

Workforce Alliance Board Virtual Meeting Minutes

April 30, 2020

Board Members Attended: Joe Mirra, Robin Golden, Marc Nadeau, Maria Campos Harlow, Larry McHugh, Toni Walker, Andrew Inorio, Bonita Grubbs, Chris Brown, Jeanine Reckdenwald, Howard Hill, Marcia LaFemina, Linzi Bell, Angel Rivera, Mary Burgard

Board Members Absent: Stephanie Wolfe, Garrett Sheehan, David Reitz, Tiana Ocasio, Serena Neal-SanJurjo, Ed Dooling, Chris Cozzi, Richard Borer, Dr. Thomas Coley

Invitee, Erika Lynch, Mike Dunne, Pamela Tonello, LouAnn Gallichio, Lisa Sementelli, Marci Reed, Steven Winkler, Keri Humphries

Staff: Bill Villano, Ann Harrison, Josie Vazquez, Kym Branch, Wanda Lary, Earl Foster, Chris Reardon, Sudhakar Vamathevan, Jill Watson, John Brancato and Jill Watson

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Golden at 8:00 a.m.

Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the previous meeting were presented, with no comments/changes Mr. Mirra made a motion to accept them, Ms. LaFemina seconded. The minutes were approved unanimously.

Introduction of new Workforce Alliance Board Members

Ms. Golden asked the new members to introduced themselves. Ms. Reckdenwald, Sr. Vice President, Employee Services from the Regional Water Authority, indicated that she is happy to serve on this board and looking forward to working on our mission. She added that she has worked for small and large companies and not for profits as well. Mr. Inorio, President/Field Representative for Local Union 455 in East Haven, is the Financial Secretary for the Building Trades Union and has worked for unions for the past 15 years. Linzi Bell, General Manager at the Hilton Garden Inn Hotel, indicated that she is very happy to be part of this group as well.

Workforce Alliance Staff Activities

Mr. Villano indicated that this meeting is going to focus on the staff activities since the COVID-19 outbreak. Ms. Branch will be giving an update on the Career Center Services and Ms. Harrison will update us on the On-Line Services and Customer Success Stories. Mr. Villano noted that our offices are still opened but with limited staff, we will have a few managers a day in the office and the rest of the staff, when not in the office, will be working from home.

Ms. Branch indicated that the American Job Centers (New Haven, Meriden & Middletown) have continued the services with customers and employers. She indicated that having a great company working with us (ResCare) has made this process much easier.

Virtual Career Center Services: Targeted workshops are now available online to help job seekers keep their skills sharp, staff led Zoom/WebEx Workshops, Individualized mock interviewing and also ResCare Academy Online courses, 8,000 plus vocational skills, job readiness, motivational financially literacy and adult ed courses (current customers only).

Virtual Intake and Enrollment: New enrollments, OJT's & subsidized employment contracts. New job seekers can watch our online orientation, also a new CT DOL system will allow for better management system. There will be ongoing Case Management & follow-up support to engage and support customers via daily phone and email communication.

Staff Development: Multiple Live ResCare webinars for both AJC and Workforce Alliance staff and online academic/courses for staff: Ms. Golden asked if we have a sense of how people know about our services now that the centers are closed or if they can access information on online. Ms. Tonello indicated that we placed a billboard on the Boulevard that indicates that we are still conducting business through online. Ms. Golden asked if the center was still receiving calls for unemployment issues, Bill said yes, we are still getting a lot of calls although Mr. Villano noted that DOL has hired state retirees to keep up with the individuals that have applied for unemployment in the last 4 weeks.

Ms. Harrison discussed the Virtual Services Stories, Adapting Virtually and Business Services Activities. She indicated that a staff coached a customer throughout a virtual on-boarding process with a new employer that included an on-line orientation. The customer now is working as a home health aide at Visiting Angels Health Care.

A partnership with CVS & Aetna led to placing a Project CEO youth as a Pharmacy Tech to fulfill essential medications. Her pharmacy tech training was made possible with Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA) funds. We have recorded orientations that right now are on our website, we are posting jobs on line, and on social media. Ms. Harrison noted that staff are going above and beyond to let our customers know about our programs.

On the Business Services Activities, Ms. Watson reported that staff continues to work with employers. They are doing weekly virtual meetings with their AJC sector teams and provide them with the current labor market information. She added that we are working with the New Haven Chamber to survey all of their members on the effect of COVID-19 on their businesses. Of the surveys that were sent out at the end of March, 355 responses have been received to date and 80% of the respondents are small businesses, 75% have laid off or furloughed their employees although majority will rehire their employees back when they have sufficient cash flow.

Mr. Villano showed the percent of unemployed workers seeking unemployment. We were at 3.7% for most of 2019 and for the first two month of this year. CT DOL said that by November 2020 unemployment in CT could be as high as 19.1%. They are also projecting it will take 20 months to return to March 2020 Unemployment levels.

Metrix Numbers

Mr. Villano indicated that Metrix is an Online Learning platform designed for the public workforce system with 5,000 courses from Skillsoft, a leading provider of training to Fortune 500 companies. Mr. Villano shared a copy of the Metrix registration numbers with the group. Mr. Villano indicated that the SkillUp CT program is coordinated by the Connecticut Workforce Development Council (CWDC) in collaboration with the Connecticut Governor's Workforce Council (GWC). SkillUp is the national brand and we are referring to it in our literature as Metrix Learning to avoid people confusing this initiative with our manufacturing program also called Skill Up. The Metrix/SkillUp CT allows access to on-line training programs at no cost to the customer. It is also made possible by funding from CHEFA and is offered through Connecticut's five regional Workforce Development boards. About 5,000 courses can be taken on-line with courses for beginning, intermedium and high levels. Mr. Villano added that right now, of the 250,000 people collecting unemployment, only 40,000 are registered in the state system with one of the workforce boards. We will be able to download those people from our region and this will be a good service for our customers.

Mr. Villano then discussed the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) estimated allocation for Program Year 2020-2021. WA allocations will be about \$500,000 lower than this year's allocation across the Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth Programs

Mr. Villano noted that the Summer Program funding is up in the air right now. There is supposed to be a special session to approve the FY20-21 budget, but we don't know when. If the budget isn't passed by July, the summer program probably won't happen this year. Mr. Brown noted that they are hiring for essential jobs, they also do online training using "linked in learning" to see what programs they have available. Mr. Villano thanked Ms. LaFemina for all her help with the Ex-Offenders Program. Ms. Grubbs added that they are still providing services in emergency cases throughout this time. Mr. Inorio added that they had some jobs that have been shut down, and that this is the time to bring apprenticeship programs back.

Regional Plan

Mr. Villano indicated that every 3-5 years we have to redo our regional plan but that the process has been delayed and we don't know when the process will continue. He noted that once the process starts again, we will need to bring the CEOs Executive Committee and the WA Board members together for a joint meeting to have both groups approve the plan.

With no other business, the meeting adjourned at 9:20 a.m.

Submitted by,

Josie B Vázquez