



## Middlesex County Workforce Investment Board Meeting

**Tuesday, July 29, 2014, 9:00 AM**

Present: Gloria Aftanski, Amy Bellisano, Roseann Bucciarelli, Roberts Davis, Luis De La Hoz, Janice Fishbein, Julie Piano (as designee for Adrienne Keaton), Gabriel Lavigne, Melyssa Lewis, Dawn Lystad (as designee for Brian Loughlin), Maryann Lovas, Henrietta Wilson (as designee for Angela Mackaronis), Iris Moncion, Susan Pasternack, James Perry, Joseph Picone, Sue Englert (as designee for Peter Reno), Ginny Romeo, Jill Schiff, Kathy Shaw, Timothy Timberlake, Bernice Proctor Venable, Joanne Vogel

Staff: Adrienne Keaton, Nina Rios-Rivera, John Ross, Melinda Walton

Guests: Sharita Brown, Jeff Shulman

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### **1. Call to Order:**

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

### **2. MINUTES OF PRIOR MEETING:**

The minutes of the last meeting held on April 29, 2014 were submitted for approval.

Roseann Bucciarelli made a motion that the minutes be approved as written: Kathy Shaw seconded and the motion carried unanimously.

### **3. INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS**

Jill Schiff introduced two new members on the Board, Gabriel Lavigne of UBS Financial Services and Luis De La Hoz with MarMar LLC in New Brunswick. Dr. Laura Morana, the new Interim County Superintendent of Schools was not able to attend the meeting and Ms. Schiff explained that two years ago it was decided to rotate the voting membership on the Board between the New Brunswick and Perth Amboy Adult Learning Centers, therefore, Timothy Timberlake from the New Brunswick Public Schools will be the voting representative for the Adult Education area and that Senovia Robles would return to that position in two years.

### **4. ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

Jill Schiff relinquished her position as Chair to Gloria Aftanski as the Committee Chair of the By-Laws committee. Ms. Aftanski then announced the Slate of Officers for 2014/2015 recommended by the Committee and e-mailed ahead to all Board members as: Jill Schiff for Chairperson, Amy Bellisano for Vice Chairperson and Joanne Vogel as Secretary.

A motion to approve the nominations as presented was made by Bernice Proctor Venable. There were no nominations from the floor.

A motion was then made by Kathy Shaw to accept by acclamation the slate as presented and seconded by Robert Davis.

Jill Schiff called for the vote by restating the motion to vote by acclamation and requested that those in favor acknowledge by voice vote. There were no votes against the slate as presented and the following members abstained: Jill Schiff, Amy Bellisano and Joanne Vogel.

The motion passed unanimously and the Officers for the Board for the 2014/2015 year will be Jill Schiff as Chairperson, Amy Bellisano as Vice Chairperson and Joanne Vogel as Secretary.

## **5. CHAIR'S REPORT**

Ms. Schiff introduced Kathy Shaw, Department Head, Middlesex County Department of Business Development and Education. Ms. Shaw explained that she was pleased to have worked collaboratively with John Pulomena, County Administrator and the County Board of Chosen Freeholders in the search for a new Director for the Office of Workforce Development and the Workforce Investment Board. Ms. Shaw announced that as of August 4, 2014, Kevin Kurdziel will be the new Director. He comes to us from Essex County College, Workforce and College Training and is an energetic and positive person. Times are changing and we have to make creative use of federal and state money in deciding what programs to fund. Both the county and the Office of Workforce Development know these challenges and will make them happen. Mr. Kurdziel will be at the next Board meeting in October.

Jane Brady leaves a fabulous legacy for initiatives and we are headed for an exciting year for Workforce Development and the County. Ms. Shaw mentioned the upcoming availability of the new County web presence and Ms. Schiff asked if we could have a demonstration at the next Board Meeting.

Adrienne Keaton's upcoming retirement on September 5 was announced and Ms. Shaw wished her luck, success and enjoyment. Ms. Keaton thanked her and said that it had all been good and had passed quickly. Nothing had been more rewarding than her work here helping someone get back to work and on their feet. She thanked everyone for their support.

