



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

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

Meeting: February 1, 2022
Time: 8:00 am
Location: Zoom Video Conference

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

CEO Members Absent (0): None

Executive Committee Members Present (9): Ben Bernsten; Karen Brown; Michelle Cassaro; Pamela Fettes; Bob Guirl; Vanessa Hughes; Amy Ott; Frank Rotello;

Exec. Comm, Members Absent (1): Scott Bloomquist; Craig Steege;

Board Staff Present: Cathy Cornelius; Amanda Sink; Dan White

Partner Staff Present: Ted Duckett; Courtney Geiger; Tabitha Sims; Jeff Zeal

Guests: None

1. **Executive Committee Call to Order:** Board Chair Frank Rotello called the Executive Committee to order at 8:00 am.

CEO Call to Order: Mayor McNamara called the CEO meeting to order at 8:00 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 2, 2021, Meeting Minutes– Action Item:**

- **TWC Executive Committee**
Motion: Ott Second: Cassaro Approved
- **Chief Elected Officials**
Motion: Boone Second: Winnebago Approved

4. **Committee Updates:**

- **Finance-** Amy Ott was unable to attend the most recent Finance Committee meeting. Shelly Cassaro reviewed the Finance Report Summary for January 2022 and the Agreed Upon Procedures Report. Frank Rotello asked about how we are responding to the latest layoffs at Stellantis and Courtney Geiger, One-Stop Operator/Programs responded that two Rapid Response events have been held and many of those laid off have returned to work so they will only see a few enrollments from those events. They continue to work closely with Stellantis and UAW on responding to layoff events
- **Operations Management Council-**Ben Bernsten, committee chair, reminded the Executive Committee and CEOs that the purpose of the committee is to discuss One-Stop matters and keep partners informed. The committee has been discussing technology and service integration. They reviewed the questions for the Career Seeker Survey related to employment, compensation, benefits, compensation, etc. The completed survey will be shared with partners and employers. The committee reviewed and discussed the MOU Budget and timeline. The partners will submit their FTE information and the draft PY2022 Budget will be reviewed at the March meeting.
- **Youth Council-**Dan White gave the update in the absence of the Committee Chair. The committee has been discussing a CNA Community Campaign to reach youth and inform them on career pathways in healthcare. A sub-committee will be established and any board members are invited to join. The committee also worked on updating the Regional and Local Plan for PY2022.

Frank Rotello asked how high school graduates are being targeted to fill the gap for the trades and other occupations in our area. Amanda Sink responded that it is easy to reach in-school youth with information and we are working with and relying on our partners to help with outreach to out-of-school youth. The focus of the initiative will be mostly to out-of-school youth. Mayor McNamara added that the city will be bringing resources to 6 different neighborhoods and will provide dates and times of this outreach. The Mayor asked about coordinated efforts for the Live, Learn, Play funds that are out there and Courtney responded that preliminary discussions have been started.

- **Pathways to Careers-**Pamela Fettes, committee chair, shared information on program approvals. The staff has provided more in-depth information on these programs, such as wages and job openings and this information is very helpful to the committee. The committee also reviewed the Regional/Local Plan update and spent a lot of time talking about ways to address the talent pipeline for attraction and retention. They talked about using data from Tom Austin and getting additional data from higher education.
- **Employer & Public Engagement-**Amanda Sink gave the update in the absence of the Committee Chair, shared that the committee reviewed the results of the Employer Survey that was sent to 830 email contacts and the Board Newsletter. The questions in the survey asked about their current hiring needs, anticipated new hiring needs, benefits of upskilling their current workforce, and job profiling. They also asked about topics for upcoming Employer Forums. The committee discussed the Essential Skills Certification Courses that were created and the Digital Literacy component that was added. A cohort from AAR completed the course and Ryan Goertzen from AAR commented that they are seeing a difference in the those that attended the course as opposed to employees that haven't. Amanda noted that it was decided to postpone the Workforce Symposium a new TWC Executive Director is in place. Going forward, the committee discussed including metrics to align with Economic Development and other partners and developing additional metrics to track employment and training outcomes.
- **Human Resources Committee-**Karen Brown, committee chair, reported that the committee has met frequently as of late to discuss the pay of board staff to be competitive and retain talent. They have had conversations with the City of Rockford HR Director and the outcomes of these discussions will be implemented and shared soon. Karen also shared that the committee has been supportive of the process of the Executive Director Search. Frank Rotello gave a quick update, noting that they have selected 3 candidates for interviews tentatively on February 10, 2022. The next step is for candidates to meet with CEOs and staff. An onboarding process will be developed with the help of the HR Committee.

