

The Fulton, Montgomery & Schoharie Counties Workforce Development Board

Board Meeting

Wednesday, April 7, 2021
via Zoom

I. Opening and Attendance:

Welcome: Marty Callahan, Chairman of the Board, called the meeting to order at 4:36 p.m. Marty asked all attendees to place their name and Business or Organization into the Zoom chat box for attendance purposes. All Board Members and guests introduced themselves.

Members Present: Wendy Adams, Laurie Bargstedt, Donna Becker, Elijah Braemer, Kerry Brunner, Marty Callahan, Roger Cusano, Dave Fariello, Andrea Fettinger, Pamela Goldswor, Melissa Johnston, Allene Monaghan, Donna Pesta, Amy Rogers, Andrea Scribner, Donald Snoop, Jeannette Spaulding, Jeff Stark, and Peter Stearns

Excused: Erin Clemens, Art Graulich, Kathleen Kilmartin, Karen Miller, Lani Pertell, and Ken Rose

Absent: Amy McCray and Mark Mincher

Also present: **Mary Hill**, Program Director, FMS Private Industry Council, Inc. and **Tracy Paradise**, Job Training Developer, Montgomery County Department of Social Services

Staff to Board present: Gail Breen, Beverly Ball, and Kim Skiff

II. Action Items:

- **Resolution BY 2020 -09:** Acceptance of the minutes from the February 3, 2021 Board Meeting
 - Motion: *Elijah Braemer* Seconded by: *Peter Stearns*
 - Discussion: There was no discussion.
 - Vote: All in favor
 - Motion Carried
- **Resolution BY 2020-10:** Upon the recommendation of the Ad Hoc RFP Screening Committee and the Accountability Committee: Acceptance of the resolution for the WIOA Services Provider and One Stop System Operator for the period of 7/1/21 to 6/30/22, renewal for up to an additional 3 years, through 6/30/25, dependent upon budget and provider performance.
 - Motion: *Andrea Fettinger* Seconded by: *Don Snoop*
 - Discussion: Andrea shared that the RFP for WIOA Services and One Stop System Operator was released on January 19th with a return date of February 26th. We only received one proposal and Gail communicated with NYS Department of Labor to ask if we needed to release another RFP. DOL

NYS DOL responded that if the procurement process followed both local procurement rules and the uniform guidance related to procurement that we could go forward. An Adhoc Committee reviewed and scored the proposal. They found that the proposal was acceptable and agreed to bring it forward to the full board for a vote that the Private Industry Council be accepted as the WIOA Services and One Stop System Operator. Gail shared that with any proposal we receive, they are reviewed individually using the same scoring sheet, and nobody talks ahead of time. Everybody has an individual scoring sheet. The Committee then meets together as a group to discuss the scoring and if there are any questions, why they came up with the scores they did Gail also scored it, although hers doesn't count towards the selection. Gail's fell right in the middle of the range so she feels really confident everyone was very consistent at scoring and saw the same things. Gail reiterated with the Board Members that they don't discuss the proposals until after everyone has scored them individually.

- o Vote: All in favor
- o Motion Carried

III. Information Sharing:

Accountability and Return on Investment Committee: Andrea shared that the Accountability Committee met on March 23 via zoom and that while her notes are a highlighted version, the full meeting minutes are on the Workforce Investment Boards website. Kim gave the financial report for February and both the PIC and the Workforce Board budgets should be at 67.67% expended. The PIC Adult and Youth funding continues to be underspent. Adult currently has \$7,791 obligated for training. Dislocated worker is slightly over budget at 70%. All expenditures are as expected, and should level out as the year goes by. The Workforce Development Board expenditures are at 52.5% and this represents 14.17% under budget, but that should also work itself out over time.

Gail reported that NYS DOL had released initial estimates for PY'21 WIOA funding for Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth. Although we have a slight decrease in Adult and Youth funding, we will have a significant increase in Dislocated Worker funds and, as a result we're expecting an increase of \$64,000 over the last year. Final figures will be released around the first of May, based on final New York state allocations from the Department of Labor. In the meantime, April is our budget building month and we'll be working to bring a draft forward for review by the Accountability Committee before submitting to the full Board for action at the Annual Meeting. Gail shared that we are also hoping to have a waiver from the State Department of Labor again to carry in up to 30% of last year's funding, rather than 20%. Last year, the workforce areas were allowed to apply for a 30% waiver because of the reduced activities due to COVID and we're hoping for the same for this program year. This helps us to have additional funds to utilize for services and programs that we might not necessarily have and to also to increase our reserve funds through the program and fiscal year.

Andrea stated that the Accountability Committee is the fiscal committee for the board, and if anybody wants to join, they are always welcome.

The full minutes from the committee meeting are available on the website for review.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, April 27, 2021, at 3:30 p.m. by Zoom.

