



Middlesex County Workforce Investment Board Meeting Tuesday, April 30, 2013 9:00 a.m.

PRESENT: I. Azeez (representing Gloria Aftanski), Amy Bellisano, Roseann Bucciarelli, Kevin Duncan, Janice Fishbein, Lorrie Ginewaw, Maria Gonzalez, Dan Henrickson, Adrienne Keaton, Maryann Lovas, Dawn Lystad (representing Brian Loughlin), Jim Perry, Barbara Roos, Jill Schiff, Samuel Stewart, Bernice Proctor-Venable, Earl Wiggley and Henrietta Wilson (representing Angela Mackaronis)

STAFF: Jane Brady, Nina Rios-Rivera, John Ross and Patti Seip

GUESTS: Kirsten Giardi, NJ State Employment and Training Commission, Liaison to Middlesex County
Timothy Timberlake, New Brunswick Adult Learning Center

Call to Order:

WIB Chair, Jill Schiff called the meeting to order. Notice of this meeting was made pursuant to the Open Public Meetings Act, NJSA 10:4-10.

MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING:

Board Secretary, Amy Bellisano, presented the minutes of the last meeting held on January 30th for approval. Dr. Bernice Venable made a motion that the minutes be approved as written; Jim Perry seconded the motion and the motion carried.

INTRODUCTIONS:

Jill Schiff introduced and welcomed new board member Kevin Duncan. Mr. Duncan serves as the President of the Middlesex County Building & Construction Trades Council and replaces former board member, Bill Nagy, who recently retired.

Two (2) additional board members were recently appointed that were unable to attend today's meeting. They are Iris Moncion, Service Access Center Supervisor at the Puerto Rican Action Board in New Brunswick, and Nicholas Gacos, President of Colorado Café in New Brunswick. Members who have been on the board for a while will remember that Mr. Gacos previously served on the WIB, as well as served as our WIB Chair for several years. Ms. Schiff stated it will be a pleasure to have him on our board once again.

Jane Brady also introduced Timothy Timberlake, Principal of the New Brunswick Adult Learning Center in New Brunswick.

WIB RECERTIFICATION PROCESS:

Jane Brady reminded members that we are in the midst of being recertified by the N.J. State Employment and Training Council (SETC). We have been required to submit paperwork to our SETC liaison, Kirsten Giardi, who has the job of reviewing all documentation to ensure we are doing what we should be doing in order to receive our certification. Ms. Giardi's initial review reflected no unsatisfactory areas and only three (3) areas were listed as "cautionary".

One of the cautionary areas cited was for the department website not functioning properly, as SETC was unable to access the board's meeting minutes. The Middlesex County IT Department was notified of this issue and the website is now working properly. The second cautionary area was for not submitting the required WIB Evaluation Report. We were unable to submit the Evaluation Report until after the Board met and voted on the report. This Report will be discussed and approved at today's meeting and will then be forwarded on to SETC. The third cautionary area was for not submitting a Board Development Plan. This Plan will also be reviewed and approved at today's meeting and forwarded on to SETC.

Once SETC has received these documents, they will have everything they need. The official Recertification will not happen until January 14th, 2014.

Jill Schiff questioned Kirsten Giardi as to how Middlesex compares to other counties. Ms. Giardi responded that Middlesex County is in very good shape compared to several other counties who are struggling in getting their documentation together.

UI PERSONNEL IN NEW BRUNSWICK:

Members received a copy of the letter to Commissioner Harold Wirths from officers of the board expressing concern over the closing of the Unemployment Insurance (UI) office in the New Brunswick One-Stop Career Center. Jill Schiff announced she had received a response from Assistant Commissioner Aaron Fichtner indicating that plans had changed and New Brunswick UI personnel would not be moving.

Shortly afterwards, UI employees were informed again by someone from the state that they, in fact, would be moving. There has been a total lack of communication with the state on this issue. Jill Schiff once again contacted Aaron Fichtner about the misunderstanding, and he once again assured her they would not be moving and communication was provided to UI staff indicating this.

Ms. Brady indicated there are two (2) divisions of UI personnel in New Brunswick. Staff in the front area actually see UI claimants, whereas UI employees in the back area are Adjudicators. They spend their entire time on the telephone with UI appeal claimants. It is her understanding that Adjudicator staff will be moving from New Brunswick.

Members will be kept informed on this issue.

