

COUNTY OF ULSTER

Workforce Development Board

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Sharon Williams, Director

Ulster County Workforce Development Board Meeting (via Zoom)

June 14, 2022

Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT – Tony Marmo, Anthony Mignone, Frank Falatyn, Alex Cordova, Don Lucarello, John Eickman, Tamika Dunkley, Ashima Butler, Desiree Lyle, Brian Amthor, Steve Casa, Jess Davis, Coleen Macaluso (for Gene Knudsen), Sean Mahoney, Chris Kelley, Mike Iapocce, Chris Marx, Mary O’Connell

MEMBERS ABSENT - Don Mapes, Gene Knudsen, Jim Ferraro, Joe McDole, Michael Berg, Nancy Bell, Nels Leader, Tina Buono, Angela Patella, Bill McKnight

ALSO PRESENT – Sharon Williams, OET Director/WDB Director, Faith Golden, OET Deputy Director, Renee Pugliese, OET, Robert Hirsch, OET, Danica Pierre-Louis, OET, Miles Davis, OET, Legislator Phil Erner, Rev. Gary Fuller

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 pm by Tony Marmo, WDB Chair. There was a quorum.

1. OPENING – TONY MARMO, BOARD CHAIR:

Tony welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. We have two guests today: County Legislator Phil Erner and Rev. Gary Fuller.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Tony asked for a motion to approve minutes from April. Motion made by John Eickman, seconded by Frank Falatyn. All in Favor. None opposed. Minutes approved.

3. FINANCIAL REPORT – FAITH GOLDEN, OET DEPUTY DIRECTOR

Faith shared her screen and went over financials. We are close to the 80% expenditures required by end of the program year. We are slightly ahead of the goal in Adults, for the Youth we are just below our goal and Dislocated Worker we are right on the nose.

NYSDOL for the third year in a row has allowed local areas to request to carry in extra funds. So Faith has requested and been approved to carry in extra youth because we are pretty close on youth and she doesn’t know if we will need that permission or not. Faith also requested permission to carry in extra Dislocated Worker funds because we have the national dislocated worker grant funds that we have not spent yet. So she can transfer some spending that has gone to our regular dislocated worker formula funds over to the employment readiness national dislocated worker funds which will then leave us with underexpended in dislocated worker. Therefore, by the end of June, the dislocated worker spending will look different from what is on the chart currently. Tony reminded everyone, for those who don’t know, that our fiscal year is July 1 – June 30, we are near the ending. Faith requested permission from the Board to transfer money from Dislocated Worker to Adult funds. She expects to move about \$20,000 of spending from Dislocated Worker to the National Dislocated Worker Grant to balance out where we are at between Adults and Dislocated Worker. Tony requested a motion, motion made by

Sean Mahoney, seconded by Ashima Butler. Tony asked if there are any additional questions to Faith. All in favor, none opposed. Motion passed.

4. POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL – SHARON WILLIAMS, WDB DIRECTOR

YOUTH OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT POLICY

Sharon introduced herself for those of you that don't know her. One of the rules of the Board is to set the policy that allows us to assist job seekers in obtaining their training to either upskill or to find new work and one of the policies that we have been asked to review and update is the Objective Assessment Policy and the objective assessment for youth specifically has been done a variety of ways. We are trying to find a way that will be best suited for us to obtain why this young person is looking for a job and what skills they have.

Sharon asked Danica Pierre-Louis, a member of our Youth Team, to give a description of what that process looks like. Board members were previously emailed the actual policy for consideration.

Danica introduced herself. She stated that we are doing an objective assessment on youth. This is an assessment of their educational history, their employment history and also their education and employment interests. It also evaluates their computer skills. With these assessments, we are hoping for the youth to be able to set informed goals for their individual services strategy. With these assessments, we'll also be able to pick out where the youth may need help, whether it be in computer skills or setting educational or employment goals. It's all leading up to the final goal of the youth setting their goal. It gives us some background information to capture that. Sharon thanked Danica.

Sharon stated that the actual verbiage that we must submit to NYSDOL was sent to everyone ahead of time – not sure if everyone had a chance to review it and if there were any questions about that particular policy. Upon approval of the Board today, it would take immediate effect. We are already using this assessment but we had to do a little re-wording of the actual language to fit into what NYSDOL has asked us to do.

Tony asked if there are any questions from the Board. Frank asked where all the questions came from and how was this developed. Danica stated that we were sent other area assessments and we compiled an assessment based off of those other Workforce Development areas that we thought would help with our population of youth. Faith stated that Nancy Bell, Auditor - NYSDOL, sent these to us as examples and we compiled it from suggested documents from her, approved from that level ahead of time.

