientation. We are beginning to gather some anecdotal evidence on how that is working and are hoping to speed the time up it takes to become engaged in the process.

**Bill Sugarman, Regional Manager for Morrisville and Barre District Offices provided the following update:**

Like Nancy's report, Careers Initiatives has been on the forefront of our work. In Barre, we have been trying to get to know the career clusters better by using our progressive education inventory as are every other district. It truly is not one of those documents that go on the shelf and people are adding to it all the time.

In Morrisville, everyone wanted to receive some training around career counseling. We ended up working with CCV in developing four, four-hour sessions that we will all participate in. We are spending a lot of time on careers assessment. We have a careers assessment specialist. We found out that we didn't use Careers Assessment in a lot of situations, so we are working on that. One of the pieces not to be forgotten, we get together

frequently and talk about successes and difficult situations. The dip in middle age consumers has been talked about, but we have been having a constant stream. The LLC project has identified that we can hire a Youth Employment Specialist who will work with 34 kids in Morrisville and 34 kids in Barre. We are doing outreach with Turning Point Recovery Centers and have placed a counselor in both centers. We had some new hiring because of advancement, etc. Finally, I am reminded weekly how wonderful Voc Rehab is.

Conclusions:

Great updates! Thank you, Nancy and Bill!

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

11. Presentation on Progressive Employment (David Mann of Mathematica):

Discussion:

David Mann presented Vermont's Progressive Employment Program: A Preliminary Impact Analysis authored by himself, David Stapleton, and Alice Porter. The presentation can be found on the SRC website with Agenda Items for February 7 for the Full SRC.

Overview:

Using data from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and other Vermont administrative data to examine progressive employment (PE) impacts on customer outcomes

Had to address various methodological issues

Preview of findings:

Evidence of increased employment

Limited evidence of increased earnings

PE has promise but needs stronger evidence

A (Very) Quick History of PE:

- DVR created PE in 2009 with funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
- Four state VR agencies use the model:
  - DVR

- The general agencies of Maine and Nebraska
- Oregon’s blind agency
- Other agencies are considering PE
- DVR expansion of PE varied over time and across district offices

#### We Used Vermont Administrative Data for the Analysis

- Data sources:
  - DVR administrative data
  - Earnings data extracted from state Unemployment Insurance wage records
  - Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) records from Vermont’s public-benefits data system
- Sample characteristics:
  - Applied for services between May 1, 2009, and Dec. 31, 2014
  - Had a signed Individualized Plan for Employment
  - 2,356 PE recipients
  - 13,459 nonrecipients

#### This Is a Challenging Analysis for Several Reasons

- Impact evaluation goal: find a valid comparison group
  - A group that behaves like PE recipients would have if they had not received PE services
  - Randomization is the best way to achieve this
- Challenges of PE impact analysis
  - Selection into PE is nonrandom
    - PE recipients and nonrecipients are fundamentally different
    - May be difficult to capture these differences in data
    - No randomness or unaffected regions in rollout
  - DVR data do not capture all PE recipients
  - Variation in PE services and economy over time

#### We Had Some Things We Could Leverage for the Analysis

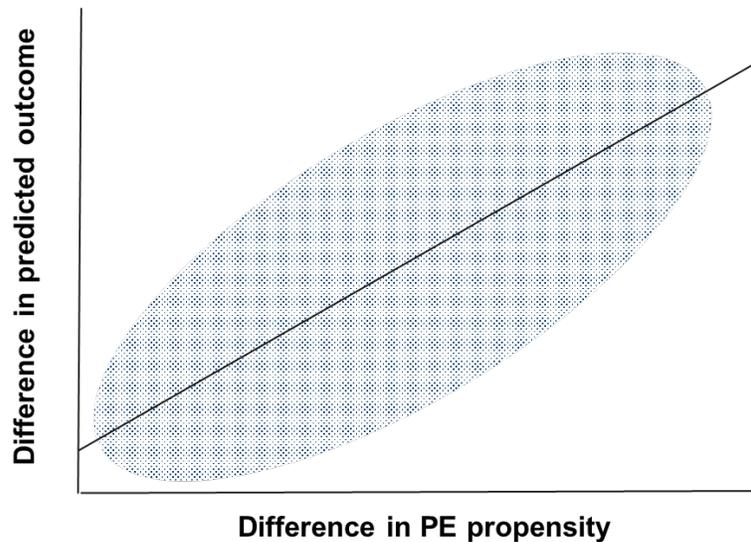
- Rich baseline data
  - Customer characteristics
  - Relevant field office
- Gradual rollout of PE over time

