



Middlesex County Workforce Development Board Meeting

Tuesday, January 26, 2016, 9:00 AM

- Present: Amy Bellisano, Roseann Bucciarelli, Luis De La Hoz, Kevin Duncan, Edward Faver (as designee for Janice Fishbein, Dan Frankel, Daniel Henrickson, Gabriel Lavigne, Henrietta Wilson (as designee for Angela Mackaronis), Laura Morana, Susan Pasternack, Julie Piano, Joseph Picone, Miriam Ruiz, Jill Schiff, Carla Cefalo (as designee for Kathy Shaw), Bernice Proctor Venable, Joanne Vogel
- Staff: Kevin Kurdziel, Nina Rios-Rivera, John Ross, Melinda Walton
- Guests: Thomas O'Connor

I) Welcome and Introductions

- a) Pledge to the Flag.....Jill Schiff
- b) Compliance with Open Public Meetings ActJill Schiff
 - i) Notice of this meeting was made pursuant to the Open Public meetings Act, NJSA 10:4-10
- c) Roll Call Joanne Vogel
- d) Approval of Minutes of October 27, 2015..... Joanne Vogel
 - i) Motion to accept the minutes as written was made by Bernice Proctor Venable and seconded by Dan Frankel. The motion carried with Laura Morana abstaining and the minutes were accepted as written.

II) Board Reports

- a) Chairperson’s Report.....Jill Schiff

The focus of the Middlesex County Workforce Development Board continues to be on the transition from WIA to WIOA. The State Employment Training Commission and The NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development have been developing the State WIOA Plan. Maureen O’Brien Murphy from the SETC is here today, and will give us an update on the plan, along with a review of some policies that were recently adopted by the commission at their last meeting.

In Middlesex, we are working closely with both the Department of Labor and the SETC to submit various items including our Youth Program Transition Plan, WDB Recertification, WDB Regional plan, and our Resource Sharing Agreement. You will be kept up to date throughout the year on the status of these important projects as we move forward toward complete implementation of WIOA.

While the implementation of WIOA moves forward, there are some positive indicators to show that the economy is improving both locally and statewide. Middlesex County’s unemployment rate is currently 4.4% and the state rate is 5.1% slightly above the national average of 5%. While these numbers are encouraging, we still have 19,000 people in our county that are unemployed. While that number is much lower than last year, we are still finding that there are residents who need training to enhance their skills, and jobs that will provide them with economic stability. I confident that our local workforce area will meet the needs of the unemployed and underemployed of Middlesex County.

We have one Action item on the agenda today, which is request of this board to receive re-designation as a local workforce area.

- b) Director's Report Kevin Kurdziel
Mr. Kurdziel combined his report with information Maureen O'Brien-Murphy from the SETC was going to share because she was not able to attend the meeting.
 - i) At mid-year we have 322 ITAs completed for Adult/Dislocated Worker/Youth/WFNJ with 261 currently enrolled. Dislocated Worker has the highest numbers. There are 82 in Basic Skills and 53 have completed that. Our Performance Measures show that we are meeting or exceeding all our PY15 goals. There have 238 clients placed in full-time employment with an average wage of \$19.70 and a median of \$15.
 - ii) At a recent meeting some of the changes that directly affect all the WDBs in the state were discussed:
 - (1) The main change is that the WDB members will now have some input into the budget process. They can make recommendations and will vote to submit it to the state. We will have the Executive Committee meet and look at our budget for PY 16 and present it to the members for a vote at the July 2016 meeting.
 - (2) Another change is that the SETC wants the WDBs to be more governing than advising. We are not sure yet what that entails and whether or not the Board will supersede the Freeholders.
 - (3) The SETC will now require that each area have four dedicated staff members but did not allocate any more money for this; we will have to find funds from other areas. We currently have three members but they are not full-time for the WDB. We will need one more staff member and find out if they can play a dual role. Jill Schiff asked if some staff could be "shared" with other locals in the Region, but Mr. Kurdziel did not think that was going to be permitted.

