



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

Meeting: March 1, 2022
Time: 8:00 am
Location: Zoom Virtual Meeting

- Board Members Present: Ben Bernsten; Scott Bloomquist; Karen Brown; Todd Cagnoni; Kathy Crandall; Michelle Cassaro; Pamela Fettes; Sue Fischer; Einar Forsman; Jessica Greenberg; Bonnie Juarez for Bill Grennell; Dr. Daniel Grohens; Bob Guirl; Greg Harle; Kim Kuborn; Eva Kretschmar; Amy Nord; Amy Ott; James Pirages; Dan Ross; Frank Rotello; Dr. Amanda Smith for Dr. Howard Spearman; Mark Stefanic; Mark Williams; Ed Wood; Jeff Zeal
- Board Members Absent: Len Carter; Frank Delarosa; Al Golden; Vanessa Hughes; Jordan Priest; Craig Steege; Todd Wells;
- CEO Members Present: Joseph Chiarelli; William Hadley; Karl Johnson; Thomas McNamara;
- CEO Members Absent: None
- Board Staff Present: Cathy Cornelius; Amanda Sink; Dan White;
- Partner Staff Present: Joseph Agbeko; Courtney Geiger; Jessica Story
- Guests Present: None

1. **TWC Board Call to Order:** Board Chair Frank Rotello presided and called the TWC Board to order at 8:02 am.

CEO Call to Order: Mayor McNamara called the CEO meeting to order at 8:02 am.

2. **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 present.

3. **Approval of Consent Agenda – Action Item:**

- a) TWC Board Meeting Minutes – 12/07/2021
- b) CEO Meeting Minutes – 12/07/2021
- c) Program Approvals/Re-approvals as approved by the Pathways to Careers Committee
- d) PY2022 Regional and Local Plan Modification

TWC Board Motion: Brown Second: Ott Approved

CEO Board Motion: Boone Second: Stephenson Approved

4. **Personnel Matters**

- **Executive Director Hiring**

Frank Rotello reviewed the hiring process with the Board and Chief Elected Officials.

1. Request For Bid (RFB) released for Search Firm-Workplace Selected
2. HR Committee review job description
3. Visioning Session with Workplace to establish right fit
4. 36 online applications received
5. 8 completed initial interview
6. 4 moved on to complete Culture Index-results reviewed by Search Committee with Culture Index Consultant
7. 3 moved to in-person interview

Gina Caronna Marvin was selected as the new Executive Director for The Workforce Connection. Frank gave a summary of her background and qualifications. Karen Brown commented that the process was very solid and feels very comfortable with the decision. Jim Pirages agreed with Karen and thanked Frank for his leadership. Dr. Howard Spearman, President of Rock Valley College, endorsed Gina Caronna Marvin as a strong leader for the position. Bob Guirl and Kim Kuborn also endorsed Gina Caronna Marvin. Mark Williams endorsed Gina as a great person to lead the organization.

Motion: To approve the hiring of Gina Caronna Marvin as the Executive Director of The Workforce Connection beginning April 1, 2022, at a yearly salary of \$122,330.00.

Motion: Brown Second: Pirages Approved by Roll Call Vote

- **Board Staff Compensation Review**

Frank Rotella made a correction to the agenda, noting that this item was not an action item.

The Human Resources Committee was formed to assist the Executive Director with HR matters and is chaired by Karen Brown.

Karen Brown reported that during this time when recruiting and retention of staff is difficult and very competitive, the HR Committee realized the importance of recognizing the value of the Board staff. The HR Committee reviewed each staff member's current compensation, market data, and cost of living increases received and determined to adjust the current staff member's salaries. In lieu of an Executive Director being in place, they had the increases reviewed by the Finance Committee to ensure this fit within the budget. Frank added that the organization is running very lean at the moment with a vacant position and Dan White stepped up as Interim Executive Director with Cathy Cornelius and Amanda Sink supporting and keeping all functions moving forward. The City of Rockford Human Resources Department, Shurice Hunter, worked with the committee to help with the data and other matters to put this in place.