Anthony Mignone said that he has been reading the questions and asked if we are using language that they (youth) are going to relate to. Danica reported that she does believe that we are using language that they can relate to and we do ask them, because a lot of times they do come in, and they don't necessarily know what occupational skills training is. That is actually one of the questions – “do you know what occupational skills training is?” and then we can go into that if they do not. Anthony asked if a few of us have handed these questions to our teenagers and older children at home and seen their reaction to it and stated because that would be a good test. Danica stated that we can and have, and we haven't had any aversion to it so far and stated that's a great idea. Sharon added that the assessment is taken by the individual young person but the staff are there to answer any questions and to interpret anything so that they are able to answer from their own feelings even if they don't understand a word or the context that the question is being asked. Anthony stated that is what he is concerned about, that they are getting what we are trying to get. Tony Marmo shared the screen of these questions for everyone to see again.

Legislator Erner asked about the computer part of the assessment and how long has that been a part of the assessment. Also can you say more about the overall job picture of our county, the types of computer skills generally required, the percentage of jobs that need computers and things like that.

Danica responded that all of these assessments we started using in December and the computer skills assessment is basically to see if they need assistance so we would provide a workshop or get them into a session at the library where they can learn how to work Microsoft Office, Microsoft Word, Excel and things like that. As far as how often do we see jobs that require computer usage, we see it a lot. However, the occupational skills that we're doing, they're usually on the computer for a little bit and it's not really that intense. But we are seeing

a lot of jobs that require some computer usage and knowledge. Sharon added that basically those jobs that we see coming across our office are for basic computer literacy skills and what is ironic is that the younger folks have more computer skills in terms of keyboarding because they've recently left high school and that is part of their day. As we see our older customers (25 & older), we are seeing more individuals who need the computer basic skills.

Tony asked if there are any other questions or comments.

Chris Marx asked about the objective assessment of the academic skills/levels, are we still using an external tool like the TABE test for that as well? Danica responded that we haven't used the TABE test recently. We are using this assessment, which has been approved by our State auditors and DOL and we also still do the career zone assessment. Danica believes that some of the classes at BOCES offers in their Adult Ed do require the participants to pass the TABE test, so they would offer it. It's no longer a measurement that our youth have to meet. Chris stated that in the WIOA policy it does start with academic level. Danica said that is on the regular application and whether or not they graduated high school, etc. Chris asked that they attest to the highest grade completed? Yes. Steve Casa stated that since it is a yes or no question, that we might want to massage that because we aren't going to get very much if it's a yes or no question. "Do you think you were a good student, what characterizes that yes or no answer? I got up everyday and did my work." Just a thought. What are the criteria of a good student? Some people would think that it's academic/good grades but Steve would argue that it's a lot more. It's about reliability and showing up. Maybe putting some criteria in there might work and a scale might work. Suggestions by Chris and Steve: ask what kind of a student do you believe you are and why. Danica said they are good suggestions and we can change the wording.

Tony thanked Danica and stated nice work. Tony asked for a motion to approve, notwithstanding Question #1, we are going to massage that a little bit: Motion made by Sean Mahoney, seconded by Jess Davis. Motion passed.

Tony said it would be nice to come back to this in the future and share some of the results of how it's working.

5. COMMITTEE REPORTS

BOARD MEMBERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT:

Tony spoke about how we have a good board because we have a committee system and we have people now assigned to that committee system. Tony is in charge of the Board Membership & Engagement Subcommittee. Historically it had to do with the onboarding of new members and then some training and education going forward. One of the obligations of this subcommittee is that we want to bring some diversity in the nominating process in the business sector – and making sure our members are on committees and are participating. Then there is the social engagement part – we are going to plan a shindig at Ole Savannah some time before the end of summer and get to know each other.

Tony noted that our attendance is outstanding today and thanked everyone for attending.