III) **Review of Recently Adopted SETC Policies**Maureen O'Brien-Murphy
Ms. O'Brien-Murphy was not able to attend the meeting and her information was reported by Mr. Kurdziel in the Director's Report above.

IV) Action Items

- a) Local Area DesignationsJill Schiff
Policy Resolution SETC #2015-04 (New Jersey Regional Designations) and Policy Resolution SETC #2015-02 ((Workforce Service Delivery Area Designation Request) were explained and discussed.
 - i) Resolution SETC #2015-02 outlines the process for us to request automatic re-designation from the Governor as a Workforce Delivery area under WIOA. It is basically a formality and all WDBs must submit this request.
 - (1) A motion was made by Amy Bellisano to send the letter requesting the initial designation of the Middlesex County Local Area as a Workforce Service Delivery Area outlined by WIOA of 2014, seconded by Laura Morana and passed unanimously with no abstentions.
 - ii) Nina Rio-Rivera explained the map showing the approved regions that keeps us with our former "informal" arrangement with Monmouth, Mercer and Ocean Counties. We have had some meetings and are currently working with Monmouth County on a program with Pepsi that might go statewide and could be used as an example. Under regionalization, we are also looking into sharing some services, such as monitoring or training providers, as a way to achieve cost savings. We hope to have more information about this at the next meeting.
 - iii) Bernice Proctor Venable brought up the information about the economy in this area and wondered if the good reports encompassed all sectors. They judge how things are by who comes to their company looking for employment. Mr. Kurdziel said the statistics are based on Unemployment which now stands at 4.4% and we know there are many people are not included, so the actual number is probably several percentage points higher. Amy Bellisano told the group that Middlesex County is considered a growth area for "office" jobs. While we had record jobs lost since 2008 we have gained them all and more back. Dean Hughes of Rutgers says we have been in an "economic

expansion” for the last 79 months locally and nationally and that there are positive indicators in Middlesex County.

V) Committee Reports

- a) Literacy Committee Julie Piano for Gloria Aftanski
 - i) The recent Literacy Committee Meeting discussions were centered on the Proposed Policy Resolution (SETC# 2016-05), regarding establishing standards for New Jersey’s Adult Basic Education (ABE) and English as a Second Language (ESL) by the State Council for Adult Literacy Education Services (SCALES).
 - ii) Concerns were raised regarding aligning the standards, meeting the needs of adult learners and meeting the performance measures stipulated under the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA).
 - iii) The need for funds to do curriculum development was also raised. Discussions centered on the implications of limited literacy to employment opportunities, economic (literacy levels proportionate to wages earned), and social implications (extending to family relationships).
 - iv) At the heart of these discussions, the lack of adequate available resources to address these literacy concerns always resurfaces.
 - v) The challenge remains to be in the mapping of a viable integration of all available resources that will yield the optimum outcome, serve the most number, and meet the literacy needs of the county.
 - vi) **Workforce Learning Links Update:** The anticipated additional funding for the Middlesex Workforce Learning Links (WLL) were not received to date. Consequently, the third classroom was discontinued. The Learning links have reached 97% of their PY15 goals at the half-way point of the year, serving 159 of the 164 required.
 - (1) Ms. Schiff asked how clients find their way to the Learning Links and Julie Piano responded that when a need is discovered, we determine which program would be most suitable for the individual.
- b) Youth Advisory Committee Susan Pasternack
 - i) As of December 31, 2015, the Youth transition to WIOA is progressing steadily. Yesterday (January 25) the Youth Transition Plan for 2016 – 2019 was submitted to the State DOL and SETC. A copy of the report will be made available at the Youth Advisory Council meeting on February 2.
 - ii) With the restructuring, the focus has been on the 20% requirement for “Work Experience”. An internal plan for this was created and is currently being implemented. We are currently looking to increase worksites and possibly have the students start the program with a worksite requirement.
 - iii) The **Financial Literacy Technical Assistance** continues to have Webinars. Individual program technical assistance specific to Middlesex is due to start sometime in February. It focuses on Financial Stability for youth/young adults and from how to save – through paying for school, home, personal business and even into retirement.
 - iv) WIOA is very focused on serving High School Dropouts. We continue to work closely with the Executive Superintendent’s office to get accurate drop out lists and to have productive communication with the local school boards
 - v) High School Diplomas from July 1, 2015 – December 31, 2015; there are 20 eligible to attend graduation to be held in May (details pending). Seven students are still waiting on HSE results. (TASC lost the tests and we are in the process of trying to retest at no cost.)

