

**WASHINGTON COUNTY
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING
CareerForce
Woodbury, MN
September 20, 2023**

Members Present

Christopher Eng	Erin Kampa	Laurie Levine
Susie Evans	Eric Riedel	Lydia Moua
Jaime Staska	Doug Loberg	Lucas Priestly
Lori Tapani	John Burcaw	Nina Meyer

CareerForce Staff Present

Rick Roy	Cory Sindt	Tatum Heller
Deb Cunningham		

Washington County Staff

Jennifer Castillo – Director of Community Services

1. Meeting Called to Order & Determination of Quorum – John Burcaw, Vice Chair

A quorum was determined.

- A Motion was made to approve the agenda, it was seconded, and the Motion was approved.
- A Motion was made to approve the June minutes, it was seconded, and the Motion was approved.
- Attendee Introductions

2. Board Needs/Requirements/Requests/Updates

- Two open seats for business representatives, with two businesses interested: Lakeview Hospital and Market & Johnson, Inc. – both in Stillwater.
- Proposed allowance of proxy members and voting rights – was brought up at the last meeting. It's progressing. Rick brought it to County Administration to go through the needed process.
- **Subsequent Designation** - periodically we have to request that Washington County remains a local workforce development area based on achieving performance measures and not having any fiscal issues. A letter was submitted and confirmation from the Deputy Commissioner was received that they are reviewing it and will get back to us. There are no issues so there's no concern. **Memorandum of Understanding/Infrastructure Funding Agreement** – this was a new part of the law passed in 2014 where all partners must contribute to the comprehensive workforce centers. Rick completed the document from DEED summarizing how we're allocating it. Waiting to hear back from Somali Community Resettlement Services who took over our Senior Employment Program and TAA – Trade Adjustment Act. If a partner is not co-located on site,

they agree to contribute to the cost of one cube (electricity, IT, any bill associated with that one cube) which ends up being a approx., \$585/year.

One-Stop Operator – is also a new requirement under the law. Voc. Rehab. has stated they can't participate as a one-stop operator. We are issuing an RFP (request for proposal) for that. If no one applies, we are allowed to do a designation within the authority of Workforce Board naming partners.

- **A Board Chair needs to be appointed from our Business Representative members (vote)** – Lucas Priestly expressed interest; Susie Evans made a formal nomination. The Chair asked if there were any others interested. No other interests or nominations. A vote was taken and passed for Lucas Priestly as the new WDB Chair.

3. Career Pathways Exploration through Virtual Reality update

The contract for the subscription with Career Labs VR was approved. IT has submitted a ticket to purchase the laptops/equipment. Jerry has reached out to both a local Workforce Board and a school district who are using it. He's received good information and is working on a plan for the rollout. Target date is November. A waiver is being worked on that minors would need to sign before using the VR goggles. A budget is in place through September 2024. We're looking for other funding sources to be able to keep Jerry on board, otherwise it would transition to the Youth Counselor and Career Services staff who work with youth and adults.

Susie Evans – asked secondary teaching & learning director to join the EEAT and to nudge the school district to get more engaged. Working with Ashley Ruka the South Washington Alternative High School principal to find ways to pilot it in the school district, in the high school, alternative high school, middle schools and in the community.

Jamie Staska – would be great to introduce it to both the Family Means Cimarron and Landfall Teen Centers.

4. Action Team discussions on this year's priorities

- **Business Engagement Action Team** – *Chris Eng* – next meeting will be to discuss priorities for the coming year. Focus will be to work closely with the Education Team. The connections between business, economic development, workforce development & schools are all about the availability of talent and finding talent. We already have the talent; we just need to make better connections between business and students to help our local businesses find the talent they need to be successful. We want to support the EEA Team with what they're doing and can help if there are opportunities to fill gaps with funding and assist with resources that are needed.

We continue to meet twice monthly with the area chambers. We've held three workforce & economic development summits, and another is scheduled for October 21st in Cottage Grove. We will be surveying members - what's changed in the last two years after our first survey. How can we support? We can also bring in speakers to address specific needs.

- **Community Engagement Action Team** – *Cory Sindt* – We have no major priorities at present. Our focus is on our name by getting out into the community attending, creating, and supporting community events; most recently attending job and resource fairs in local communities. We are also working on getting a Chair for our team.
- **Education Engagement Action Team** – *Susie Evans* – We're looking to have a stronger focus. Our meetings have generated a lot of good sharing of information between members, networking and what they can bring to the team. We would like to get school districts talking to each other to share what they are doing. Forest Lake is doing a lot of great things in their district. It would be helpful to have someone from there on our team.

5. Board Members and Guest Updates

Lori Tapani – We are open to connecting with other partners, businesses and schools to bring in and give an opportunity to those that may not have a direct manufacturing background but may have transferrable skills.

Lydia Moua – The company has big plans to grow; we are working on what that may look like in the next 5 years. There are challenges in the world of manufacturing. Employees are from all over so language barriers are a huge piece.