5. **Finance**

- **February 2022 Financial Report**

Amy Ott, Finance Committee Chair reviewed the February 2022 Finance Summary Report noting that Adult & Dislocated Worker Training Expenditures were at 65%, well above the 50% requirement. Youth Work-Based Learning spending requirement was at 21%, above the 20% requirement. Training Obligations for Combined Adult & Dislocated Workers and Youth Training costs will be rebalanced when a Budget Modification is completed in the next month or so and will transfer funds from Dislocated Worker Individual and Work-based training to Adult Individual and Work-based training. Subrecipient spending for the Boone/Winnebago County Youth Services and the One-Stop Operator & Career Services were above the reasonable spending requirement. The Elevate Stephenson Youth Services were slightly below and they are working to bring this up. Spending for AAR is below but they are catching up with submitting their documentation. The Overall Actual Costs & Obligations finds the Adult and Youth above the reasonable spending threshold with Dislocated Worker lagging behind and this will adjust with the Budget Modification. Participant Service Levels shows the goals

of the number of people being served in relation to the goals. Lastly a statement for the fund with the Community Foundation of Northern Illinois has been included.

6. **Boone/Winnebago Elevate Youth Services RFP Timeline**

Dan White gave an update on where the Request for Proposal (RFP) is in the process. The RFP was released on February 7, 2022, and a Bidder's Conference was held on February 16, 2022. The Intent to Apply is due on March 4, 2022 with Proposals due by noon on April 14, 2022. A review team will be assembled and will meet to review qualifying proposals the week of May 9, 2022.

7. **Mid-Year Conversations – Program Update:**

Dan White informed the group that Board and Program Staff meet quarterly to address any concerns before they become an issue and cannot be corrected. This report reflects information from October 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021. The enrollment numbers show that all programs exceeded their goal through the 2nd quarter.

The Subrecipient Spending for Elevate Boone & Winnebago and One-Stop Operator and Career Service met or exceed the spending goal and Elevate Stephenson is historically underspent at this time of year because some budget line items aren't typically spent until the end of the program year.

Both the Adult & Dislocated Worker Minimum Training Expenditures and Youth Work-Based Learning were well above the requirement.

He directed the group to read the Observations and Comments and noted that there were no concerns.

8. **Illinois Workforce Partnership (IWP) Awards**

Shelly Cassaro, Vice-Chair, announced the Business Leadership Award to Alpha Controls and congratulated Board Chair, Frank Rotello, co-founder of Alpha Controls who was given this award in recognition of his work with The Workforce Connection Board and other efforts in the community to serve businesses.

Amanda Sink, Strategic Initiatives Manager, presented the Innovative Solutions Award to AAR. AAR was recognized for its work in partnership with The Workforce Connection (TWC) to build local talent and provide opportunities for the region in aviation maintenance. Together AAR and TWC worked to develop a strong pipeline of talent and workforce equity and they diligently worked to create a comprehensive talent pipeline development plan including an innovative Sheet Metal Apprenticeship and as a result of the collaboration, advocated for \$2.6 million to come to TWC for this workforce endeavor. She thanked AAR and Ryan Goertzen for their partnership.

Amanda then presented the Individual Achievement Award to Julian Hernandez-Castillo. His goal when he enrolled in the Elevate Youth Program was to earn his GED and earn his post-secondary education. He completed his GED in 9 months all while navigating the challenges to education brought on by the pandemic. He then completed a 6-week welding program where he received an Industry Recognized Credential. He then completed a Work Experience where he could grow his skills. Currently he is working full-time in a welding shop. She congratulated Julian for completing all the goals he set when entered The Workforce Connection Elevate Youth Program.

9. **Workforce Highlights from Chief Elected Officials**

- **Winnebago County** – Chairman Chiarelli shared that the county just completed the Baxter Road infrastructure improvement that will support the new Amazon facility and the 300 jobs that it will bring to the county. There are also two businesses looking to locate to the south side of Baxter Road that will equate to \$60 million of equalized assessed value and are excited to welcome new businesses to

Winnebago County. They are in the final phase of the Solid Waste Management Plan where they are identifying waste needs for the future. He shared that Air Liquide announced that they will be building the world's largest gas recapturing plant in Winnebago County. The county is working with them on permitting and is excited for a sustainable energy company to come to the county.

He also shared that he is excited that businesses are taking advantage of the Winnebago County C-Pace Finance Program. The Commercial Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) finance program is an innovative tool that enables commercial property owners to obtain up to 100% long-term, fixed-rate financing for energy efficiency, renewable energy, resiliency, water use, and electric vehicle charging building improvements. Commercial property owners can receive funding for their projects from qualified Capital Providers. Lastly, the Winnebago County Sheriff's office has partnered with Rock Valley College to expand the Techworks CNC program to the jail for inmates.

