

Georgia Occupational Regulation Review Council

Meeting Minutes: November 30, 2022

Attendees GORRC Members

Meaghan Carver, Chair, Governor's Office of Planning and Budget
Kelly Dudley (SAO)
Ashley Short (AGR)
Kate Iannuzzi (DNR)
Megan Andrews (DPH)
Georgia Steele, Department of Revenue (DOR)
Sam Teasley, Secretary of State (SOS)
Sen. Ed Harbison, Georgia Senate

Absent:

Rep. Tom Kirby, Georgia House of Representatives
Sen. Larry Walker, Georgia Senate
Rep. Steven Meeks, Georgia House of Representatives

Other Attendees and Affiliation

Advocates:
Kay Kendrick, Georgia Board of Cosmetology and Barbers Chair
Brian Stone, Georgia Board of Registration for Foresters Chair
Tim Lowrimore, Georgia Forestry Commission Director
Andres Villegas, Georgia Forestry Association President and CEO
Tim Miller, Georgia Forestry Association Advocacy Director
Rep. Clay Pirkle, Georgia House of Representatives

OPB Staff:
Christian Hamby
Zach Gilbert
Jakob Allen

I. Call to Order

Chair, Meaghan Carver, called the meeting to order at 1:05 PM and welcomed the members of the Council to the second meeting regarding HB 1617 and the first meeting regarding HB 1479.

II. Recap Previous Meeting and Approve Minutes

Meaghan Carver recapped the first meeting pertaining to HB 1617 and asked the council for any suggestions or edits needed to be made to the minutes. Kelly Dudley made a motion to approve the minutes and Senator Ed Harbison seconded the motion to approve. The minutes for the November 14th meeting was unanimously approved.

III. House Bill 1617

a. Questions from Council

Meaghan Carver asked if any of the members of the council had questions pertaining to the discussion held for HB 1617 at the previous meeting. No questions were presented from the council. Meaghan Carver asked if any council members would be unwilling to support recommending HB 1617 in the final report. No members were unwilling to support HB 1617's recommendation. This vote was non-binding and only used for the purposes of drafting the final report.

Due to technical difficulties the council paused the meeting at 1:16 PM and reconvened at 1:23 PM

IV. House Bill 1479

a. Overview of Bill

Meaghan Carver gave a brief introduction to HB 1479 and its respective applicant group.

b. Applicant Group

Tim Miller, advocacy director for the Georgia Forestry Association, presented a brief overview of HB 1479 and the reasons behind as to why this proposed legislation is being pursued.

Brian Stone, Chair of the Georgia Board of Registration for Foresters, presented some background information pertaining to the mission and role of the Georgia Board of Registration for Foresters. Brian Stone stated that all of the board members are in favor with a move to the Georgia Forestry Commission. He stated that moving this board will allow foresters to receive better service.

Tim Lowrimore, Director of the Georgia Forestry Commission, discussed his belief that GFC is well positioned to take over these responsibilities provided in HB 1479. Director Lowrimore mentioned the letter that was sent to the council regarding his support for HB 1479.

Kelly Dudley asked if there will be a fiscal note for HB 1479 and for a figure with regard to the volume of complaints dealing with customer service from the Secretary of State's Office. Kelly Dudley also mentioned that there will need to be internal controls if this move of the board was to go through. Kelly Dudley also asked about any current duties that might become overshadowed if GFC investigators take on this new responsibility.

Tim Lowrimore stated that GFC would attach a \$90,000 figure for one individual who would be focused solely on the administrative functions of licensure and that the agency would absorb all other startup costs. Director Lowrimore stated that GFC's investigators are already involved with the Secretary of State's Office investigations.

Brian Stone explained a discrepancy between the \$90,000 figure for the new administrative role and the \$60,000 figure submitted in the applicant survey. Brian Stone stated that the difference between these two figures was due to the inclusion of benefits. Brian Stone mentioned that the numbers of complaints with regard to investigations is around 1 or 2 per year. Brian Stone stated that he is receiving 3 to 5 complaints per month with regard to the licensing process with the Secretary of State's Office. Brian Stone also mentioned that these complaints are going to other board members and to the Secretary of State's Office. Brian Stone mentioned that the Attorney General's Office has asked for the cease-and-desist section of this bill to be included.