5. **Regional/Local Plan Update**

Amanda Sink reviewed the updates to the Regional/Local Plan 2020-2024. The plan was posted for the 30-day public comment period on February 24, 2022. The committees worked these updates and also worked with LWIA 4 because Ogle County is part of our Regional Economic Development area. The implications of COVID were incorporated into the update.

6. **Chief Elected Officials Reports**

City of Rockford: Mayor McNamara shared that the Casino has been approved and they are anticipating an April, May, or June Groundbreaking. The casino will bring 1200 construction jobs and 1000 permanent jobs. The Rockford Park District announced an investment into the Riverview Ice House. The airport announced it has moved 3.4 billion pounds of cargo. RMTD won a competitive grant for \$16 million to improve the downtown facility and is implementing an all veterans and students ride-free program. Rockford Housing Authority was approved as one of 11 housing authorities in the nation for the Jobs Plus Program. This program allows residents to earn income without it increasing their rent. This allows residents to build wealth and move up and move out of public housing. RHA was also designated as a Moving to Work Housing Authority and allows flexibility with its funding streams. The city approved a Critical Home Repair Program for Rockford residents in partnership with Habitat for Humanity. Funding of \$500,000 will allow residents to make major repairs to their homes, such as roofing, mechanicals, and other major repairs so they are able to stay in their homes. The Mayor also announced that they are creating a Community Development Financial Institution (CDFI) which is a new structure that allows the city to get federal grants and is one of the first in our area. He commented that he is excited to see the momentum building around youth with grassroots and long-standing organizations working together. The funds provided by RPS 205 play a huge role in getting these initiatives moving and organizations working together.

Boone County: Chairman Johnson reported that the county board just finished a new budget session and continues to work with Growth Dimension to secure good things for the county.

Stephenson County: Chairman Hadley reported that Stephenson County Mill Race Crossing Industrial Park is working on connecting to the City of Freeport water and sewer. A business that is located in Mill Race Crossing contributed \$2 million to the project creating a public/private partnership and that agreement is to be approved through the county board.

Winnebago County: Chairman Chiarelli was unable report because he had to leave the meeting to attend to an urgent matter at the county building.

7. **Chairman's Remarks:**

Frank Rotello remarked that talent attraction and retention is a challenge for all organizations, and we are impacted. The Regional/Local Workforce Plan addresses this issue. This is a unique opportunity to discuss some of the root causes and collaborate on a plan. He appreciates the years of commitment from Board members to The Workforce Connection. He also thanked the staff for taking on the additional duties that have been put on them with the vacancy of some positions. He thanked Dan White for stepping into the interim Executive Director position.

8. **Interim Executive Director Report:**

Dan White echoed some of Frank's remarks. He added that the Youth RFP for Boone and Winnebago counties will be posted on Friday, February 4, 2022. The model is the same as it was for the last Youth RFP as this model has proven to work well. The Community Foundation Grant received by The Workforce Connection has been used to secure new computer hardware for the Freeport Access Site. Previously a grant from First National Bank was used for the same purpose in Belvidere. Both Access Sites have now been updated. A JTED grant was applied for through the State of Illinois and a response was expected by the end of January but has not yet been received. Dan commented that with the departure of Chris Connors from staff on 1/31/22, he is appreciative of the relationships we have with our partners

and the One-stop Operator to help with the work. He also thanked Finance Committee members for stepping up to help with the financial process.

9. **Member Comments/Announcements:** Pamela Fettes shared that she encouraged businesses to include their staff time for the development of training and other projects when they are submitting for grants for training. She also announced that Boone County in partnership with other counties has received an Accelerate Illinois Broadband Planning grant. This grant will help address the digital divide.

10. **Public Comment:** None

11. **Adjournment:**

A motion to adjourn the meeting of the Executive Committee was made at 8:53 am.

Executive Committee Motion: Bernsten Second: Fettes Approved

A motion to adjourn the meeting of the Chief Elected Officials was made at 8:54 am.

CEO Board Motion: Boone Second: Stephenson Approved

Respectfully submitted,
Cathy Cornelius

Date: April 25, 2022

ITEMS INCLUDED IN THE MEETING PACKET

Agenda February 1, 2022

Executive Committee / CEO Meeting Minutes November 2, 2021

Regional/Local Plan Update