Susie Evans – Would like to bring Andersen model to South Washington School District and to this Board. There are educated adults coming to this country that are highly employable with skills from their country but need some assistance navigating through language barriers and what it's like to work in this country.

Rick Roy – Received a grant (just under \$5000) to implement a program for businesses called – IWE (Inclusive Workplace Employer). It's an assessment that businesses can complete. If they score high enough, they get a placard or sign to show they are an inclusive workplace employer.

John Burcaw – Working with a lot of incarcerated individuals. It's a priority for our school. If we want to hire skilled employees, we need to look at all avenues. Employers, however, are not on board and have a fear of hiring someone who's been incarcerated.

Erin Kampa – DEI initiatives need to include people with disabilities and accessibility. They may need some accommodations and we're here to help with those accommodations. Our office had the highest success rate of closures, individuals getting jobs and retaining them. Businesses can reach out to me at Voc. Rehab. to help with accommodations (ADA) that employees may need.

Lori Tapani – We work with MN RISE – one of our crew that comes in with a job coach to clean, expressed a desire to learn, and has since moved into production and has been there 5 years. He could do more but would lose his disability benefits.

Lori is on the Board of Fabricators and Manufacturers Association. They have a foundation called Nuts, Bolts and Thingamajigs. They received a grant to hold camps for kids to expose them to manufacturing. They also have camps for adults with different abilities. They partner with businesses. The adults go through the camp and then go into the business for a week to do the job. All have been hired afterwards.

Lucas Priestly – We also work with RISE and have hired people with disabilities. We've found they are the most reliable employees once they have their schedule in place and know where they're supposed to be. We continue our focus to hire for skills and availability.

Susie Evans – South Washington School District is experiencing transportation issues. We don't have enough staff to drive students to their work experiences. We've had Next Step students working in our coffee shop. Paid work experiences take precedence, however our internships and job shadowing are a challenge due to lack of transportation assistance.

John Burcaw – Transportation is also a challenge for our high school students. We've reached out to our community mentors and retiree community for assistance.

Jen Castillo – Washington County does have transportation challenges. We had a volunteer program pre-CoVid. It was challenging to get volunteers. We've received more funding now and are trying to get that up and running again.

We've also created and started our navigation program. Navigators work alongside customers to find all possible programs and assistance available to them. We need to be flexible and innovative. If you have ideas, bring them to Rick. We've launched a Community Engagement Team. It's a team of four. We've been focusing on the Somali, East African, Hmong & Hispanic communities and how we can engage with them and building trust.

Susie Evans – Who do we have to help the Ukrainian and Russian immigrants coming here from war countries. They're experiencing PTSD. How can we serve them?

Chris Eng - The CDA has created a five-year strategic plan. The top priority for economic vitality is to be a value education partner. We have resources to put into new ideas for schools. Possibly a grant to create a career pathways program or funds for Forest Lake career launch program to provide funds for licensing for Microsoft certificates. The County Board has approved the levy. We have flexibility with these funds and want to be of value to the County.

John Burcaw – Transportation in the trades is a huge challenge. Public transportation isn't feasible for employees to get to job sites. Some of the obstacles folks have are getting their license back, obtaining a vehicle, and securing childcare. Ramsey County has a good program in place to help get licenses back. We've got some ideas around using grant dollars to hold in equity and partner with a bank so we can use those dollars to guarantee loans to folks that may not have a credit history and help them obtain a car loan.

Rick Roy – There's talk about the possibility of getting a childcare center in an industrial park. It's been done in a couple areas in Minnesota. Cottage Grove may be a good place to start.

Laurie Levine – Businesses have expressed that transportation and daycare are challenges for their employees. Having childcare in industrial parks would help with both and it would be more helpful to have them open 24 hours to accommodate all shifts. In some other areas, chambers have helped by using open housing turning them into a home daycare. Licensing is easier and sometimes businesses have helped with funding.

Eric Riedel – Century, a student can choose, on any given day, to be in-person or attend class online. It's helped with students not missing class due to lack of childcare or transportation.

John Burcaw – At our school we take attendance by 10:00 a.m. If a student is not in attendance, we make a call to make sure they're ok. We've implemented wrap-around services at our school to help with mental health wellbeing and other services. It's helped with our retention rates. We want students to be successful and want to provide services to help them get there.

Rick Roy – We've been collaborating with the R.H. Stafford Library across the street for Teen Career Conversations. The next event is October 24, 4:30-6:00 p.m. Students have expressed interest in the following careers: engineering, IT, medical, psychology, neurosciences, arts and humanities and real estate, to name a few. If you know of businesses or individuals that have an interest in having a table or being a speaker, they can contact Robin Hakari, CareerForce Resource Specialist at our office.

6. Call and Vote for Adjournment – John Burcaw

A Motion was made to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded, vote taken and the Motion was approved.