



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

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

Meeting: August 3, 2021
Time: 8:00 am
Location: Zoom Video Conference

- CEO Members Present (3): William Hadley; Karl Johnson; Thomas McNamara;
- CEO Members Absent (1): Joseph Chiarelli;
- Executive Committee Members Present (7): Ben Bernsten; Karen Brown; Michelle Cassaro; Pamela Fettes; Bob Guirl; Amy Ott; Frank Rotello;
- Exec. Comm, Members Absent (3): Scott Bloomquist; Vanessa Hughes; Craig Steege;
- Board Staff Present: Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones; Chris Connors; Cathy Cornelius; Amanda Sink;
- Partner Staff Present: Courtney Geiger; Karen McDonald,
- Guests: None

1. **Executive Committee Call to Order:** Board Chair Frank Rotello presided and called the Executive Committee to order at 8:05 am.

CEO Call to Order: Mayor McNamara called the CEO meeting to order at 8:13 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 May 4, 2021 Meeting Minutes– Action Item:**

- **TWC Executive Committee**
Motion: Ott Second: Brown Approved
- **Chief Elected Officials**
Motion: Boone Second: Stephenson Approved

4. **Policy Updates**

- **Human Resources Personnel and Payroll Policy:** Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones reviewed the Action Item form noting that the HR Committee has discussed the relationship with the City of Rockford as it relates to

HR matters and has determined that certain policy may be set by The Workforce Connection Board applicable to TWC Board Staff.

The HR Personnel and Payroll Policy has been modified to reflect Board Officer oversight of the Executive Director and the Executive Director's compensation and Pay for Performance merit increases.

The policy authorizes the Executive Director oversight of staff positions and compensation levels as well as Pay for Performance merit increases in accordance with City of Rockford policy and provided TWC appropriates the funds. Performance Reviews for all TWC staff will be conducted annually on a calendar year basis and completed no later than June 30th. Other modifications include the addition of policy relating to Telecommuting for Board Staff at the discretion of the Executive Director and any arrangements made may be discontinued at will and at any time at the request of either the employee or Executive Director.

Frank Rotello added that it takes a crisis to make you take a look at things and that's how the HR Committee was born. Because TWC has a Board separate from the City of Rockford, it is able to set its own policy. Looking forward we want to be progressive and look to seek non-WIOA funds. Karen Brown added that officers are applying the policy and compensation has oversight by the Finance Committee via the budget.

Motion to approve the Human Resources Personnel and Payroll Policy as presented and recommended by the Human Resources Committee.

TWC Executive Committee

Motion: Guirl Second: Ott Approved

5. Program Approvals:

Chris Connors reviewed the Action Item Form for ITA Programs requesting approval or re-approval. There were 2 programs from Rock Valley College and one program from Rasmussen University for re-approval which is a 2 year term. There were 17 programs for approval from Rockford Career College. Initial approval is only for a 1 year term. Bob Guirl raised the question of if there are 2 of the same programs from different providers, should we pay for the more expensive program. Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones replied that program selection is a customer informed choice. There are all different types of customers and different programs provide a variety of options. Bob would like additional information provided on the form in the future to include: length of the program; costs; and alternate ways to earn the same credential.

Motion to Approve / Reapprove the programs as listed and approved by the Pathways to Careers Committee.

TWC Executive Committee

Motion: Brown Second: Bernsten Approved

Chief Elected Officials

Motion: Boone Second: Stephenson Approved

6. Committee Updates:

- **Finance**-Amy Ott, committee chair. No report because there wasn't a meeting in July 2021. Amy added that all spending requirements were met for PY2020.
- **Operations Management Council**-Ben Bernsten, committee chair, reported that the committee has had great participation and attendance. The committee provided a forum for partners to share resources and best practices for navigating COVID. He thinks this allowed partners to be very responsive. At the last meeting the committee worked on the Re-opening Plan required by the state and that was completed and submitted. The committee's main focus over the last year has been the Service Integration Plan Goals. These goals included developing aligned and streamlined processes. A Service Integration Specialist position was created through a special grant. Since the position was created, referrals have doubled. The

grant is ending soon but the One-Stop Operator (OSO) is going to continue with this position. Frank Rotello asked Ben how the new One-Stop Operator transition has been going. Ben responded that it was going very well because he and Dr. Spearman of Rock Valley College, the former lead of the OSO Consortium; met with the staff of both organizations to let them know what to expect.