- vi) Current Activities include Volunteer work with food banks and Habitat for Humanity which is a new volunteer worksite for us. We are looking for new possibilities if anyone has anything to offer please let us know.
- vii) Mentoring/Fiscal/Leadership/Work Readiness includes working with Santander Bank and public service/community meetings and projects, and a professional resume writer and consultant who volunteers her time during in house orientations
- viii) Career Pathways includes Occupational Research and Speakers for Training Options
- ix) Basic Skills/Tutoring is covered by the Workforce Learning Links and the Adult Schools in New Brunswick and Perth Amboy and Vendor Based on site
- x) There has been one Industry tour to Rutgers’s University highlighting operations, building, food services and land maintenance; career pathways – medical. Transportation has become an issue and is being worked on through procurement so until then Industry Tours have been suspended, One Stop Orientations are continuing with the Youth Career Counselors going to the Vendors and doing presentations.
- xi) As of December 31, 2015, the Youth Program has reached 66% of their annual goal of 135 for new enrollment serving a total of 122.
- xii) Mr. Kurdziel took this moment to thank Ms. Rios-Rivers for her work on the Youth Transition Plan and to comment Dr. Morana for her collaboration with our office on many things, including getting timely “drop out” reports from the high schools. Many areas do not have a good relationship with the schools and we appreciate that we do.

VI) Ad Hoc Reports

- a) One-Stop Julie Piano
 - i) The Middlesex County WDB Report Summary was emailed ahead of time to members showing the number of clients served by all partners and much has already been covered by other area reports just given.
 - ii) We are finding that it is not difficult to schedule appointments with counselors in either New Brunswick or Perth Amboy.
 - iii) The MOU with our key partners (Employment Services, and Unemployment) is due to the SETC in February.
 - iv) We have met or exceeded all our Performance Measures as shown in the report emailed ahead of the meeting.
- b) WorkFirst New Jersey.....John Ross
 - i) The six month statistics from the WFNJ Programs operated by Middlesex County College, New Brunswick Adult Learning Center will be the basis for the RFP for next year.
 - ii) TANF referrals (down 28.4%) and enrollments (down 40%) have decreased and employment placement rate (26.7%) is increased from last year’s 8.8%.
 - iii) GA referrals (up 6.7%) and enrollments (up 17%) have slightly increased and the placement rate has slightly decreased.
 - iv) SNAP referrals (up 16%) and enrollments (up 6%) have increased slightly but are expected to significantly increase in 2016. Placements are slightly lower. The Board of Social Services is reviewing its SNAP caseload and referring clients who have not been referred to the Employment Service area. As of January 1, there are as many as 500 additional SNAP clients who should and will be referred as soon as possible. This must be taken into account when we prepare our RFP. SNAP will probably have the highest rate of enrollment of all of the WFNJ Programs.
 - v) ABAWD (Able Bodied Adults without Dependents) is a subset of SNAP, It requires that in order to maintain eligibility, individuals classified as ABAWD must work at least 20 hours per week, participate in a SNAP approved work program at least 20 hours per week or be in a SNAP

approved workfare program. These requirements have been deferred since 2008 but are in place for 2016 as a result of the improving economy and unemployment rate.

Having just learned of this situation, there has been insufficient preparation. We are required to offer the required activities for between 547 to 1,200 clients referred by the Board of Social Services. Henrietta Wilson clarified that the state was notified in March 2015 that this would happen but the Board only received notice in October 2015.

