



**The Workforce Connection Board and Chief Elected Officials
Meeting Minutes**
**The Workforce Connection Board,
Workforce Board for Boone, Winnebago, and Stephenson Counties**

Meeting: June 2, 2020
Time: 8:00 am
Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting

- Board Members Present (27): Ben Bernsten; Scott Bloomquist; Karen Brown; ; Todd Cagnoni; Len Carter; Michelle Cassaro; Frank Delarosa; Pamela Fettes; Sue Fischer; Dr. Daniel Grohens; Jerry Guinane; Bob Guirl; Greg Harle; Geri Hayden; Angela Hite-Carter; Tim Hood; Vanessa Hughes; Amy Ott; James Pirages; Kraig Reichwald; Frank Rotello; Craig Steege; Mark Stefanic; Mark Williams; Ed Wood; Beth Young; Jeff Zeal
- Board Members Absent (8): Mark Adams; Eric Black; Nathan Bryant; Einar Forsman; Al Golden; Paul Logli; Jordan Priest; Dr. Rudy Valdez
- CEO Members Present: William Hadley; Frank Haney; Karl Johnson; Thomas McNamara;
- CEO Members Absent: None
- Board Staff Present: Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones; Chris Connors; Cathy Cornelius; Mike Johnson; Robert Jones; Amanda Sink; Dan White;
- Partner Staff Present: Tom Austin; Jessica Gonzales; Courtney Geiger;
Mary Ann Kolls
- Guests Present: Greg Nelson, Ultrasonic Power Corp.

- TWC Board Call to Order:** Board Chair Frank Rotello presided and called the TWC Board to order at 8:06 am.
CEO Call to Order: Mayor McNamara called the CEO meeting to order at 8:06am.
- TWC Board Roll Call:** A roll call was taken and a quorum was present.
CEO Roll Call: A roll call was taken and a quorum was present.
- Approval of Consent Agenda – Action Item:**
 - **TWC Board Meeting Minutes – 03/03/2020**
 - **CEO Meeting Minutes – 03/03/2020**

TWC Board

Motion: Harle **Second:** Ott **Approved**

CEO

Motion: Winnebago **Second:** Stephenson **Approved**

Approval of One Stop Operator (IDES, Goodwill and RVC) Renewal for PY20

Based on the Mid-Year Conversations and the Illinois Department of Commerce & Economic Opportunity programmatic and fiscal monitoring, it is recommended that the current One-Stop Operator be extended for PY20.

*Abstentions: Ben Bersten – President of Goodwill of NI, Jeff Zeal – IDES Rockford Office Manager
Beth Young – Interim President, Rock Valley College*

Motion: Brown **Second:** Fettes **Approved**

4. Employer/Public Engagement Spotlights

- Ultrasonic Power Corp. – Greg Nelson
Located in Freeport since 1984, Ultrasonic Power Corp. is a small company with less than 30 employees. Heard about The Workforce Connection benefits through IMEC and used Incumbent Worker Training funds to train their staff on new software to upgrade their reporting and engineering systems. They would not have been able to purchase the software and training without the assistance of the IWT funds. They also applied and received the COVID-19 Layoff Aversion Grant that TWC offered to local employers. They were able to purchase 6 laptops and able to work remotely during the COVID crisis. The timely measures they took to purchase additional equipment Allows their small business to be more flexible and continue working towards more success.. They have not laid-off any of their staff.
Greg invited Board members to come visit the company in 6 months to 1 year to see the difference the training has made in their company.
- Program Participant – Sofia Resindez, Youth Program Work Experience
Courtney Geiger shared the success story of one of the program participants. Sofia explored career options with her Career Planner and settled on Healthcare. She enrolled in Phlebotomy at Rock Valley College and was able to work through the Work Experience program and gain customer services, data entry and computer skills. She would not have been able to afford to go to college and support her young child without the help of The Workforce Connection Elevate Youth Program.

5. ITA Program Approval:

The Pathways to Careers Committee approved the following requests by Current Eligible Training Providers for training programs to further the skill development and education/training of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program participants. Board staff reviewed labor market information and outcome data to garner information about the effectiveness of programs as well as available industry recognized credentials.

All programs meet the Individual Training Account (ITA) federal and state guidelines and Local Workforce Board policies. All of these providers are on the approved training provider list for the state of Illinois. DCEO requires all programs to be re-approved every two years. All programs for re approval have met performance standards. A list of ITA Programs was provided on the Action Item Form in the agenda packet.

Motion to re-approve the training programs listed.

Abstentions: Tim Hood, Highland Community College, Karen Brown, Highland Community College and Beth Young, Rock Valley College

TWC Motion: Pirages Second: Fettes Approved
CEO Motion: Winnebago Second: Stephenson Approved

6. April 2020 Financial Report:

The Finance Report Summary for April 2020 reported the Adult and Dislocated Worker Minimum Training Expenditure percentage (60%) stayed steady although there are not many new participants. It is expected to remain above the 50% requirement and finish at approximately 55%-57%. The Youth Work-based Learning percentage (24%) and is projected to finish above the 20% requirement. Adult and Dislocated Worker training expenditures were at a combined 81%. Youth training obligations are at 80%. These are remaining steady and have a few new participants. Overall spending is trending very well and projected to meet goals.

Before receiving allocations, there was concern about having adequate carry-over funds for the next program year.

