

DRAFT
WASHINGTON COUNTY
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING
WebEx Meeting
September 16, 2020

Members Present

Christopher Eng	Susie Evans	Jordan Fry
Tara Gearing	Erin Kampa	Jeff Klemmer
Cynthia Larson	Rachel Perez	Monica Ramirez
Greg Renne	Julie Strommen	Tom Yuska

Action Team Members

Tom Colosimo	Andrea Dunn	Stan Karwoski
Michelle Kemper		Sara Shanley

CareerForce Staff Present

Deb Cunningham	Tina Dudzinski	Robin Hakari
Rachel O'Connell	Karen Ritter	Rick Roy
	Thai Yang	

WDB Partners

Sharon Blomgren	Michael Dolphin	Cherylee Sherry
Dawn Nickleson		Lee Okerstrom

1. Meeting Called to Order by Vice Chair – Monica Ramirez

Vice Chair, Monica Ramirez, called the meeting to order. The attendance of Members, Action Team Members, Partners, and CareerForce staff was recorded. It was determined there was a quorum of business members in attendance. A Motion was made to approve the Agenda, it was seconded, and the Motion was approved. A Motion were made to approve the meeting minutes from June 17, 2020, it was seconded, and the Motion was approved.

New Board Member Introduction: Rick Roy introduced new WDB member Julie Strommen from Renewal by Andersen. She has been working with our Pathways to Prosperity Manufacturing project. Julie said she is thrilled to be at Renewal by Andersen as her background has always been manufacturing and engineering. They are partnering with Great Rivers Adult Education Consortium on a variety of successful projects to develop a pipeline of workforce ready participants.

2. Covid-19 Updates – WDB Members and CareerForce Staff

Rick Roy, CareerForce Woodbury: The License Center needs to expand and is taking over a significant area forcing the relocation of CareerForce staff. Construction on the expansion starts today and we will continue to operate virtually. The Stillwater, Forest Lake, and Cottage Grove locations are open on a limited basis by appointment only. The Career Lab in Forest Lake will be moved into the library.

Monica Ramirez, Century College: Their instruction is about 90% online. Her department of science, technology, engineering and math has 64 employees who are working from home with 11 working from school. They have a great technology system where students can check out lap tops. Their Student Services Center has some online and some face-to-face services. Her division's enrollment is down 4-5% which is good considering some schools were down over 30% last spring. The Sciences have lab kits and most can be done online except for organic chemistry. They had an outdoor open house where employees and students were issued free face masks. Their President is really on top of things.

Susie Evans, Great Rivers Adult Basic Education Consortium: All classes are offered virtually except English in the workplace in Cottage Grove. They have a GED testing center in Hastings. Their ABE English as a Second Language classes are full and they are adding another teacher. The past week they have been working on grants for healthcare. They are also reaching out to people who have been isolated and may need education.

Chris Eng, Washington County Community Development Agency (CDA): The first round of the CARES Grant ended August 22 and 375 applications were received for grants of up to \$15,000. The second round came out last Thursday and the deadline for applying is September 24. Chris thanked Commissioner Karwoski and the County Board which put \$10 million into small business grants across the County. There is a short window to apply and if the money is not spent by December 1st, it goes back to the Federal government. Information on the grants can be found on the CDA website. <https://washingtoncountycda.org/>

Stan Karwoski, County Board: The County Board gave 1/3 of the CARES grant money to business relief which is more than most counties. Small business is the lifeblood of the County and they want to make sure businesses stay healthy.

Erin Kampa, Vocational Rehabilitation Services: Staff will be working from home until the first of the year and are not meeting directly with participants. Referrals are down but there was an influx of applicants when the extra \$600 in unemployment ended. Some people who were furloughed are not being rehired and their unemployment is ending. Less referrals has meant they were able to take 322 people off their waiting list. Right now they are working with those who have the most severe disabilities but other categories may be opening up in the future.

