

COUNTY OF ULSTER

Workforce Development Board

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Tomasine Oliphant, Director

Ulster County Workforce Development Board Meeting (via Zoom)

February 9, 2021

Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT – John Eickman, Arnaldo Sehwerert, Sean Mahoney, Angela Patella, Chris Marx, Alex Cordova, Frank Falatyn, Jim Ferraro, Mike Iapocce, Nels Leader, William McKnight, Donald Mapes Jr., Anthony Mignone, Don Lucarello

MEMBERS EXCUSED -

MEMBERS ABSENT - Heidi Rosborough, Tony Marmo

ALSO PRESENT – Tomasine Oliphant, OET Director/WDB Director, Faith Golden, OET Deputy Fiscal Director, Lisa Snyder, OET

The meeting was called to order at 3:36pm by Sean Mahoney WDB Chair. There was a quorum.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Sean asked for a motion to approve minutes from September. Motion by John Eickman, seconded by Anthony Mignone. All in favor. Minutes approved.

2. FINANCIAL REPORT: Faith Golden, OET Deputy Director

Faith stated that Adult training expenses are on track for this program year. We are a bit behind on Youth spending, but there is time still to make up for that until the end of June. For Dislocated Worker funding, we are ahead of the game right now. There is some flexibility for balancing spending between adults and dislocated workers. Dislocated worker money has been kept in DW without transferring. Administrative money is right on track for the end of the program year. We can transfer money between Adult and DW. We still have some training funds left and we have extra Youth money that we are working on spending. Summer Youth Employment money is a different category than Youth. Training options are limited right now. CNA is being used quite a bit. A lot of the training monies were not available at the beginning of the program year. Chris noted a decline in enrollment due to COVID. Frank asked about the increase in DW spending. Faith explained that there are many people who qualify as DW right now. One of the criteria for being a Dislocated Worker is to be on unemployment for 13 weeks or more. There are more Dislocated Workers out there right now.

3. DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Tomasine Oliphant, Director

Tomasine advised the board that Troy Snyder, Disability Resource Coordinator retired in November. His replacement, Michael Thomason, has jumped right in and is doing a great job running the Ticket to Work Program. Troy trained him well. OET has steady staff now.

Tomasine advised the board that she is working on the MOU with our Career Center Partners.

The Career Center is still closed to the public, but staff are providing services electronically and in-person by appointment only. Staff time in the office is limited as much as possible to keep staff and customers safe. DOL staff are still working remotely. The county maintenance staff is cleaning the Career Center twice a day.

OET is working with Economic Development on Sector Strategies. Tomasine spoke about the Health Care Consortium with OET, SUNY Ulster, and Ulster BOCES, and are reaching out to employers to find out about training needs. An Essential Skills Survey with a letter from the County Executive will be sent out to employers to help us better understand the needs of the employers in the healthcare sector. Chris Marx stated that they had started out with a smaller survey and got very good feedback. Chris mentioned Labor Market Reports and trends. An in-depth, detailed survey from employers is the best way to get a good handle on current needs and what may be needed for the future. It was noted that Ulster BOCES has shut down its LPN Program. Currently, there is a very strong need for LPNs.

Tomasine spoke about the Green Careers Coalition and working with Citizens for Local Power. She stated that Bill McKnight has been very helpful with this. The CLP provides interns who go into the OJT Program and from there to permanent employment. They also provide a mentorship component and Donald Mapes and his wife, Kim, have contributed greatly to the program. Tomasine stated that OET's work with this coalition will be featured in the State of the County Address. There will also be a Green Careers survey sent out and Tomasine will have data to share at the next board meeting.

An Ad Hoc Committee has been created for the hospitality and tourism sectors. Jennifer Murray will be on the SBDC team and she comes from the hospitality industry. She is experienced in safety training and protocols, webinars, inclusion policies, etc. Chris stated that Lisa Berger recommends that we start with a small coalition of business owners. Lisa will join us at the next WDB meeting. Discussed hospitality workforce needs in the industry.

We also have an Ad Hoc Committee to support both the Summer Youth and Young Adult Employment Programs. Members include Ashley Knox, Nina Dawson, Frank Mulhern, Stephen Casa and Mike Iapoco. We need to find a way to reach out-of-school youth. We are working on both entrepreneurship and mentorship components for YAEP, and if it goes well, we will expand to SYEP. Mentorship pieces are idea when working with youth. Tomasine stated that we are working more concurrently with our Economic Development and Tourism Departments, and that other counties are looking to do the same.

Coursera: Coursera is now being administered by DOL. OET still has a microsite. This is a tool for enhancement and a segue way to SUNY Ulster and Ulster BOCES. Tomasine will have more to share on this at the next board meeting.

Nels asked how much information/support comes from the state for CLP and green jobs? Not much support, most of it is grass roots on the ground. NYSERTA is very helpful. Pattern for Progress has regional resources and Tomasine can provide information on this. Nels mentioned the Community Protection Act which specifically addresses climate issues, housing, energy efficiency, etc. Website is: climate.ny.gov.

Bill McKnight stated that he will be meeting with BOCES regarding their industry curriculum. Bill will have an update at the next board meeting. Discussion followed.

Sean noted that everyone is trying to do a lot of different things considering the 2,200 jobs lost in Ulster County. These coalitions and committees are working hard to get these jobs back. Discussion followed.

Don stated that DOL staff are still processing many U/I claims with a small amount of career activity – trying to get U/I recipients to transition to jobs. There are still so many U/I issues coming in. We are hoping to see less in the spring, but that may not happen.

Discussed vaccination worker trainings. Sean stated that more and more people will be needed to vaccinate. Once people are vaccinated, that may be one way to get the workforce back.

Nels spoke about the difficult in finding ideal candidates in the mid-high level and a struggle to retain good employees. Where are they? Tomasine spoke about the Employability Assessment Tool and will send this to Nels. Sean noted that there is a disconnect between needed employees and the increase in U/I claims.

Mike stated that one dynamic for attracting youth to the workforce is training and incentive programs. Foster kids approaching adulthood need additional supports. Mike said that young working people are not in the priority populations and this may be something to speak with County Executive about. There are currently 70,000 people in the priority population waiting for vaccinations. This could inhibit re-entry into the workforce. Discussion followed.

Anthony mentioned that he is on the Vaccine Equity Panel and they are looking at June or July. When co-morbidity kicks in, more people will be included.

Mike mentioned that according to a recent housing study, many individuals and families must allocate a substantial portion of their finances for housing needs. Discussion followed. Sean asked if young people could afford to live here? Hopefully there will be new regulatory legislation coming from the county soon. Affordable housing is vital for getting young people to stay in Ulster County.

4. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Sean thanked everyone for their input and asked for a motion to adjourn. Motion made by Chris Marx, seconded by Donald Mapes. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 4:23pm.

ULSTER COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
NEXT MEETING:
Tuesday, April 13, 2021

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