Kelly Dudley stated that the commission will have to set up processes for the accounting aspects of this bill going into law. Kelly Dudley also stated that if this were to proceed that all parties involved will need to make sure the needed accounting reporting is in place.

Brian Stone stated that currently with the Secretary of State's Office, they are still using paper checks for payments. He stated that the agency wants to modernize this process going forward.

Tim Lowrimore stated that GFC currently does invoice and takes payment now for the variety of services that it provides. He stated that he imagines that the reporting for those processes will be the same for licensure if it were to come into effect.

Meaghan Carver stated that it would be beneficial for a fiscal note to be requested for this bill.

Brian Stone mentioned that through his contacts with Tim Miller and Tim Lowrimore, he believes that Rep. Corbett, the bill sponsor, will be available for the next meeting. Brian Stone asked about what values would be used to make the fiscal note.

Meaghan Carver stated that the fiscal note will be an agreed upon estimate from the Office of Planning and Budget and the Department of Audits and Accounts regarding the true cost of HB 1479. Meaghan Carver stated that she can send some follow-up emails to help facilitate this process.

Brian Stone asked if any backlog within the fiscal note request process would delay the introduction of this legislation in the upcoming session.

Meaghan Carver stated that all fiscal notes are statutorily required to be completed before session.

Tim Miller stated that he is happy to work with Rep. Corbett with regard to the fiscal note request.

Meaghan Carver read a question from the meeting chat written by Kelly Dudley which focused on whether the revenues from the Georgia Forestry Commission would be retained or remitted to Treasury.

Tim Lowrimore stated that the way the bill is written, the Georgia Forestry Commission would not retain the fees, and for that to happen it would have to be appropriated.

Meaghan Carver asked if the bill will be reintroduced with new language in session.

Brian Stone stated that he would not want to change the language if that were to slow down the process.

Meaghan Carver asked if there are any plans in place to prevent conflict of interests that could develop if this legislation is implemented.

Brian Stone stated that they have rules that they have to follow and will abide by those rules.

Tim Lowrimore mentioned that in 2014, the General Assembly gave the Georgia Forestry Commission the responsibility to take the lead on timber theft. Tim Lowrimore stated that the success of this previous work shows that the Georgia Forestry Commission will follow the letter of the law and the facts as they are presented.

Brian Stone stated that the board represents the Governor as they are appointed by the Governor and are separate from the Georgia Forestry Commission.

Meaghan Carver asked if any other council members have questions for the applicant group.

Sam Teasley asked if the previous \$90,000 figure is the total cost to hire an investigator.

Tim Lowrimore stated that the \$90,000 figure would be used towards the individual responsible for the administrative services.

Sam Teasley asked if a new investigator would be brought on or if they will utilize their current investigators.

Tim Lowrimore agreed that they would utilize their current investigators.

Sam Teasley stated that he believes that the applicant group should figure out what the fees will be before they go any further with the bill.

Tim Lowrimore stated that his position is that if it is the will of the legislature for the Georgia Forestry Commission to handle this administrative function, that he would be willing to do so. Tim Lowrimore also stated that in committee meetings, the price tag for bringing on someone to do this administrative function was \$90,000.

Sam Teasley stated that the author of the bill and those pushing for it should address the fee structure before pushing this through the legislative process.

Brian Stone mentioned that the board is currently in the process of reevaluating its fees and the structure of its licensing processes. Brian Stone stated that the board plans to have a new fee structure in place by the beginning of the year.

Sam Teasley stated that he wants to get in contact with Brian Stone to discuss the complaint issues discussed previously.

Ashley Short asked how many forester licensees are currently licensed and how much money flows from the license fees annually.

Brian Stone stated that there are around 930 licensed foresters currently and that the current revenue projections show around \$120,000 every 2 years which is around \$60,000 annually.

c. OPB Research

In the interest of time, OPB research will be presented in a future meeting.

d. Public Comment

Meaghan Carver asked if anyone else has questions related to HB 1479.

No questions were asked from any other attendees.

Due to the previous technical difficulties, Meaghan Carver asked again if any council members had questions regarding HB 1617.

No questions were asked from the council members.

V. Announcement of Next Meeting

The next meeting will take place on December 9, 2022, from 1-2 PM.

VI. Adjourn