



SWW Workforce Development Board

Meeting Minutes

of April 14, 2021 Online (ZOOM) Meeting

thejoblink.org

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Joe Serafini (Chair), Ash Anand, Scott Brazie, Michael Bittel, Dan Dudley, Maureen Grabowski, Tara McCaughey, Marcy McNamara, Zack Moore, Mike Munter, Laura Oswald, Turina Parker, Dominick Patrignani, Caelynn Prylo, Tracey Riley, Shelby Schneider, Wendy Skawinski, Mary Ann Spezio, Tracy Stadel, John Wheatley. (20)

EXCUSED: Mark Fish

GUESTS: Jen McCloskey, Liza Ochsendorf, Traci Ross, Emily Walters, Kathleen DeMuth (ACCES-VR)

STAFF: Gretchen Steffan, Executive Director

Welcome

Chairman Serafini welcomed all and facilitated the meeting.

1. Approval of Minutes from February 10, 2021 meeting

Motion to Approve: by Dominick Patrignani; **Second:** Michael Bittel

Discussion: None; **Vote:** Approved unanimously.

2. Approval of Approval of Center Transfers

Jennifer McCloskey-Fiscal Agent and Saratoga County Career Center Director provided background on a budget fund transfer request from Dislocated Worker to Adult.

Motion to Approve: by Laura Oswald; **Second:** Ash Anand

Discussion: None; **Vote:** Approved unanimously.

3. Board Member Group Process Discussion

In a quest to ascertain how to best meet the current and future Workforce needs of our tri-County area, the WDB shared perspectives on experiences/perceptions/questions on current Workforce programs, resources and audiences. *Discussion outcomes on potential initiatives for process improvements to meet the challenges ahead included:*

Communications

- Portal for Board access and Board documents.
- Strategic action plan for communication.
- A software communications platform.
- Outbound communications plan.
- Subcommittee on communications.
- One point-of-contact for Business
- Message board for current initiatives in the Capital Region (*including access by the Board and Centers*).
- Board agenda updates to the County BOS and Committees.
- Press releases from the WDB.



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Strategic Planning

- High-level priorities.
- Laser focus priorities for effectiveness.
- Long term and short-term initiatives (*like Career Jam and a CDL program*).
- Remedies to the employment crisis (*like the Child Care Grants currently in-process*).

Benchmarking

- WDB best practices from across the US.
- Data is key, especially survey data.
- Numbers of those who are opting out of the workforce.
- Looking at barriers to workforce reentry.
- Business assistance on taking care of employees, total rewards, and becoming an employer of choice.

Technology Access for Saratoga Warren and Washington

- Federal stimulus money directed to Workforce Development
- Computer loan program and broadband support with additional stimulus money.
- Possible Microsoft donations and/or private sector support to improve access.
- Virtual career center (*currently in beta testing by NYS DOL*).

Workforce System to build a pipeline of employees to employers

- A funnel of systems for employers, for recruiting support.
- Helping people with criminal histories reenter the workforce.
- Communications tools and a central repository or dashboard of data, to know where we stand.
- Home-based work to help those with child care and transportation issues.

Training Options

- CDL training for truck and bus drivers, which is part of the NEEDS committee recommendations.
- A business collaboration with a mentoring program for CDL drivers to get hired post program completion and methods for graduates to get experience-hours for insurability.
- Focus on both the needs of current local business needs and looking at the jobs of the future.
- For greater workforce participation.
- Engagement with more teenagers and high schools.

Transportation Networks

- To deal with barriers to employment.

4. Committee Updates

- Executive Committee:** Chairman Serafini reported that this year is an extraordinary one because of all of the compliance items coming due this year including: the MOU, 4-year Local Plan, 4-Year Regional Plan, Centers Recertification and Board Recertification. He said that the WDB was awaiting the NYS Business Workforce Survey Results, as it would provide valuable post-pandemic direction for SWW WDB strategic planning. The Chairman extended his personal appreciation to the Committees for moving their work forward, and the work of the Career Centers during the pandemic to ensure both business and job seekers were well served.



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- b. **Business Needs Committee:** Ms. Steffan reported on behalf of the Committee that January meeting outcomes were to evaluate pre-pandemic business and workforce survey data against current data to better identify post-pandemic direction for both business and training needs. The committee re-looked at the Warehousing & Logistics (WL) Survey done by the Saratoga Prosperity Partnership, and felt that needs identified were still relevant. With significant regional WL development over the last year with more currently in-process, the group feels a CDL training program is warranted and can be modeled after the successful Machine Tool and Brewers programs. The WDB concurred with the committee's recommendation. It was also identified that a WDB and business partnership was essential in the development and execution of a program. The committee awaits the Business Survey for exploration of other options to pursue.
- c. **Resource & Development Committee:** R&D Chairman, Mr. Anand reported that data is key to the committee, and gathering Center-related service data pre-pandemic and amidst the pandemic will help to evaluate what's working and what hasn't. The pandemic changed the service-delivery model of the Center's from in-person to virtual. Those service delivery changes are likely here to stay. The Center's will reopen for in-person service by-appointment in the fall. The need for more hires by regional businesses have spurred program innovation. How to market these programs continues to evolve, to gather qualified and interested candidates for regional opportunities. There was good discussion of the committee on the reasons for the tight labor market, but more data is needed to understand why people are opting out of the workforce. That data is needed to identify barriers to entry or reentry into the workforce.

5. Update on Career Centers Activity

The Centers reported that they are providing the same services as pre-pandemic, but in a virtual way. The 33rd Annual Job Discovery has been planned virtually this year, with 100 employers signed up. It has historically been the largest Job Fair in the North County. Unfortunately, we have few job seekers signing up, which is a trend being seen in the Career Centers across NYS. As far as training, Centers have put more people through training than ever before. However, the Center Directors concur that there is an employment crisis, and there are so many jobs and not enough workers to fill them. Activities to bridge the gap have included high school job fairs to add teenagers to the workforce, partnering with school administration for virtual job fairs and facilitating working papers for those 14 and older who are eligible to work, and utilizing social media outlets in addition to our DOL partners. Warren County E&T is working with Congresswoman Elise Stefanik's office on submission of a Childcare Grant. The Centers continue to provide business services and help to identify strategies for a diverse cross-section of business sectors. There is an important collaboration between Tech Valley Transportation and the Capital Region Career Centers to remedy the transportation barriers to employment. The Centers have been very creative to try and solve regional employment gaps. Lastly, the Centers are gearing up for the annual Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP), which places disadvantaged youth in summer jobs to build work skills, but also other important aspects of self-development such as work ethic, social skills, financial literacy, interpersonal communication, attention to detail and problem solving.



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6. WDB Operations Update

Ms. Steffan discussed progress on several projects mentioned by Chairman Serafini during his Executive Committee report (*MOU, Local Plan, Regional Plan, and upcoming certifications*). She also updated the WDB on the new virtual Career Jam, which profiles an array of career options 7th and 8th grade students can explore as they consider their future career aspirations. This year instead of a day-long event, it was extended over a 6-week period, with gamification integrated into the platform to entice students to keep returning and exploring. The hope was to also encourage parents to explore career options and local companies. SWW WDB provided some technology support funding for this workforce development opportunity. It is hoped that this virtual platform can be used in the future for 11th and 12th graders who have not yet selected a career path, or who may not be interested in college, but want to find local opportunities with regional companies. Ms. Steffan committed to provide the WDB with a draft of the SWW Local Plan before the next WDB meeting so they can provide input before the public comment period and submission to NYSDOL for review.

7. Adjournment at 9:55 am.