ADDITIONAL BARRIER FOR WIA ELIGIBLE YOUTH:

Members were provided a copy of the Second Barrier Certification form used by staff to determine if a youth is eligible for WIA youth funds. Jane Brady indicated that in order to determine a youth eligible, youth not only need to be considered low-income, but also need to have a second reason that they are unable to make it on their own. Items listed on the left hand side of the form contained potential barriers. A youth must have at least one (1) of those listed barriers, in addition to being low-income, in order to be eligible for the WIA youth program. The right hand side of the form indicates the supporting documentation required for each of the barriers.

Ms. Brady mentioned that the board had previously approved the second barrier requirement and staff have been using this form. However, official approval by the board is required by the SETC as part of the Recertification process.

Amy Bellisano made a motion that the Additional Barrier for WIA Eligible Youth be approved; Jim Perry seconded and the motion carried.

TRAINING FLYER:

Members were provided a copy of the Occupational Training flyer recently printed by the Middlesex County Reprographics Department. She indicated the flyer will be printed again, this time using both sides of the flyer as well as printing on heavier stock paper. She asked if anyone would like copies of the flyer, to let her know and she

will see they are sent. Dawn Lystad, Maryann Lovas, Lorrie Ginegaw, Bernice Venable, Amy Bellisano and Barbara Roos indicated they would like copies sent to their offices.

GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING SUITABILITY FOR TRAINING:

Members were provided a copy of the above mentioned form. Jane Brady stated there are eligibility criteria for WIA programs, but staff would like guidelines established to ensure that clients are actually suitable for training. The items listed on the Guidelines for Determining Suitability for Training will help staff in determining a client's suitability for training.

Adrienne Keaton, One-Stop Manager, provided a summary of the guidelines contained on the form.

Amy Bellisano questioned if Item #1 was reasonable based on the recent economy (Customer has an attachment to the workforce = worked 5 out of last 7 years). Ms. Keaton responded that counselors will make accommodations based on the individual's history.

Maryann Lovas made a motion that the Guidelines for Determining Suitability for Training be approved; Barbara Roos seconded, and the motion carried.

REQUIRED EVALUATION REPORT ON THE ACTIVITIES OF OUR BRC:

Members were previously provided a copy of the WIB Evaluation Project for 2012. Jane Brady informed members that this is another requirement of the SETC Recertification.

At the November board meeting, members agreed for staff to prepare a report on the Business Resource Center (BRC) now that Middlesex County is in charge, versus previous years when the State operated the BRC. Unfortunately, this comparison was not possible due to the state indicating they did not have any data for which a comparison could be made. Staff also contacted a few other counties to see what their activity was in their BRCs. Again, this was not possible, as each County was not recording their data the same. Therefore, a comparison could not be made.

Staff are now looking at the BRC and evaluating what can be done in the future to improve its function. In terms of recommendations, a number of things will be done differently beginning in July. The report provided to members detailed the activities of the BRC during the period July 2011 to June 2012, with the number of job orders entered and recommendation for the next year to improve this process. The report also provided information on Positive Recruitments, Outreach to Business Community and Information from Business Surveys for the same time period, as well as proposed recommendations for improvement.

Board members were informed of the lack of Business Survey responses received from employers. This is a survey sent to companies after they have used BRC services. Members questioned if employers might respond better to a personal phone call after their recruitment has been held. Nina Rios-Rivera responded that emails are sent out immediately after a recruitment, and most will respond to the email, where they have the option of reading the email right at that moment or later when more convenient. Amy Bellisano suggested that the survey be sent out to employers immediately following utilizing BRC services, as the event is fresh in their mind.

James Perry made a motion to approve the recommendations contained in the BRC Evaluation Report; Roseann Bucciarelli second, and the motion carried.

IT INDUSTRY SECTOR REPORT:

Members were previous provided a copy of the IT Industry Sector Report. For new board members, Jane Brady indicated that approximately five (5) years ago, the WIB chose three (3) sectors to conduct research on areas for training that would provide the greatest opportunity for employment. Areas chosen were 1) Healthcare,; 2) Transportation/Distribution and Logistics (TDL); and 3) Information Technology (IT). It was decided to postpone researching IT at that time due to the crash in the IT field.

Staff has resurrected the idea again due to IT occupations once more being in demand. In looking at recent Classified Ads, one of the problems encountered in researching IT jobs is that what one company may call a Computer Analyst, another company may have a totally different title. It is known, however, that data entry is no longer in demand.

Ms. Brady mentioned that an occupation with the most trouble in New Jersey is Computer Security, as the state has not included that job on the In-Demand list because it is relatively new. Also, the state will not include this job title on the In-Demand list unless there are more than 2,000 individuals in that occupation. Ms. Brady has been emailing the state regarding this issue. Bernice Venable commented there are some security companies that are branching out into that area. She suggested that staff contact security companies as well as large companies who have their own security system.