- **PY2020 Preliminary Budget Approval**

A preliminary budget is developed which includes WIOA formula allocations, estimated carry over funds and any additional grant funds. For Program Year 2020, LWIA 3 received an increase in WIOA formula funds of \$1,285,651. This increase made up for the reduced carry-over funds and allowed for level funding across all programs. A summary of PY20 funding sources and planned expenditures compared to the current year was provided on the action form.

Recommended subaward funding was also included for Goodwill of Northern IL for Youth Services for Boone & Winnebago County, Regional Office of Education #8 for Youth Services for Stephenson County and Rock Valley College (with a subaward to Goodwill of Northern IL) for One Stop Operator/Adult/Dislocated Worker and Trade Career Services.

These allocations are not COVID related, these are annual WIOA formula funds.

Motion: Finance Committee Second: Steege Approved
Motion: Stephenson Second: Boone Approved

Special Remarks by Mayor McNamara

Mayor McNamara addressed some of the concerns of the community related to protests. Youth and community came together in front of the federal courthouse to sing a song; You Are Somebody; to build unity in our community and educate young children on the struggles over the decades. Later in the afternoon there was a thoughtful and peaceful event at Haskell Park. There was a peaceful march down State Street to District 1 Police Station by about 1500 to 2000 people. As the crowd dwindled, tensions rose as the night went on and the remaining 75 to 100 became violent. The mayor, other community leaders and pastors from around the city held a press conference on Sunday to address the violence and communicated to the community that they don't want the violence to drown out the message. That evening there was some looting and damage but not nearly as bad as other cities. Monday night there was a large police presence to deter looting and violence. Another protest is planned on Tuesday night from Haskell Park at 5pm until 8pm. These are historic times and time for historic opportunities.

Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones thanked the Mayor and Chief Elected Officials for their leadership and taking time to join us today with everything else they're addressing in their communities.

7. **Lease Renewals for Rockford and Belvidere:**

Frank reported to the TWC Board and CEOs that the very complex lease renewal process is complete. He thanked those who served on the Ad Hoc Committee; Paul Logli, Ben Bernsten, Dan White and Dr. Bly-Jones. He also thanked Todd Cagnoni with the City of Rockford for connecting us with the state Central Management Services to work out the details of the lease. CMS was able to get a cost reduction to the lease cost as well as a 33% refund for paper products. The IDES space stayed the same but The Workforce Connection reduced space by about 5,000 sf by eliminating space on the west side of the 2nd floor. All other space remains the same. Overall savings will be \$99,000 per year for the first 2 years of the lease.

The Belvidere access site was co-located with RAMP and RAMP decided they no longer needed an office in Belvidere. To stay in the same building without doubling costs, a smaller space was procured through the landlord. A lower rent rate was realized however, we will now have to pay all utilities. Final cost will be \$900 rent plus utilities.

Once all documents are finalized, a special Executive Committee meeting will be called for approval.

8. **Economic Conditions and Opportunities**

Tom Austin gave an update on Labor Force Employment by Industry. He prefaced his report stating that this information is only what we know up to this point. He first reported on initial unemployment insurance (UI) claims for the Economic Regional EDR 5 which includes Boone, Stephenson, Winnebago and Ogle counties. As we know, claims data through April have rapidly moved up since February. All counties have trended up in UI Claims. Unemployment rate is at historical levels nationally, statewide and regionally. Prior to the pandemic, we were at historical low unemployment rate. The number of unemployed was shown to increase significantly with the April data. The largest decline in employment was in the Leisure and Hospitality industry with Manufacturing showing the next largest decline. Manufacturing was already showing a decline prior to the pandemic with layoffs occurring in the auto manufacturing sector. Tom also showed initial claims that began a significant climb in the beginning of March through the beginning of April where they began to decline. Continued claims began their significant climb toward the end of March and started showing decline in the beginning of May. Help wanted ads have not had a decline but employers have held those ads out there and we will have to keep tracking those job ads to see how they are affected.

Amanda Sink continued the conversation describing each of the industries highlighted in the Regional Plan, how they are effected by the pandemic and what the expected rebound will be as we shift to the new normal. IT was not identified as a targeted industry sector on its own because it is identified in many different sectors but will likely become a targeted industry in our region because of the growing number of people working at home. Also Agriculture production or Agribusiness has only had modest setbacks and is the only sector of the economy that has a trade surplus with China and there can be impact due to the pullback on trade with China. The majority of the Regional Plan will stay the same with the possible addition of IT as an emerging sector.

9. **Restore Illinois and Re-Opening American Job Centers**

Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones updated the TWC Board and CEOs on the reopening of the American Job Centers (AJC) as we enter Phase 3 of the Governor's plan. Because we have many organizations involved in the operation of our AJC with different policies related to COVID 19, it was decided to create a Board sub-committee. Currently the AJC in Rockford and access sites in Boone and Stephenson counties will not be opening. This is mostly due to the fact that IDES is not open and the perception of the general public that The Workforce Connection is the unemployment office as well as the sheer volume of people seeking help with UI Claims and concerns about social distancing and overall safety of the public and staff. Currently Career Seeker and Business services are being delivered remotely.

Courtney Geiger reported that staff have been delivering services via telephone, Zoom, virtual workshops, and utilizing DocuSign to deliver services to career seekers and employers. Staff have been responsive and