## **6. WIA Reauthorization**

Adrienne Keaton reviewed that the WIA had been established in 1998 and authorized through 2003. It has been overhauled into WIOA and the new regulations should be completed in the next six (6) months with a probable two (2) year phase in period. A handout from the meeting folder (The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Key Improvements from Current Law) was referenced. Some of the changes will be: a) elimination of some programs not being used; b) transferability of funds between Adult and Dislocated Worker categories will be increased. A big help to us will be the "90% Hold Harmless Clause" which will prevent large changes in funding amounts from year to year. Since funding

has been coming in later and later every year, it is difficult to have programs and contracts in place when needed because of the uncertainty. This will eliminate some of that concern; c) require states to have one strategic plan describing how they will comply with the regulations, etc. d) make things more regional instead of by County and e) will place more emphasis on “On the Job Training.” (The new reimbursement for employers can be 75% up from the current 50%); f) reduce the required number of members on the Boards. The Workforce Investment Boards will still be the body that governs these activities. There are also important changes in Youth regulations. The ages served will now be the same as the Job Corps program and eligibility requirements will now allow us to serve youth who have certain barriers but not be eligible because of income documentation.

Bernice Proctor Venable asked if there will be any presentations with information about the changes and Ms. Keaton said that there will be. The GSETA Conference in September will have someone from Washington as a speaker and we will be able to pass that information on to the Board. Ms. Venable reminded everyone that we need to work hard for our youth and it is hard once they are no longer connected with a school system or agency but thanks to Jane Brady’s efforts we are ahead of many other areas with our Youth programs.

Nina Rios-Rivera announced that as this legislation moves on, there will opportunities for us to comment and offer suggestions. This back and forth process took more than 1 ½ years last time but there could be some interim regulations. One might be concerning youth eligibility. Ms. Keaton remarked that the current income guidelines are not based in reality. Ms. Rios-Rivera asked that members feel free to send us any of their ideas and we can incorporate them into our suggestions and comments.

## **8. YEAR END REPORTS**

- a. **Operations**: Ms. Keaton explained some things about our “Career Beacon” website link which is a client’s entrance into our system to determine eligibility and how we can help them. It requires a commitment and possession of certain basic skills in order to be placed in training programs for In Demand Jobs or sent to programs to remediate their basic skills. Our contracts with training providers usually allow up to \$4,000. There are training benchmarks that participants are required to meet during the programs before anything is paid to the training provider. A 20% holdback is actually in effect until the student is placed in a training related job through their own efforts or those of the school.

We met or came very close to our goals for this year. Adult/Dislocated Worker goal was 560 and we served 578. Youth goal was 175 and we served 170. and the Learning Link goal was 155 and we served 183. Computer Skills is very much in demand with the older adults.

The “Contracts Written” chart in the packet was discussed. It shows what program areas we are sending people to for training because they are on the “In Demand” lists. The top four areas are Business Management and Related Services, Transportation and Logistics, Health Professions and Computer and Information Services. Amy Bellisano

noted that we have this information broken out by schools in the Placements Report, but asked if we knew what percentage of people get jobs in the field related to the training. That information is available. We keep track of it. Most of the placements are related to the training.

CDL training is sometimes looked on as a last ditch opportunity to change careers that will led to a good income. Many have unrealistic expectations about salary and location of the jobs. Many employers will not consider hiring drivers under the age of 25 because the cost of insurance is higher for them. Joanne Vogel mentioned that sometimes the student's driving record is a problem. Jill Schiff suggested that more checking should be done before a client is sent for training and then found to not be eligible for a CDL. Being upfront with us, DVR or the school is helpful because sometimes things can be worked out. We need to research the best way to get this information and anything concerning a drug and alcohol or driving record problem. Ginny Romeo suggested that a client have to pass a DOT physical before we send them for training. Ms. Vogel said that doing a physical before a background check would cause us to lose a lot of applicants.