- **Youth Council**-Amanda Sink, Board Staff Youth Council Liaison reported that at their last meeting, the committee gave updates on each of their respective organizations. They also discussed jobs of the future for youth and the competency and technical skills that will be needed. They discussed the healthcare pathways for youth and how they would start campaigning on the career options and pathways available to them in healthcare. Lisa Bly-Jones added the CNA occupation has been removed from the approved training list and Lisa brought it to the attention of the Illinois Workforce Innovation Board (IWIB) that local workforce areas still provide ITAs for youth and this is a viable step on healthcare pathway or career exploration occupation for youth.
- **Performance and Accountability Committee**-Bob Guirl, committee chair, reported that the committee received a review of the Final Report of the analysis done on performance of services by Forland & Wheeler. They will present to the full board in September. It's a good look at 4 years of data of demographics and outcomes.
- **Pathways to Careers**-Pamela Fettes, committee chair, shared that this committee is responsible for the ITA program approvals. What has changed at the state level is that there is now a state-wide occupation list. The committee was reminded that they approve the program and not the training provider. They discussed the need to gather information to make sure that the customers can make a quality decision. They asked that every training provider include certain information with their request for approval, including how they address barriers and deficiencies for students. They also want to do a post-training survey of the TWC participants to show the outcomes of that training. In addition, they talked about work-based training policy approval and livable wages. Lisa added that asking training providers to report their outcomes is sometimes tricky because Higher Education has the mission of getting people an education and Workforce Development has the mission of getting people to work. We have to be consistent on asking completion rate and placement data. We just need to be sure they have those supports in place to make sure people are successful.
- **Apprenticeships**-Frank Rotello asked about our work with apprenticeships. Lisa Bly-Jones responded that the Apprenticeship Navigator Grant that was received was to educate employers on the different models. Employers are looking for additional resources to fund the apprenticeship models. That would mean dollars for the technical training and the OJT training. We have been working with employers to fund the OJT. We need additional training dollars to support the employers. We also need commitments from employers to wage progression. Chris Connors added that we work with the employers to create the standards for the apprenticeship along with the Regional US DOL person. We have had success with creating a Medical Assistant apprenticeship with FHN. We have been supplementing with Incumbent Worker Training and On-The-Job Training dollars.
- **Employer & Public Engagement**-Amanda Sink reported in the absence of the committee chairs. She reported that they received an update on metrics. They discussed how there is a limitation of funds. The committee continues to discuss how they can increase non-WIOA funds and deepening employer engagement. Strategies and methods to bring in more unrestricted dollars. At the next meeting they will discuss a playbook that is in development for the Business Service Team so that all reps are on the same page and working with the same united vision. Lisa added that Amada is working very hard to ensure that we are coordinating with Business Service Reps and has created the playbook. An Employability Certificate program has been developed for customers and is available to anyone in the community at no charge. Courtney Geiger has been working tirelessly to ensure that the Business Service Reps work is aligned with the Regional Plan. Asked if there will be an effort to get it high school grads, Lisa responded that this would be a great initiative for a community-wide campaign. This type of service would be

outside of WIOA and would require additional unrestricted funding. Perhaps the school districts could support this effort with American Recovery Act dollars they've received.

- **Human Resources Committee**-Karen Brown, committee chair, reported that the committee has been working on Diversity Equity and Inclusion and thought it was important to have a statement and set the standard for the community. Karen shared the statement with the group. Following the statement they will also have training for the Board and perhaps offering consultative services to employers in the region. Lisa added that the Healing Illinois Grant from United Way provided three forums on Building a Business Case for Diversity which set the stage for this. Employers were very interested in DEI. This will roll out at the Annual Meeting. Ben Bernsten commented that it is an excellent statement. The HR Committee will also be looking at compensation modeling to help the Board and Board Staff.

7. **Keynote Topic – Workforce Development Trends:**

Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones said that much of the information was shared throughout the meeting and that she would share her slide via email.