Cindy Larson, DEED: CareerForce services are being provided virtually – resumes are reviewed by phone or e-mail, mock interviews are done through WebEx, Teams or Skype, and virtual workshops are available statewide. They are still getting calls about unemployment but can only give general information and refer them to unemployment's customer service.

Tom Yuska, Family Means: Family Means worked with Public Health and food shelves to bring truckloads of food to Landfall and Cimarron and served 100-150 families. Youth programming has been virtual for older teens and they are doing a hybrid model this summer with social distancing. This is more of a challenge for younger youth whose parents can be hesitant. They have programs offering academic help with zoom now that school has started. In these communities, 40% of the kids have to share devices and don't have enough

connectivity to be online at the same time. They have applied for a grant to purchase Chromebooks, tablets and to boost internet speed. Rick added the libraries are buying tablets and hotspots with some of the CARES funding they received.

Greg Renne, Finishing Trades Institute Upper Midwest (FTIUM): Apprenticeship classes started a week ago and they have a large facility to keep everyone separated. A pre-apprenticeship training program through their worker readiness program has started with reduced enrollment. There are 12 high school students in dual enrollment spending part of their day in training and incorporated into apprenticeship classes. Classes are running at about ½ capacity with a mixed schedule and employees and students fill out a survey each day to keep everyone safe.

Jordan Fry, International Union of Painters and Allied Trades District: Office remodeling has declined affecting work in the finishing trades and some members are taking time off. Some job sites had to shut down for a few days because of Covid.

Karen Ritter, CareerForce Woodbury: There have been 40+ referrals for the Dislocated Worker Program since July 1st. Calls picked up after the extra \$600 in unemployment ran out. Counselors report problems getting people to engage and are doing everything remotely by phone and e-mail. The WIOA Adult program is having problems recruiting people and is reaching out through social media. The Legacy Career Force and Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) is for people 55 and older. SCSEP participants are beginning to return to work if their host site is open and precautions are in place. The Youth Program counselor, Sheng Xiong was out for military training but now is wrapping up the summer youth Career Pathways program.

Tina Dudzinski, CareerForce Woodbury: There has been a large influx of referrals for the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) for cash assistance now that the \$600 unemployment payment has ended, which made many families over income. The Diversionary Work Program has been waived and people are going directly onto the longer term MFIP program because of the high unemployment rate. It is difficult to keep people engaged with mandatory work participation. Counselors are focusing on connecting people with classes and resources while they are home with children to be better prepared to work in the future. The Pathways to Prosperity program ended and it was a challenge to move it to distance learning. Even though they started with full recruitment, the majority dropped and they are unsure why. The pandemic made it difficult to develop rapport with people and keep in contact with them.

Jeff Klemmer, EXIT Realty Springside: There was a lull in March but now the housing market in Washington County and the Twin Cities is healthy with more buyers than sellers. Very few agents are coming into the office or to closings which are done directly with the title person. August showings are up 26.2%, Washington County sales are down 12.6% and the number of homes for sale are up 46.1% over the same time last year. Washington County home values are up 8.9% over last year. Rick Roy added he read Minneapolis is one of the cities with the largest exodus of people and wondered if it was because of the recent unrest there.

Julie Strommen, Renewal by Andersen: In March, April and May there was a significant downturn in business because their business model was tied to retail showrooms, in-home sales, and live event marketing. The company moved to a significant cost cutting model with voluntary and involuntary layoffs and reductions in spending and projects. As people spent more time in their homes and their sales team pivoted to virtual reality based apps, sales went through the roof. They have been onboarding at least 28 people every week to build their team on the manufacturing floor adding overtime and weekend shifts. They are committed to creating a safe environment at work with temperature and symptom checks, free PPE, a new cleaning protocol and additional barriers between work spaces. There is an intake process with Covid cases and no disciplinary action because of absences. New technology is being tried out to determine a six foot distance with wearable sensors when people are too close. This is also helping them understand what jobs should be modified. Temperature kiosks have just been installed in some areas that allows or denies access to buildings. Safety is a priority for Andersen's.

