



**Executive Committee and Chief Elected Officials  
Meeting Minutes**

**The Workforce Connection Board,  
Workforce Board for Boone, Winnebago, and Stephenson Counties**

**Meeting: February 2, 2021**  
**Time: 8:00 am**  
**Location: Zoom Video Conference**

CEO Members Present (4): Joseph Chiarelli; William Hadley; Karl Johnson; Thomas McNamara;

CEO Members Absent (0):

Executive Committee Members Present (10): Ben Bernsten; Scott Bloomquist; Karen Brown; Michelle Cassaro; Pamela Fettes; Bob Guirl; Vanessa Hughes; Amy Ott; Frank Rotello; Craig Steege;

Exec. Comm, Members Absent (0):

Board Staff Present: Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones; Chris Connors; Cathy Cornelius; Mike Johnson; Robert Jones; Amanda Sink; Dan White;

Partner Staff Present: Sue Carmichael; Ted Duckett; Courtney Geiger; Jeff Zeal

Guests: None

1. **Executive Committee Call to Order:** Board Chair Frank Rotello presided and called the Executive Committee to order at 8:03 am.

**CEO Call to Order:** Mayor McNamara called the CEO meeting to order at 8:04 am.

2. **Executive Committee 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.

3. **Approval of November 3, 2020 Meeting Minutes– Action Item:**

- **TWC Executive Committee**  
Correct minutes to remove details of closed session and just note that the committee entered into closed session.

**Motion: Fettes                      Second: Ott                      Approved**

- **Chief Elected Officials**

**Motion: Boone                      Second: Winnebago                      Approved**

4. **Employer and Participant Spotlight**

- **Employer Spotlight:** Lori Glawe with Caldwell Inc. was unable to join due to technical difficulties
- **Individual Spotlight:** Olivia Goral is an On-the-Job Training participant who is a recent college grad who was unable to get a job in her field of study. After connecting with The Workforce Connection, she was able to get an OJT position with Greenlink Energy Solutions as an Organizational Development Specialist which is the field in which she received her Bachelor's Degree. She works in Human Resources and Customer Relations. While Olivia was helped to get a job that was a good fit for her, the employer, Greenlink was able to get a really great employee.

5. **One Stop Operator Report:**

Courtney Geiger reported to the group the One-Stop did open for in-person services by appointment only last week with the region going to Phase 4 mitigations. Sue Carmichael reported that Career Planners are meeting with program participants both virtually and in-person and will continue to use the electronic processes that were implemented during the pandemic for the signing of documents. Jeff Zeal reported that the Rockford IDES office has hired 3 new employees to help with claims processing and they are looking to hire 6 more. Fraud is still an issue and IDES continues to put safeguards in place to prevent future fraud.

Mayor McNamara asked who he should direct Hard Rock Casino to connect with to fill positions at the temporary casino when it is approved and Courtney replied to reach out to her and Robert Jones.

6. **Committee Updates:**

Finance Committee: Amy Ott reviewed the most recent Financial Report. She also reported that due to the changes to our financial structure as the Fiscal Agent, it was determined that a full audit is no longer needed but an Agreed Upon Procedures engagement will be performed by a CPA to see if standard accounting procedures are being followed. The recent AUP conducted by Sikich, LLP resulted in no findings.

The Finance Committee is discussing how to increase non-WIOA or unrestricted funding in order to be more flexible and be a leader in Workforce Development in the community through additional grant funds.

Operations Management Council: Ben Bernsten started by describing the role of the council. The Council is comprised of One-Stop Partners and Board Members. The council develops and coordinates strategies for the One-Stop Partners. The last year they looked at Service Integration and did an assessment and from the assessment developed 3 goals. 1) Ensure process are streamlined and aligned; 2) Increasing and improving communication; 3) Improving Business Services across the partners. They continue to address various gaps in service delivery. These efforts have resulted in an updated Partner Guide that will help the partners refer customers to the services they need. The meetings have provided a great forum for partners to share information related to navigating service delivery during COVID.

Youth Council: Scott Bloomquist reported that the Stephenson County Youth RFP timeline was released with the RFP being released on February 5, 2021. Recently the council discussed Skills Gaps for Youth with Chris Connors providing an interesting article and Ed Wood with Berner Foods discussing the skills gaps he see as an employer.

Performance and Accountability Committee: Bob Guirl reported that the committee has been working on analyzing additional data outside of the Labor Market Data. Recently they looked at the outcomes of Occupational Training on income and learned that income significantly increased post-training. Bob also reported that they will contract for more data analysis. Lisa Bly-Jones shared that a request for bid has gone out to do a data analysis on programmatic outcomes to show the community the return on investment and compare with state and national trends and show the value of workforce training long-term.

Pathways to Careers: Pamela Fettes reported the committee's role has expanded over the years to help align programs to meet the needs of the employers in the region. The committee also learned about CTE-Perkins and their efforts to align with WIOA, Competency Based Education in the Belvidere School District as well as at Rasmussen University and the connectivity between secondary and post-secondary school systems.