The Placements Report showing job placement by schools was next discussed. Ms. Bellisano asked if it can also be broken down by individual programs and was told that information is available and that most have been training related. Some schools have a more difficult time because of the clients that they serve. For example, "Elijah's Promise," is mostly Work First (welfare) clients and they face some difficulties completing the program in the normal time frame.

At this point Ms. Keaton introduced Julie Piano. Ms. Piano is currently our Deputy Manager of Operations in New Brunswick and has been with the department for 28 years. She will be moving into the position of One Stop System Manger in September. Ms. Keaton feels that she is leaving the job in very capable hands.

- b. **Work First New Jersey:** John Ross explained that the aim of WFNJ, which is an arm of Public Assistance Programs, is to help clients who are able to work to find employment and reach self-sufficiency. We work with the clients with vocational/educational and work experience programs and skills such as job seeking and resumes. Middlesex County College and the New Brunswick Adult Learning Center are our primary vendors.

The trend over the last four years continue to be downward, with a decline of 105 TANF (adults on assistance with dependent children, 18 years or less.) It is regulated by both the federal and state governments. Referrals to WFNJ from Board of Social Services have decreased by 10% with a 4% decline in our enrollment for the fourth year. We still serve very many clients. Placement is defined by the federal government as employment of at least 30 hours a week at minimum wage or more; that placement rate shows a 15% decline this year. For the last 3 to 4 years we had a stable placement rate

with entry level jobs, so were not affected as much by the economic decline. But the tendency now is to not hire for the goal of 30 hours a week at minimum wage therefore clients are not considered as full time employees. They have to combine a number of part time jobs to reach the 30 hours. Approximately 50% of our clients were placed in part time jobs of 20 hours or more and while we can't count them as a "placement," even this is a way out of the system. This is not just with Public Assistance clients but also with those going to Employment Services. Ms. Schiff mentioned that many areas are now going to a "per diem" basis for many jobs offering no benefits and Mr. Ross agreed that was the case and might have been affected by "Obamacare" and that we will now monitor jobs that are twenty (20) or more hours a week. In GA, if a client does not obtain a "full time" status of 35 hours, we require them to work for us to make up the difference.

General Assistance (adults with no dependents) is state based and the steady increase in referrals and enrollment has taxed our abilities to work with them because of the amount of space available in our Perth Amboy and New Brunswick offices. This year it has stabilized. We had a .3% increase in referrals instead of the double digit increases we had been seeing for the last three years leading to a 1% decline in enrollment. We are being told that "Obamacare" might play a part in it because people see other ways to get health insurance. Henrietta Wilson agreed it might have something to do with it. They are trying to get clients out of the system after five years. They have a SAFE Program offering intensive case management before termination. Now about 95% are terminated in both GA and TANF. If someone does reapply, they need to prove they are permanently disabled. It is a problem for them to get this proof. The new forms taken to the doctors highlights the term "medical fraud referral" so doctors are aware of why they are being seen. This has made an impact on the population as well.

In general, the number of GA placements are approximately the same as the last few years, but may be because the jobs are less than 30 hours per week as they are being reported to Mr. Ross. Clients usually see Employment Services and are evaluated for up to 28 days and then move on to our programs, employment, or are deemed ineligible.

SNAP (food stamps) clients are unemployed and able to work. It is separate from GA now, but the historical numbers combine the programs so now are not accurate. There are more people looking to receive SNAP benefits and the Board of Social Services is referring appropriate clients to us. We find that the most successful people we work with come through this program. Possibly because those in this group do not have the same level of barriers so they are more successful in job seeking and becoming self-sufficient.

Ms. Schiff asked for a sample of the 20 hours a week jobs and was told they are the "fast food" jobs with full shifts of 23 – 24 hours a week. If the client has no children under five years of age, the County program still needs to service them and they have a 35

hour a week work requirement to retain TANF eligibility. Therefore they have to work in other ways for us, which creates problems because of the varying hours per week.