STRATEGIC INITIATIVES:

Frank is Chair of the Strategic Initiatives Committee. He spoke about the spread chart that they put together. There are 9 different things that their committee is required to look at. They sent out a survey to the 8 members of that committee, asked them to rank from #1 being most important and #10 being the least important and did a weighted average of all nine items in order of importance. There are four items that are above the other activities that they want to work on: 1. Focus on occupational skill standards development and certification. 2. Identification of training gaps. 3. Recommendations of prioritizing demand occupations and establishing criteria for training provider approval. 4. Develop and maintain a demand occupations and skills shortages list. Of these four, everyone on the committee had them ranked as #1 or #2 of importance. Ultimately, they are looking for a good strategic process and coming up with the criteria of where we should be focusing our energies and then working with others to try to make that happen.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

John Eickman is in charge of this subcommittee. They met on May 12. They started with an agenda where they might want to try to identify customers, identify policies and programs that we use, ways that we communicate with all of our customers. We need to articulate in a simple way who we are and what we do. They went over a number of ideas and trying to bring the committee members to a baseline understanding of what we do and the dual objectives of the office. We have objectives as both the Workforce Development Board and as the Office of Employment and Training and those two functions report differently, so Sharon has split responsibilities that complicates things more. This committee will be meeting again soon so we don't lose that baseline understanding that we develop. Tony stated that all these committees are a work in progress and we are just starting.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT:

Sharon spoke on behalf of Bill McKnight. They met in May and hope to meet in July as well. There are different entities in the county that are working on the idea of workforce development and we are looking if there is a way to make this a cohesive transition from as early as elementary school to our graduating students from our BOCES programs, our high schools and our in-school and out-of-school. One of the things we talked about was putting out a survey to all of the workforce providers for youth in the county to see what they are doing and make this alignment that we are missing right now. We are actually in a misalignment when it comes to our youth. We are hoping if we can build this bridge as we're crossing it, that the struggles we are having right now with finding job seekers to fill vacancies might be eliminated. We want to make that alignment clear to all and everyone's role in that alignment and not waiting until these young people are in high school or junior high school, reaching them way earlier.

Legislator Erner asked how this committee works together with the County's youth board. Sharon stated that the Workforce Development Board is not working directly with the youth board but the Office of Employment and Training is working with the youth board on a number of initiatives. We are doing a lot of work with our summer youth employment currently. Legislator Erner also stated that the County has a new housing group - Middle-Income Workforce Housing working group- and invites anyone to come to their next meeting which will be in last week of June. More info to come. The Chair of that group is Legislator Lopez.

Desiree Lyle said she is thinking about the Strategic Initiatives Committee and looking towards jobs of high importance in the county and asked if the Youth Engagement Committee has thought about that. When we are trying to engage the youth at an early point, what are the jobs that we actually need and how to specifically get them engaged in those kinds of jobs. Desiree asked if this is part of what the youth committee is focused on. Sharon responded this is part of our plan as well and also stated that those in-demand careers are ever-changing with the county. Sharon referred to the NYSDOL job seeker and employer survey results which showed that one of our in-demand careers in the healthcare field but people are fleeing from the healthcare field so that is going to shift that in-demand list. We are in an ever-changing environment right now. It is aggregate data but in the next few weeks, we will be able to get specific Ulster County data based upon our employers and our job seekers.

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

We are putting together in collaboration with the Office of Economic Development and Tourism Department a Workforce Symposium – tentatively slated for July 20, 2022. All will receive an invitation once it is completely done. They will be looking at our workforce needs vs. our workforce supply. Everyone is struggling to find employees. It will be held at Mohonk Mountain House in the morning – more details to come.

We are in full swing with our Summer Youth Employment Program. We have 182 completed applications. From those applications we will serve between 118-120 young people and will place them at employers around the county. Some of the applicants will not meet criteria.

We are also revamping some of our collaborations with our County Probation Department as well as through our Restorative Justice Center. We are doing things like civil service basics so people have an understanding of what the civil service process looks like and how do they apply for County positions. We are doing work around resume writing and also with engaging our young people in employment opportunities. We have an opportunity to work with some of our youth who may have barriers to employment.

We participated in the Ulster BOCES Technical Career Showcase and Hiring Event in collaboration with SUNY Ulster. It was a great morning and an opportunity for students from a variety of schools. They were able to explore different career industries. Sharon spoke about green careers but there was also law enforcement, manufacturing, etc. What really was the highlight of this event was a panel that talked about the future workforce, what employers are willing to do and what are they looking for.

Sharon asked if they are any other questions or comments.

Tony acknowledged Deputy County Executive Chris Kelly and thanked him for his involvement with the Workforce Development Board.

Anthony thanked Sharon for report and all her efforts. Tony seconded this.

Sharon reminded everyone to check out our website Ulsterworks.com and reviewed how we have been going out into the community via the Mobile County Government and ensuring that we are engaging more people.

Tony asked everyone as the Chair to use the committee system and actively participate in your committee.

7. MOTION TO ADJOURN

On behalf of Tony, Sharon asked for a motion to adjourn. Motion made by Ashima Butler, seconded by John Eickman. Meeting adjourned at 4:52 pm.

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

Tuesday, September 13, 2022