Employer and Public Engagement Committee: Craig Steege reported that the committee continues to look at how to better promote The Workforce Connection out to the community. The committee is looking at ways to be top of mind and provide easy access to business and individuals who need services. The Business Team launched the Salesforce Customer Management System (CRM). This system will allow the Business Team to have a clear and organized one point of contact approach when calling on businesses. This will help to stop multiple team members from contacting the same employer and avoid confusion among employers. The committee is connected to the work of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) because committee member Einar Forsman is a member of the IWIB Business Engagement Committee. Einar recently reported on the state's committee work with the Illinois workNet website which sparked the TWC committee to take a look at The Workforce Connection website and find ways to improve the user's experience. Robert Jones, Business Account Manager, developed an Adopt an Employer Program where the committee members will engage with employers in a business to business approach to help them get connected to business services that will assist them with any business matters related to COVID.

Robert Jones added that the Business Team is looking at developing a video concept that walks participants and employers through the process of receiving services through The Workforce Connection.

7. **Workforce Development and Stepping Up:**

Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones talked about the theme of Stepping Up. She shared the background of how the theme was adopted. Stepping up as a Workforce Board on the other side of COVID and being creative and innovative during uncertain times. It's important to be intentional. She asked the group what they thought of when they hear economic development. Some of the responses were:

jobs, new businesses, incentives, opportunities, business retention, assets of the region. There is a component to economic development that needs to be top of mind and that is people. Workforce Development is all about the people component. In other areas across the country, Workforce Development organizations were included in discussions around Cares Act funding spending and were often leading the projects. States often decide to invest in their #1 commodity and that is people. Ensuring that the training for the people was not interrupted during the pandemic; ensuring that the people were able to seek training in high demand occupations. They used WIOA program models and principals without having the restrictions of WIOA funds. In other areas Workforce Development is included in strategic conversations. A great example is all of the work went into getting a casino in Rockford. The next leg of the race is to better understand the casino jobs and ensuring we have a prepared workforce to fill the jobs. There is great potential of what our region could be if we work together and put people at the center of the conversation. Human potential is the golden ticket for the region. When working on any Economic Development project with a people component, please be sure to invite your local Workforce Development expert.

8. **Chairman's Remarks:**

Frank Rotello echoed Lisa's sentiments and talked about how the Board has grown and the great work of the staff and committees. Board members are the ambassadors for Workforce Development and all workforce development is local and is unique.

Frank opened the floor to the Chief Elected Officials to share their perspective on what is happening in their cities and counties.

Joe Chiarelli, Winnebago County Board Chair agreed that people are the #1 asset and the investment in the people is instrumental to any economic development project. The county is working on growing their economic development and being progressive and reaching forward. Economic Development has been stagnant over the past few years. He appreciates the work of The Workforce Connection.

Mayor McNamara, City of Rockford agreed that people are important and the city has used their money for rental and mortgage assistance as well as utility bill assistance. COVID has provided an opportunity to the City of Rockford to expand residency and is focusing on livability and quality of life to get people to move here. There is a \$100 million capital improvement plan. They are also focusing on the middle school slide and the students that are struggling and falling behind. It is estimated that they are approximately 18 months behind on learning. There is funding for a summer learning program for public schools and they are raising funding for private school students to also be able to participate in a summer learning program.

Karl Johnson, Boone County Board Chair shared that he has a new board and they are focusing on diversifying their workforce and get into other sectors and not solely rely on the automotive industry. They are hopeful that the Chrysler plant will remain a strong employer but see the need to diversify.

William Hadley, Stephenson County Board Chair shared that The Workforce Connection has been a great help with business in the county. The county is unique in that it has a lot of food processing companies and those companies have worked with The Workforce Connection to recruit new employees through Hiring Events and other methods. Renewable Energy, wind and solar, companies are also growing in the county.

**9. Executive Director Report:**

Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones provided a written report to executive committee and chief elected officials.

**Member Comments/Announcements:** Mayor McNamara asked if The Workforce Connection Board can take a position on a company status. Chairman Hadley suggested a resolution for all municipalities be drawn up for the Byron Nuclear Power Plant closing and the loss of 700 jobs. Mayor McNamara will meet with other city mayors and will get back to Chairman Hadley. Chairman Johnson would be on board as well.

Craig Steege announced that Rasmussen College is changing its name to Rasmussen University.

Pam Fettes announced that funding they received started a program for entrepreneurs and it is restarting this summer. She also reported that Stellantis is the new name resulting from a merger between Fiat Chrysler Automobiles and Peugeot S.A. This will allow the retention of the current employees and the current plant locations. They are now the 4<sup>th</sup> largest automotive employer in the world.

**10. Public Comment: None**

**11. Adjournment: A motion to adjourn was made at 9:29 am.**

<b>TWC Board Motion: Steege</b>	<b>Second: Fettes</b>	<b>Approved</b>
<b>CEO Board Motion: Boone</b>	<b>Second: Stephenson</b>	<b>Approved</b>

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Respectfully submitted,  
Cathy Cornelius

Date: April 21, 2021

**ITEMS INCLUDED IN THE MEETING PACKET**

Agenda 02-02-2021

Executive Committee / CEO Meeting Minutes 11-03-2020

Executive Director Report (Handout)

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