- c. **Business Development Unit:** Nina Rios-Rivera talked about some of the goals of the Unit. The employer data base was increased and they met with 368 new employers. They have had 81 recruitments for the Program Year 2013, far exceeding their goal of 36 and hope to be able to increase the ones given in Perth Amboy. A main concern in that location is the availability of parking for employers and job seekers. After the recruitments, they use "Survey Monkey" to get the employers opinion of the recruitments and it is mostly positive with the issue of job seeker eligibility being a topic of concern.

We have various ways of interacting with clients and employers. Our Job Developer, Garret Gega, works with graduates of the training programs, we use Jobs4Jersey which is a tool from the state that works like the ATS employers use to sort through resumes. But Jobs4Jersey is not user friendly despite the state working on improvements. And we have a distribution list of businesses. This list needs to be checked frequently to ensure that data is good and not out of date. We are hoping that recent permission from the NJ DOLWD to use social media such as Facebook, Twitter and possibly LinkedIn will help. Some companies are looking for higher level employees but they are not attending the recruitments/job fairs we are holding. LinkedIn could help with this level. Every quarter we host a five part seminar from SCORE on Entrepreneurship. For Program Year 2013 we have had 81 recruitments, 741 participants, 792 referrals and 33 seminars. We have entered 168 job orders into the system ourselves and employers have put in approximately 300 on their own as the State wants them to do. We check the jobs that are input by the employers to see if there are any large blocks of jobs and contact the employer about holding recruitments or if we can help in any other ways. We are currently marketing our services to 321 companies.

The pie charts in the meeting packet show the largest industries to be Transportation, Business Services, Retail and Health. However an issue with the health industry is the lack of jobs at the higher levels. HHAs and CNAs are needed, but they are labor intensive and the pay level is low. Now, a CNA must be associated with an agency to be hired. The top occupations we see are Warehouse, CDL, Sales and Marketing, and Management. Bu, we need to be able to offer higher level jobs to attract other companies. Many do not realize that we have clients with the skills for these higher level positions.

Bernice Proctor Venable commented that WIB success rests on leadership with an emphasis on marketing. The Board and the staff need to interface with the business leaders and that she sees the members and staff of Workforce Development doing just that. We are one of the leading WIBs in the state on this.

Transportation and Distribution is finally being seen as more than truck driving. It is a growing industry that includes logistics and higher levels of the industry. Colleges and training schools are finally seeing this.

Ms. Rios-Rivera noted that the Hispanic population in Middlesex County is 18% and that they own an increasing number of small businesses. One of our new Board members, Luis De La Hoz, is a small business owner. He is co-chair with her on the Hispanic Business Council. There was recently a successful Hispanic Business Expo and they are trying to integrate these businesses into the general markets.

Kathy Shaw addressed Ms. Proctor Venable saying that the new County structural changes into five Departments and the Web Portal will address some of the Economic Business Development issues and will “connect the dots” with social media use and other advertising to be on all levels bringing the County together.

- d. **Youth:** Adrienne Keaton reported on our Youth programs for Program Year 13/14. They serve any eligible out-of-school youth, 16-21 years old. There were 170 Youth enrolled in our programs. There are two Youth One Stop Centers, one in New Brunswick and one in Perth Amboy and a MCWAG (Middlesex County Workforce Action Group) Coordinator based in Perth Amboy. We served 58 youth in Perth Amboy, 27 in New Brunswick and have 13 enrolled in MCWAG. Fifty-four (54) received training for careers in the medical, auto, culinary, plumbing and computer fields.

We also have a Youth Work Readiness Program at Middlesex County College serving 21 students, and two GED (now HSE) programs run by MCC. The one in Perth Amboy has 30 students currently and Carteret has 28. GED/HSE diplomas were awarded to 34 participants and we are waiting for results from a few more.

We held financial workshops with Victoria Gorman from Magyar Bank who also serves on the WIB and YIC, and a representative from Capitol One Bank. The value of volunteer work was shown with opportunities with food banks and the Eric B. Chandler Health Center. We had Industry Tours with Roosevelt Care Center (medical), Wakefern (manufacturing and food industry), Wegman’s (store operations and culinary) and Rutgers’s University (operations, building, food services and land maintenance.)