Rachel Perez, St. Therese Senior Living Center: This is a difficult time in senior care with ever changing rules and regulations. Masks are mandatory and weekly Covid testing is required depending on the number of cases in the County. Drive through testing of staff has started and everyone has tested negative. Staffing is their biggest challenge because they lost employees who were afraid of getting Covid. The psycho-social aspect of lockdown is becoming very difficult for residents and brings unexpected challenges. Services for seniors such as hair salons and other services are starting to open.

They are working with Century College to train people through online learning with skills testing done onsite. They are in crisis staffing mode right now with too many open direct care positions. The impact has been huge but they have been successful in preventing a Covid outbreak. One patient developed it and was discharged and a couple staff cases isolated at home. Everyone working at home has returned to work.

Michael Dolphin, Medtronic: He is interested in joining the WDB because of the diversity of representation in government, non-profits and business. He is a lawyer by trade but is now working with cyber security at Medtronic in their cardio vascular unit. He sees markets changing towards a tech focus; he comes from traditional education which would be a useful asset in communicating that to the younger population. He is a Marine Corp veteran with two tours in Iraq and is interested in helping vets transition back into the community.

Sarah Shanley, Northeast Metro Intermediate School District: All the schools are up and running on a hybrid model although all districts are different. She works with all of the secondary career and education teachers and if you have any information to pass on to high schools, let her know.

Lee Okerstrom, Veteran's Services, DEED: Lana Hogan has been transferred to help Andrea Dunn by covering Woodbury, Cottage Grove and a special project with female veterans. Andrea will work in Forest Lake and the northern counties. Lee is covering Washington, Ramsey, Anoka and further north. One of their business reps in St. Cloud left and people are moving around to cover that position during a state hiring freeze. Companies should let Lee know if they are looking for employees because he has veterans looking for

jobs. The unemployment rate in Minnesota is 6.6% right now. **Jordan Fry** added they have a Helmets to Hardhats program that waives fees for Veterans and they can use their benefits to attain an Associate Degree. <https://helmetstohardhats.org/explore-trades/>

Dawn Nickleson, Passion for Dining and Nutrition: Dawn and her husband have a small business in Cottage Grove supporting culinary services at senior living facilities. They are very interested in workforce in Washington County and she may join the Board later.

Sharon Blomgren, St. Paul College: She was a former WDB member for three years. Culinary, nursing, and technology students are back on campus but they are encouraging students and instructors to work remotely if possible.

Tara Gearing, J.L. Schwieters Construction: They have made adjustments with shifts and provided PPE for employees. Their employees are out in the field and social distancing. In the spring business was slower but has picked up and recruitment has been a challenge even after unemployment bonuses ended. Virtual job fairs don't have the same engagement as in-person fairs. **Commissioner Karwoski** commented Schwieters donated picnic tables to restaurants to expand their outside seating. Tara said three tables were donated to the St. Paul homeless shelter.

Workforce Development Board Action Teams – Rick Roy: The October and November Action Team meetings will be from 8:30 to 10:00 through WebEx with the Oversight Action Team at 10:15. Chairs and Vice Chairs are needed.

3. Other Updates – Rick Roy

State Policy on Board Membership: The Board made two changes to their policy in June regarding membership and submitted them to the state and federal government for approval. The state passed a policy allowing the Chief Elected Official to approve one member who does not reside or have a business within the County to join the Board if the business hires from and is engaged with the communities within the County. The other change was a member who does not have higher decision making authority can join the Board with a letter from the department supervisor giving permission to represent the organization. These changes are out for 30 day comment.

Conflict of Interest Form Signature: The Conflict of Interest and Code of Conduct form needs to be signed annually and will be sent out to members. Return to Rick or Rachel.

4. Motion to Adjourn – Vice Chair, Monica Ramirez

A Motion was made to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded, and the Motion was approved.