James Perry made a motion to accept the recommendations contained in the IT Industry Sector Report; Barbara Roos seconded, and the motion carried.

SELF-SUFFICIENCY STANDARDS FOR OUR REGION:

Members were provided a copy of the Self-Sufficiency Policy. Ms. Brady stated that the figures contained in the policy are mandated by the federal government, which we have no control over. Basically, this policy is to notify board members of the definition of self-sufficiency and members are required to vote confirming they have been notified of the policy.

Members expressed their concern over the Lower Living Income Levels and voting on a policy which they have no control over. After discussion, Dr. Samuel Stewart made a motion to acknowledge receipt of the Self-Sufficiency Policy but object to the numbers contained in the policy and the Federal Government will be contacted expressing the board's concerns; Bernice Venable seconded and the motion carried.

BOARD DEVELOPMENT PLAN:

Members were also provided a copy of the Board Development Plan. Jane Brady stated that the SETC requires that WIBs put in writing, the process used for recruiting board members. She indicated that the process outlined in the Plan is not new, as she has been using this procedure for WIB recruitments.

With regard to membership, Ms. Brady informed members that board member, Fred Bruno from System Freight, submitted his resignation due to the demands of his job and now being required to cover a larger territory. Therefore, she is actively searching for another Transportation/Distribution/Logistics (TDL) company representative. Anyone with suggestions for board membership in this area should contact her directly. Bernice Venable suggested Ashley Furniture be contacted as well as Thomasville Furniture, who has a large distribution center within Middlesex County.

STATE CONTRACT:

Jane Brady announced that the State had indicated Middlesex County would be required to serve 597 adults and 273 youth this program year. We responded to the state indicating we could serve 500 adults and 175 youth, as we only serve out-of-school youth. The state approved the numbers requested. Staff have been working diligently to come up with the numbers by June 30th.

In terms of the "cost per exiter" issue, that is also no longer a problem, which staff are thrilled to learn. Our County has two (2) locations, which means two (2) rents, etc. Therefore, our "cost per" is much higher than a county with only one location. Also, if a client is placed in May and their training runs through December, to which program year should it be charged? Middlesex County does not pay a training provider in the beginning because payments are made based on benchmarks. The State was not comparing apples to apples when they came up originally with the "cost per" figure. The State, however, finally realized this and has indicated it is no longer an issue.

The State contract has been submitted for approval and execution by the Board of Chosen Freeholders at the May 16th Freeholder meeting.

WORKFIRST NJ REPORT:

John Ross, Work First NJ Director, reported that Work First programs operated by Middlesex County College (MCC) and the New Brunswick Adult Learning Center (NBALC) were monitored for contract compliance in February and March of this year. Areas of non-compliance have been addressed and responses have been very positive.

One concern of the Work First program is a potential surplus of funds in the amount of \$65,000 in both programs. This is a concern because if Middlesex County does not use the funds by June 30th, the money must be returned to the state. Future allocations are based on money used and clients enrolled. Therefore, if money is returned to the state, they may interpret this as Middlesex County not needing the funds for the next program year.

Both MCC and NBALC have developed and implemented additional services to serve additional clients.

The contracts that MCC and NBALC have this year were the result of a Request for Proposal (RFP) issued last year. It was decided to extend these contracts for another year. Both offices will be providing budgets for the new program year. Staff is looking forward to continue working with MCC and NBALC for another year.

BUSINESS OUTREACH COMMITTEE GOALS FOR 2013:

A copy of the Business Outreach Committee Goals for 2013 was forwarded prior to the meeting via email. In the absence of the Business Outreach Committee Chair, Kathy Shaw, Jane Brady provided a summary of the committee's goals for 2013.

One of the suggestions made by the committee was to hold a Made In Middlesex Manufacturing Symposium. This event has been scheduled for Friday, May 10th, from 8 am to 1 pm. Over 500 manufacturing companies within Middlesex County have received invitations. Breakfast will be provided. Ms. Brady voiced her concern over the poor response received so far. She indicated that the caliber of people recruited for speakers at this event is outstanding, and we cannot hold this event if just a few register.

Maryann Lovas made a motion to approve the Business Outreach Committee goals for 2013; Barbara Roos seconded and the motion carried.

LITERACY COMMITTEE:

Jane Brady provided the Literacy Committee report, in the absence of Committee Chair, Gloria Aftanski.