Susan Pasternack was introduced as the new Chairperson for the Youth Investment Council.

- e. **Performance Matters Preliminary Year-End Report:** Nina Rios-Rivera referred to the chart in the packet and noted that we have met or exceeded all goals and that we are in good shape. The State is struggling with literacy/numeracy but we are not.
- f. **Cumulative One Stop Center Report:** The report (Workforce Development Data) was in the meeting packet and Ms. Rios-Rivera briefly explained some of the information. The

number of Customers for Perth Amboy compared to New Brunswick seems high but is probably explained by the fact that it is easier for clients from Monmouth County to use the Perth Amboy One Stop than to travel to the one in their own County. Jill Schiff noticed that the placements seem low and Ms. Rios-Rivera explained that there is a discrepancy in the state data input technique at different locations causing the numbers to be incorrect but corrective measures are being taken to train state staff. We also find that employers are often reluctant to provide some of the information needed for this report.

## **9. 2014-2015 BUDGET (NOTICES OF OBLIGATION/ADDITIONAL FUNDS)**

Adrienne Keaton presented the Board with the comparison of the budgets from PY 13 and PY 14 as shown on the chart in the meeting packet. The SETC requires that we present the WIB with this information to approve the budget.

WIA funding was increased by \$872,000 (17.2%), TANF funding was the same. We have not yet received the Notice of Obligation for the Learning Links, but expect it to be the same as the previous year. Some counties closed their Learning Links last year due to inadequate funding. Jill Schiff asked when we decide if we close since we have not yet received the funding and was told that the decision would be made soon.

The Budget handouts include listings by funding streams. Most things (including cost of health benefits, rent and some indirect costs) have gone up. Ms. Rios-Rivera pointed out that the budget should, but doesn't, include our partners. It only shows how Workforce Development allocates the funds and it uses the same format as last year. Ms. Schiff requested a comparison of the two years. Ms. Rios-Rivera said it would be provided.

Some items are fixed costs such as rent, health/pension, vendors (procurement) and RFPs for youth. The Board was reminded of the passage of a policy to give an increased stipend to youth who travel more than 20 miles one way to training as part of the increase in costs. Ms. Schiff also asked if an update could be provided at the October WIB meeting showing what has been spent quarterly as of August. There is a requirement that at least 80% of funds be spent every year with 20% allowed to be carried into the next year.

A request was made by the chair for a motion to pass the 2014/2015 budget as presented and was made by Bernice Proctor Venable and seconded by Maryann Lovas. It was brought to a vote with all approving it, no one opposed and no abstentions.

The vote to approve the 2014/2015 Budget passed unanimously.

## **10. REVIEW OF STRATEGIC PLAN**

Ms. Keaton reminded everyone of the goals chart we work from and that we will keep working on the goals set out but, with the new legislation we will probably have to re-evaluate and modify the chart. Hopefully in the next month or two we will receive more information and guidance from the state.

## **11. COUNTY PORTAL**

Kathy Shaw gave some updates and explained that it is for Commercial Properties and that the portal is live and is updated at least monthly with deed information. The County wants it to be a “One Stop” for data information and they eventually hope to be able to offer a mobile app for the portal. Amy Bellisano mentioned that she had gone onto the County website and tried to find the portal and current information but found it difficult.

## **12. YOUTH RFP – CONTRACTS AWARDED**

The two Youth RFPS were reviewed by committee and one was recommended to the Board at the April Meeting and awarded to Middlesex County College by the Freeholders at the June 5, 2014 meeting. It is for a total of \$378,414 for three programs: HSE Program in Carteret, HSE Program Perth Amboy and Youth Work Readiness on the main campus.

## **13. MASTER AGREEMENT**

Nina Rios-Rivera explained that after receiving feedback from employers, we added a writing/work readiness component to the training program contracts. It started with the Youth programs. Eight to ten hours is being added as “work readiness” to adult programs. We give the schools an outline of what needs to be covered and they must issue a certification that this “soft skill” area was completed successfully.

## **14. AUDITS**

Adrienne Keaton told the Board that two audits were conducted recently: Fiscal Operations and Youth/TANF Procurement. We passed both of them and have nothing outstanding.