8. **Chief Elected Officials Reports**

Boone County: Chairman Johnson was happy to report the Rock Valley College ATC project is proceeding well. The county is working on many projects to bring jobs to Boone County. He is concerned about the Chrysler Plant and how the closing of that plant will affect the whole region. He hopes the region and the state will come together. The loss of this plant will have a huge effect on the whole local economy. He hopes the plant will stay in Boone County and continue to operate at a high capacity. Pamela Fettes as Executive Director of Growth Dimensions, economic development for Boone County, added that a letter has been sent to state officials and they have responded that it may take an Act of Congress, and they are talking about two incentive programs, the Blue Collar Act or JTED. She appreciates the support of officials in the region.

Stephenson County: Chairman Hadley reported that Stephenson County is receiving \$8.6 million in Cares Act funds and they will be used to provide sewer and water to an industrial park that is owned by the county in a TIF district. This will also benefit the city of Freeport by providing easy access to sewer and water for their airport.

Winnebago County: Chairman Chiarelli was unable to attend this meeting.

City of Rockford: Mayor McNamara first thanked Lisa Bly-Jones for assisting with the unemployment issues he received to his office. Lisa remarked that she routes those requests to Jeff Zeal, Rockford Office Manager with IDES and he does the great job of ensuring all issues are addressed. Mayor McNamara also thanked Courtney Geiger, Director of The Workforce Connection One-Stop Operator for coordinating a Job Fair for the city that includes the Rockford Chamber of Commerce and The Workforce Connection. He informed the group that the temporary casino is scheduled to open in the Giovanni's space in October and estimated to provide 160 jobs. The Hard Rock Casino in Rockford will look similar on the inside to the one located in Gary, Indiana. The city is working on a project to move fiber optic cable in front of every home and business in Rockford and has contracted Sci-Fi for the job. The city is also beginning Phase II of the West side improvement with light construction beginning soon. The focus is on infrastructure build and capital improvement. The city is facing a huge workforce issue of recruiting police officers. They have increased their budget by 30%. Historically, they have 300-400 applicants when they open recruitment. This year they only received 64 applicants. That number of applicants only nets 6 hires and they need 25 new officers. There is a national shortage for the sector. The shortage is so significant that cities such as Aurora are offering \$20,000 signing bonus incentives.

9. **Chairman's Remarks:**

Frank Rotello remarked that The Workforce Connection saw a 16% reduction in formula funds this year. He stressed the need for more non-WIOA funds. TWC is structured as a 501(c)(3) to receive funds from other sources. These funds would be used to address workforce issues not addressed under WIOA and to leverage

the WIOA funds received to be able to accomplish more. He also informed the committee that he and Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones were invited by the White House's Office of Intergovernmental Affairs to join a call on the importance of workforce development and the upcoming investments being made. Lastly he talked about the importance of identifying what businesses need and that the whole community needs to be focused on workforce development. The Workforce Connection is the entity to connect all the resources together.

10. **Executive Director Report:**

Dr. Lisa Bly-Jones provided a written report to executive committee and chief elected officials. She also added that the White House call was a great opportunity. She invited the committee and Chief Elected Officials to participate with the rest of the Board of Directors for a tour of the Rock Valley College Advanced Technology Center on August 25th at 3pm. Lisa informed the group that Mike Johnson has moved to the program side and she wanted to acknowledge all of the good work he did to help create the Performance and Accountability Dashboard and make it a visual tool.

11. **Member Comments/Announcements:** None

12. **Public Comment:** None

13. **Adjourn Chief Elected Officials Meeting:**

A motion to adjourn the meeting of the Chief Elected Officials was made at 9:15 am.

CEO Board Motion: Boone Second: Stephenson Approved

14. **Closed Session (Board Staff Performance & Compensation Review)**

Enter Closed Session at 9:16am

Exited Closed Session at 9:27

15. **Adjournment-TWC Executive Committee:**

TWC Executive Committee Motion: Ott Second: Steege Approved

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Cornelius

Date: August 11, 2021

ITEMS INCLUDED IN THE MEETING PACKET

Agenda August 3, 2021

Executive Committee / CEO Meeting Minutes May 4, 2021

Human Resources Personnel and Payroll Policy Action Form

Program Approvals Action Form

Executive Director's Report