Included in members' packets was a copy of a letter to NJ Department of Education Commissioner Christopher Cerf from Gloria Aftanski, Literacy Chair, endorsing concerns and comments expressed by the Morris/Sussex/Warren Literacy Committee regarding the future of GED testing in New Jersey.

Ms. Brady indicated that the GED test as we currently know it, will be ending as of December 31, 2013. As of January 1, 2014, Pearson Education has been given the contract by the State and they will be charging \$150. The state has to agree on who they will work with. As a result, two companies have come forward --- ETS and McGraw Hill. No decision will be made as to which test will be used until after the election is held in November. Ms. Brady expressed her dismay at this news.

As no response has been received from Commissioner Cerf, Amy Bellisano suggested that another email be forwarded to the individual above the Commissioner, with a copy to all board members, indicating the board would like a response to the letter. Ms. Brady indicated she would follow up on this. She also indicated that Assemblyman Peter Diegnan was asked to provide a letter of support on this matter. He has forwarded a letter to Commissioner Cerf voicing his concerns as well.

ONE-STOP OPERATOR REPORT:

Adrienne Keaton, One-Stop Operator, provided her report indicating that the Recovery 4Jersey OJT program is now available for employers. This program is the result of Hurricane Sandy. The program was unveiled last week. In order to be eligible, an individual must be a NJ resident, currently collecting UI or have exhausted their UI benefits. The rate of pay is \$10 per hour up to \$10,000. The employer must agree to retain the employee for six (6) months, on a full-time basis and provide the same benefits as other employees.

The Re-Employment Assistance (REA) Program was last held at One-Stop Centers in April of 2012. The program was contracted out by the NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOLWD) to county colleges. REA sessions were suspended when Hurricane Sandy hit due to the after-effects of the storm. The program is now being re-implemented as of this week. Middlesex County College is targeted to serve 400 individuals per week. People receiving UI extensions are being instructed to report to MCC for a half-day session. MCC will receive \$50 per person for those who show up. NJDOLWD will also be paying \$35 per person for an individual to be present and serve those needing assistance.

Jane Brady announced that two (2) towns, Woodbridge and Carteret hired Hurricane Sandy NEG workers. Woodbridge hired eight (8) workers and Carteret six (6). The federal government just extended the time period of the grant to January 29, 2014. NEG workers may still only work a total of 1040 hours. Woodbridge Township is looking for two (2) additional workers.

RENT IN NEW BRUNSWICK:

Jane Brady announced that she has stopped paying rent for the New Brunswick One-Stop offices. She explained that a sub-lease from the State still has not been received, yet it has been 18 months since the old lease expired. The State is now paying lower rent but has yet to provide notification of the new, less amount.

Ms. Brady has repeatedly asked the State for a sub-lease. It is her understanding that the Department of Treasury now has the sub-lease. The State has indicated they want to issue a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) rather than a sub-lease. However, legal counsel does not feel this is a good idea as a MOU does not carry the legal weight of a sub-lease.

Ms. Brady stated that until the sub-lease has been received, rent will not be paid. The new lease that the State signed has the lower square footage. In addition, the State already owes Middlesex County money from last year for paying at the higher rental rate.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Included in members' meeting packets was a copy of the Middlesex County One-Stop Partners Resource Directory for 2013. This directory contains valuable resource information.

Dr. Samuel Stewart commended Jane Brady for her recent informative and motivational presentation at the recent Middlesex County Curriculum Committee meeting. Her presentation included how much money an individual needs to survive in Middlesex County. Dr. Stewart also offered praise for the Youth Career Calendar created by her office which is distributed to all 9th grade high school students. Information contained in this calendar is a real eye opener for students and parents alike.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

ITEMS INCLUDED IN MEETING PACKET

- Self-Sufficiency Policy
- Second Youth Barrier Certification
- Guidelines for Determining Suitability for Training
- Board Development Plan
- Performance Measures Report
- WIB Report
- Letter to Commissioner Cerf – Expressing GED Concerns
- Letter to Commissioner Wirths – Expressing Concerns Over Closing of New Brunswick UI Office
- Resource Directory of One-Stop Partners – 2013
- Occupational Training Flyer

ITEMS PROVIDED PRIOR TO MEETING

- Agenda
- Minutes of Prior Meeting
- Announcements
- Report on IT Sector Employment
- WIB Evaluation Project for 2012
- Business Outreach Committee Goals for 2013

NEXT MEETING DATE: TUESDAY, JULY 30, 2013