#### We Used a Complex Method for Impact Estimation

- Created predicted PE propensity

- Calculated differences in outcomes and PE propensity across years
- Estimated impacts using a version of difference-in-differences

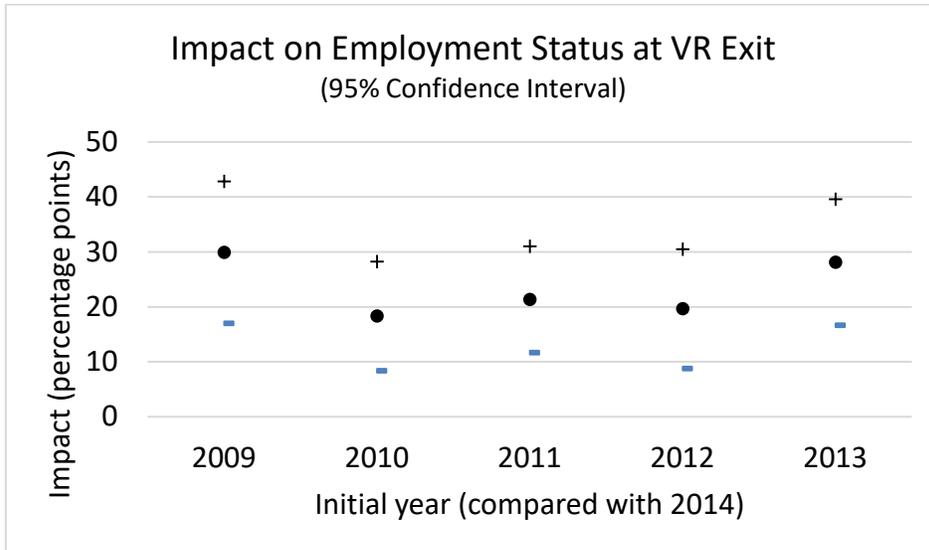
### Intuition of Impact Estimation Methodology



### Approach Addresses Some Concerns, but Key Assumptions Remain

- Addresses:
  - The fact that not all PE receipt is observed
  - Variation across time
- Key assumptions
  - We can create good predicted probabilities using the data we have
  - Factors other than PE propensity did not affect customer outcomes differently

### Findings for Employment at VR Exit



- Weighted mean impact of PE on employment at exit
- 21.3 percentage point increase
- 50% increase in employment relative to “no PE”

Other Findings Smaller but Encouraging

- Earnings outcomes
  - Outcomes
    - Percentage with earnings
    - Percentage with quarter-of-coverage earnings
  - Impacts more variable across years
  - Not consistently significant across years
- Positive estimates for SSI and SSDI benefit receipt—but based on poor measures

PE Shows Promise, So We Suggest Another, More Rigorous Test

- Summary of impacts
  - Employment at closure increased
  - Earnings may have increased as well
  - Questionable evidence for SSI/SSDI receipt
- As in non-experimental impact evaluation:
  - Estimates may be biased
  - Estimates are limited by available data
- A randomized controlled trial could provide better evidence but would require a new state partner

Appendix: Details on Impact Estimation Methodology

- Treated 2014 applicants as “baseline group”

- For 2009–2013 applicants, used data to predict:
  - PE receipt propensity
    - If applicant had applied in 2014
    - Year of actual application
  - Outcome (if applicant had applied in 2014)
- Calculated changes in outcomes and PE propensity between 2014 and actual application year
- Estimated impacts using a probabilistic version of difference-in-differences

What is important about all of this is that there is evidence that PE increases employment and earnings.

Conclusions:

Thank you, David Mann from Mathematica!

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

12. Other Business (Brian Smith):

Discussion:

None.

Conclusions:

n/a.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

13. Round Table (Brian Smith):

Discussion:

None.

Conclusions

n/a.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

14. Adjournment (Brian Smith):

Discussion:

Brian asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Sam Liss moved to adjourn, and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 13-0-0.

Conclusions:

Motion to adjourn approved at 3:30 pm.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Draft minutes uploaded to SRC website, Debra Kobus, 2/12/19.
- Draft minutes emailed to Committee members, Debra Kobus, 2/12/19.
- Minutes approved, Committee, 4/4/19.
- Approved minutes uploaded to website, Debra Kobus, 4/9/19.