

Ulster County Workforce Development Board Meeting (via Zoom)

April 12, 2022

Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT – Tony Marmo, Chris Kelly, Bill McKnight, Gene Knudsen, John Eickman, Ashima Butler, Mary O’Connell, James Ferraro, Sean Mahoney, Tamika Dunkley, Chris Marx, Mike Iapoce, Desiree Lyle, Frank Falatyn, Angela Patella

MEMBERS ABSENT - Anthony Mignone, Alejandro Cordova, Ward Todd, Tina Buono, Don Lucarello, Don Mapes, Brian Amthor, Joe McDole, Michael Berg, Nancy Bell, Nels Leader

ALSO PRESENT – Sharon Williams, OET Director/WDB Director, Renee Pugliese, OET, (ABSENT: Faith Golden, OET Deputy Director)

The meeting was called to order at 4:02 pm by Tony Marmo, WDB Chair. There was a quorum.

1. INTRODUCTIONS – TONY MARMO, BOARD CHAIR:

Tony welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. We are going to see if 4:00 pm works going forward for these meetings.

Tony welcomed new Board member Ashima Butler, Chief Operating Officer of Ellenville Regional Hospital and Ashima gave her background. She oversees all the clinical operations including IT and medical staff services. She stated she is very excited to be part of this Board looking forward to opportunities to getting some workforce trained and situated in her end of the County and see if some of her staff can be situated in Kingston and other areas.

Tony also welcomed Chris Kelly, Deputy County Executive. Chris described his experience and background. Chris oversees the Economic Development department, Employment and Training department and Tourism department and also law enforcement and Emergency Services departments. He stated that he is the lead for the County Executive on intergovernmental relations and interacts with state agencies, governmental offices and elected officials. Chris stated he is excited to be on this Board and to learn from everyone.

Tony stated that this is the only Board in Ulster County who puts public, private and educational together.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Tony asked for a motion to approve minutes from February. Motion by Mike Iapoce, seconded by Sean Mahoney. All in Favor. None opposed. Minutes approved.

3. FINANCIAL REPORT – SHARON WILLIAMS, DIRECTOR

Sharon shared her screen with the financials and went over WIOA funds available and spending, etc. The program year ends June 30. Between now and June 30, we are trying to find as many eligible individuals in need of training to increase their potential for work. Each day we are coming across a few people that we have never had before. Tony asked how do we find people or do they find us? Sharon stated it’s a combination. We’ve been doing more outreach and sending staff out. Also the mobile county government bus is going out to outlying areas. The Adult Training Program has \$15,775 left to spend, the Youth Program has \$22,850 left to spend and the Dislocated Worker Program has \$14,964 left to spend.

Sharon went over expenditure comparisons. Adult expenditures are on point to reach our goal. The youth is slightly under but, with the summer youth program amping up, we will probably meet our goal or exceed it. We are in the 2021 program season.

Chris Marx asked about the Summer Youth Employment expenses spreadsheet, stating the expenses were over— Sharon stated that right now there is an approximation and the actual allocation will work itself out. They made an increase in the hourly salary.

Gene asked about the in-demand occupations that are eligible for funding through OET. He said there is an uptick in people seeking training and new employment which is curious. He would like to revisit this and where we are funding them and where training is available. Tony stated there is a general lack of workforce and there will be follow up discussion.

4. BOARD CHAIR COMMENTS – TONY MARMO, BOARD CHAIR

Tony asked everyone to take note of the calendar of meetings that was sent to everyone. The November WDB meeting will need to be rescheduled due to 11/8 being Election Day. It will be rescheduled to either the Tuesday before or after – more word on that to come. Tony mentioned perhaps having a summer get-together/get to know you. Tony stated that everyone is welcome to sit in on the Executive Committee meetings – it is not a closed group.

Tony shared his screen of the committee structure and standing committees. The Executive Committee is per our by laws and the One Stop Committee is also. The Executive Committee set up some strategic committees. Most people have signed up for one or more of the committees. He stated that Board membership is key. The plan is to set up a meeting of these groups before the next Board meeting.

Gene asked if OET staff is the Chair and who is the one to say that someone has to work on something? Tony stated that we need a volunteer chair and staff partner. We will start with volunteers. Gene also asked has the 2040 Initiative changed and needs to be revisited based on the needs of the County. Conditions have changed. Frank brought up that it would be helpful to have someone on these committees that is doing the same work on another similar Board. Frank said it would be great if the head of each of these committees could be someone that is on another committee that syncs up with what we are trying to do. Sean suggested that we set the meeting with the members, and then first address what the mission of all of these committees is. Then interested parties can come forward. Sharon will send out the 2040 report again to everyone for review.

Chris Kelly spoke about the lack of workforce and how it is a widespread problem. We should try to start initiatives.

5. DIRECTOR'S REPORT: SHARON WILLIAMS, WDB DIRECTOR

WORKFORCE DATA:

The DOL February reporting shows NYS increased private sector jobs by 39,000. Out of 15 metropolitan areas, the Kingston metro area is second with increased jobs. We are only behind NYC. The greatest gain is in the leisure/hospitality industry. There is a major decrease in the unemployment rate – 3.9% as of February. State data conflicts with what we are seeing.

Jim said that everyone is hiring. He is getting more applicants/responses for jobs, but the issue is in retention and losing people and also people not following through with interviews, completing paperwork, etc. Ashima stated she is experiencing this also. John Eickman is having the same problem in the hospitality industry. Other employers are offering \$8.00 - \$18.00 more per hour and we cannot compete with this. Tony brought up also that people are retiring.

Sharon will send new March data report when it comes out and we will continue to watch and compare March to February.

PROGRAM UPDATES:

Summer Youth Employment program - We have applications coming in. The applications are due by May 20th and jobs start in July. Our goal is to serve at least 118 young people with jobs around the County. We have some repeat participants. We have a lot of the same worksites as last year and have gotten a few new ones

as well. Anyone interested in being a Summer Youth Employment Program worksite, let us know and we will get the application out to you.

We recently started collaboration with the Ulster County Probation department for an opportunity to work with the Young Adult Employment Program for people who have had encounters with law enforcement and are looking for employment. We currently have 4 people that we are doing training with and will place them in Young Adult Employment Program.

We were part of Ulster BOCES Showcase which was an opportunity for young professionals who graduate in June from BOCES to examine job opportunities.

Regarding the staffing crisis, Mike Iapoco shared that he received three resignation letters this week from members of his staff. One is starting a landscaping business, one is operating an Air B & B, and the other is starting an internet business. These employees were caseworkers that are fully trained and high performers. It was expected that they would stay with the County for years to come and promote up through the system. A lot of time and effort was invested in recruiting and training them. They are leaving permanent civil service jobs with benefits and a pension and have found ways to survive without being in the traditional workforce and without having to be on benefits. There are new creative ways to create enough revenue for people to live comfortably and do the things they want to. We are experiencing this in every industry. Now it will take close to a year to fill those vacant positions through the civil service process and training. It is unknown how we are going to continue meet our mandated responsibilities with the staffing crisis.

Desiree added that Mike makes a good point and that we need to have a new idea of what employment looks like, whether it is part time or flex time. The more that employers find creative opportunities for employment, the more likely employees are to stay. We need to meet people where they are and present them with attractive options and opportunities.

6. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 5:01 pm.

**ULSTER COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
NEXT MEETING:**

Tuesday, June 14, 2022