- **Boone County** – Chairman Johnson shared that Growth Dimensions has been working hard on a project to bring a new company to Boone County that will bring up to 100 new jobs to the county. He reported that they are in a holding pattern on the Stellantis plant and thanked everyone for their support.
- **Stephenson County** – Chairman Hadley had nothing new to report at this time.
- **City of Rockford** – Mayor McNamara shared that the city is excited that the Community Development Financial Institution is moving forward and has announced its first loan. Mayor thanked Greg Harle and all the labor leaders for the expo for students and for providing great presentations for hundreds of kids from our area to experience what the building trades do on a day-to-day basis. He shared that they are preparing for summer employment opportunities with the City of Rockford for at-risk youth in the city's water department or for training with local businesses. He also shared that they have seen a 50% increase in applications for the Rockford Promise scholarship program. The city council approved an \$18 million development on Cedar Street to convert long-vacant buildings to retail and apartment space.

10. **One-Stop Operator Report**

Courtney Geiger, Director of Workforce, highlighted some of the information that was included in the monthly report in the agenda packet. She noted that intakes are strong for all programs. They have from 100-150 people per month. They have had several Rapid Response events for Stellantis at the UAW Hall in partnership with IDES Employment Services and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity and have met with 250 individuals to share information on training, employment, and other services available to them due to the layoff. Many individuals reported that they were called back to work at Stellantis or have opted to transfer to another area. They are working hard to connect with individuals to get the training or employment opportunities to keep them in the region. She shared that the Career Centers are very busy and employers setting up hiring events in the Career Centers to get talented employees instead of attending outside hiring events. Effective March 1, 2022, Career Centers are now mask recommended but optional. A Community Navigator position has been established and integrated into the operations at The Workforce Connection. The Service Integration grant provided for this position and has since expired but the position was found to be invaluable to help individuals navigate through everything in order to get the basics such as a birth certificate or driver's license, SNAP benefits, housing, and others. This has allowed more individuals to not only qualify to enroll in Workforce programs but other partner programs as well. The Workforce Connection continues to provide services through the Community Navigator at the Winnebago County Jail every Thursday. Upon release, many come to TWC for employment and other services. Courtney also thanked Greg Harle and the other Building Trade leaders for the Expo. TWC Elevate took a group of youths to the expo and they were very excited about the opportunities available.

Greg Harle thanked everyone for attending the expo and shared that apprenticeship is not only his career but his life's work. Going from having to attend an alternative high school to graduate and being selected for apprenticeship to now running one of the top vocational training centers in northwest Illinois, he wants

every kid to be able to “win the lottery” like he did and he wants this opportunity to be for everyone in the community.

11. Interim Executive Director Report

Dan White gave an update on the search for the Planning and Quality Assurance Manager. The position was posted on the City of Rockford website and received six applications. Four were sent to Frank Rotello for the candidates to complete the Culture Index Survey. We are awaiting those results to see which candidates will move on to the interview process. Currently, there are three staff members doing the work of five. He thanked Cathy Cornelius and Amanda Sink for helping.

12. Board Chair’s Perspective

Frank Rotello reflected on the comments throughout the meeting on the opportunities and challenges we are facing. Our region is competing with other regions to recruit and keep our talent. The One-Stop Operator continues to reach out to get people and businesses connected. The trades are a great opportunity. We recently updated our Strategic Plan and will have a new leader. We learned through Covid that we are able to adapt and leverage technology to continue to provide services throughout. Now we have to regroup and lead an organization that is responsive and agile. We have to be flexible. Listening to identify the needs and be proactive. There is a great commitment from Board members. We need to continue to collaborate with stakeholders and partners and set the direction.

13. Announcements

Einar Forsman announced that Therese Thill has been on board as the president of Rockford Area Economic Development Council (RAEDC) for one month now, and she has been meeting with leaders in the region. Einar will be reaching out to some of those in attendance today to meet with Therese Thill.

14. Member Comments:

None

15. Public Comment:

None

16. Adjournment

TWC Board Motion to adjourn at 8:57

Motion: Brown Second: Forsman Approved

CEO Board Motion to adjourn at 8:57

Motion: Boone Second: Winnebago Approved

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Cornelius

Date: May 20, 2022

ITEMS INCLUDED IN THE MEETING PACKET

TWC Board Meeting Minutes 12/07/2021 (Action Item)

CEO Meeting Minutes 12/07/2021 (Action Item)

February 2022 Finance Report

Mid-Year Conversations Report – Program Update (Information)

Boone/Winnebago County Youth RFP Update (Information)

One-Stop Operator Report