## **15. HSE/GED STATUS**

Timothy Timberlake from the New Brunswick Public Schools gave some background on the new tests and how current test takers are doing. Tests are still given by pencil and paper but that will be phased out soon and will then only be available to take on a computer. Hopefully, that change will eliminate some of the glitches that have been occurring. No diplomas have been issued by the state yet because of some IT problems, but hopefully that will be solved soon.

His center is showing an approximate 50% pass rate from March and June and many are retaking the sections they fail and passing the test at that point. This program allows them to mix and match sections from the three different vendors which might be the cause of some of the reporting problems.

They anticipate changes to the math section to include more Algebra II and Geometry than is presently on the test.

#### **16. ELIBIBLE TRAINING PROVIDER LIST STATUS**

Adrienne Keaton reviewed the new system where the state lists a “Report Card” on line showing the placement rate of all students (not just WIA) at approved training schools. The schools were told that if they did not submit the placement rates they could be dropped from our approved lists for WIA clients. No school has been removed from the list yet. Most of the schools we use submitted the information on time. The information on the site is from March 2013 and has not been updated by NJ DOLWD yet. We use our own data to determine placement rates for the schools we use so this has not been an issue for us.

#### **17. YOUTH TAXI SPECS**

Nina Rios-Rivera reminded the Board of its policy to pay transportation costs for Youth to attend training. She explained the procurement process for this service and said that for many of the companies the paperwork is overwhelming. They just can’t predict the time and expense that would be involved. We went out for bids in conjunction with WFNJ but rejected the first set received for Youth services because they were too expensive. We went out for bid a second time and gave the bidders more information to work with and are waiting for results on that now. If nothing is acceptable this time, we may be able to negotiate for some of the services as allowed in the Local Public Contracts law.

#### **18. NEW BOARD MEMBER ORIENTATION**

Ms. Rios-Rivera announced that we will be having an orientation session for new members in mid-September or early October. All are invited to attend, not just the new members. It will review and reinforce responsibilities as Board members required by the Workforce Investment Act. Hopefully, we will also be able to include some information comparing the current WIA and the new WIOA legislation.

#### **19. JOB FAIR IN SOUTH BRUNSWICK**

Ms. Keaton announced that we will be hosting a job fair in South Brunswick on September 30 at the request of Dan Frankel, former WIB Chair. The township is having a lot of community events that week and we had a good response at the last job fair held at that location in May 2013.

#### **20. NEW BUSINESS**

Bernice Proctor Venable referred to a handout placed in the meeting packet from the American Cancer Society. They are looking for volunteers to help out at their booth in North Brunswick on National Night Out. They will also be looking for volunteers to “Stride” which is their major fundraiser taking place later this year.

## 21. QUESTIONS/COMMENTS

The floor was opened for any questions or comments on materials previous emailed or in the meeting packet.

Gloria Aftanski asked how the new requirement will affect how we were partnering with the libraries. Ms. Rios-Rivera told her that we plan on continuing to have staff go to the library for presentations. Ms. Keaton said she hopes that the new WIOA legislation will broaden the relationship with the libraries and help them become more involved and reach more people.

There being no more business, the motion was made and the meeting was adjourned.

### Handouts

#### ***Emailed ahead of time:***

- Agenda
- Minutes of April WIB meeting
- Recommended Slate of Officers 2014-2015
- Designee Form for WIB Voting Purposes

#### ***In packet:***

- Agenda
- Recommended Slate of Officers 2014-2015
- WIOA Summary Sheet – Key Improvements from Current Law
- MCOWD Contracts Written Pie Chart
- 2014 School Matrix
- MCOWD Placements Report (Charts by Occupation and Industry)
- Performance Measures
- MCOWD WIA and WFNJ Data
- PY2014 Allocation vs PY2013 Allocation
- Department Budget for PY2014
- National Nite Out! Volunteers Needed!
- Performance Matters Chart

**The next meeting of the Workforce Investment Board will be October 28, 2014.**