- (1) Our dilemma is finding space, creating programs, and hiring staff to oversee the programs with no extra funds. We feel we have space for approximately 200 and have responded to the state with an "I Believe" statement that we can't handle the expected amount and need assistance.
 - (2) There will be exemptions for some participants but that number is currently unknown. Orientations will be held to determine individual situations and possible exemptions which could also reduce the number. Staff will try to determine the number of clients to be served and place them in approved activities. Failure to do so will negatively impact clients.
 - (3) Amy Bellisano asked if we could write a letter expressing dissatisfaction on how this was handled. Bernice Proctor Venable expressed her support of this action. Mr. Kurdziel agreed that we should. He also brought the situation to the attention of the HSAC but they not concerned about it. They will be told about the letter going out.
 - (4) Mr. Ross said that the State has delayed in notifying the Counties and providing resources. The "test" counties started January 1, 2016 and had very low numbers participating but they served smaller amounts of people to begin with.
 - (5) Henrietta Wilson reminded everyone that back in the 1990s when something similar happened, New Brunswick and Perth Amboy were not included which greatly reduced the number and made the program workable. Now, we need more money in order to not hurt the clients. Dr. Morana asked if the food banks would be able to help and Mr. Kurdziel responded that they know and are already feeling strained. Dr. Morana also asked if the vocational schools as well as the County College would be part of the planning but we do not have that information yet.
 - (6) Roseann Bucciarelli said our SNAP participants are the working poor or underemployed and we need to get them up to the 20 hours if they are working less than 20 hours so they can keep receiving the benefits. Ms. Bellisano wanted to know if webinars and online courses would count toward the 20 hours but was told that it had to be in a classroom setting with a teacher because of accountability issues. She also brought up using the libraries as resources; it could be a synergy we could grow by helping them get funding and us using their space. Library computers are used for the 10 hours of independent job search activity and the job logs. Mr. Kurdziel said we just gave a letter of support to the New Brunswick library to help them receive a \$50,000 grant for Workforce and Literacy to provide services, some of which could be during "after hours." Ms. Rios-Rivera also told the Board that we do about 20 presentations a year in the local libraries
- vi) Mr. Ross thanked both the New Brunswick Adult Learning Center and Middlesex County College for assisting the County with the upcoming "Point in Time" count of homeless in the County. They exceeded their contractual requirements.
- c) Business Development Unit Nina Rios-Rivera
- i) A report was emailed ahead of the meeting showing all the activities which include:
 - (1) 360 employer visits or contacts
 - (2) 233 profiles entered in our systems

- (3) 86 recruitments held in the Business Resource Center
- (4) 18 Rapid Response events mostly with the recent supermarket closing of A & P and Pathmark. Many of those employees have found other employment.
- (5) A new series of SCORE seminars will start next week.
- (6) There has been an increase in the number of job seekers coming to the recruitments.
- (7) A job fair is scheduled for May 12 at Middlesex County College. We plan to do two larger events this year instead of smaller ones with individual municipalities.

d) **New Business**

Gabriel Lavigne spoke about an Emerging Leaders Summit, sponsored by Middlesex Regional Chamber of Commerce. A flyer was sent to all Board members ahead of the meeting. Each year there has been an increase in participants with 115-125 this year. Mr. Kurdziel attended last year and is going this year again and including some staff members.

VII) **Public Comment and Adjournment**

- a) The floor was opened to the public but there were no comments.
- b) The motion to adjourn was made by Julie Piano, seconded by Amy Bellisano, a vote was called and the motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned.

Handouts

Emailed ahead of time:

- Agenda
- Minutes of October 27, 2015 WDB meeting
- Performance Report
- Placement Report
- BDU Report
- WDB Report

In packet:

- Agenda
- 2016 Board Meeting Schedule
- 2016 Committee Meeting Schedule

E-mailed after meeting:

- SETC Resolution

The next meeting of the Workforce Development Board will be April 26, 2016.