Business Services and Employer Engagement Committee: Laurie stated that the committee met on March 18 and the full Business Services report is available on the Board Members section of the website. She shared some highlighted items from the report. From the local Business Services Team, Nancy Reccio reported that there were no recruitments or mini job fairs in the three Career

Centers in February, and there were no employer based contracts written. She did facilitate a Business Services Consortium meeting and said that attendance is definitely up since people can participate via zoom rather than needing to travel into the Career Center for the meetings. Nancy Rogers and Nancy Reccio both attended a number of Zoom trainings on business related topics so they could better serve their constituents. Nancy's complete report is available online with the full Business Services report.

From the New York State Department of Labor, Melissa said that a federal UI benefit in addition to the State UI benefit is available through August. This may actually contribute (as an incentive) to people failing to return to work, although anyone who receives UI benefits needs to certify each week that they're doing job searching. It's difficult to verify, however, because the staff of the New York State Department Labor continue to be focusing on UI work as opposed to reemployment. They are in the process of hiring an additional 770 Unemployment Insurance staff, and that should free some DOL staff members up so they can work on reemployment services again.

The Committee Member Go Around can be found in its entirety in the posted minutes. Highlights included reports from organizations returning to their offices and how many organizations continue to provide some services remotely; distance learning options for high school equivalency and literacy; concerns from employers regarding continuing job openings at local businesses; summer youth programs; possibilities for a centralized drive through-job fair; vaccination clinics; and a possible new Montgomery County solar farm.

The full minutes from the committee meeting are available on the website for review.

Next Meeting: Thursday, April 15, 2021, at 8 a.m. by Zoom.

WIOA (MOU) Partners Committee: Did not meet.

Next Meeting: June 4, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. by Zoom.

Workforce Systems Oversight Committee: Donna stated that the Committee met on March 24. Beverly shared her February report. The centers remained closed to all customer traffic through February. Starting on February 22 all staff returned three days a week, and staff started scheduling appointments for customers beginning March 1. During the month of February, there were 5457 activities logged by the Private Industry Council staff. Correspondence was up 17% from the previous month. Included are activities such as answering phones and voicemails and various mailings to customers. Customer service increased 85%, and staff report most of those calls were related to Unemployment Insurance questions. Workforce advising was up almost 25% during the month with staff busy creating resumes, providing job search information, and follow up contacts, as well as entering customer information into the One Stop Operating System. (OSOS) Beverly shared with us that she's been working on a workforce acronym list that will be made available to the full board. We talked about how services during COVID have affected everyone. Mary said that her and her staff have been servicing customers remotely and, at times, three days a week in the Center and had provided over 11,000 services since last March. They have seen an uptick in traffic since opening 3 days a week. Gail gave an update on behalf of Pam and the Catskill Center for Independence staff. They are in the Cobleskill Center Monday, Wednesday, and Friday and working from home on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Melissa brought us up to date on Department of Labor. Her staff continues to be focused almost entirely on the unemployment insurance services. But occasionally they do have some time away from that so they are trying to pivot to provide reemployment services remotely.

Gail gave said that starting April 19, Amsterdam and Cobleskill Centers well be open five days a week. The doors will still be locked and customers will continue to be seen by appointment only. Gloversville will continue to be open to Adults and Dislocated Workers on Tuesdays and Thursdays and Fridays for youth and that will continue until May 2. At that time, Gloversville will be reopen for Adults and Dislocated workers on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday and for Youth on Monday and Friday. There is a new Resource Room Coordinator in Gloversville who is still training with the Amsterdam Resource Room Coordinator. Services will continue to be provided remotely to anyone who chooses not to come to one of the centers.

The full minutes from the committee meeting are available on the website for review.

Next Meeting: Wednesday, April 28, 2021, at 8 a.m. by Zoom, unless otherwise determined.

V. Environmental Scanning:

Gail reminded Board Members that they had her Executive Directors report for February and March, but she wanted to highlight three things. She stated that we have been working with Schenectady Community College and Hill n' Markes on a possible Apprenticeship Program and other business services such as the ERN (Employer Resource Network). Mary's WIOA staff person, our Senior Business Service Rep (BSR), Nancy Reccio is on the calls. We don't know how soon we could get an Apprenticeship Program started but Schenectady Community College would probably reach out to FMCC because the community colleges work together on initiatives such as this.

Marty, Mark Kilmer and Gail met with State Senator Michelle Hinchey about three weeks ago. She is our State Senator representing Montgomery County and down the line to the Hudson Valley. She is a very energetic young woman and is excited about what she's doing. She was there as a meet and greet to talk specifically about initiatives in Canajoharie, like the old Beechnut facility and some other initiatives they have going on. The public library was in attendance and a number of businesses as well. Marty stated that he felt the meet and greet was really important for the Senator. - obviously meeting Mark from the Regional Chamber of Commerce, but also Gail representing the whole three-county workforce area. Marty said once the pandemic slows down, and they can take visitors again, the Senator is going to be open to visiting their facility in St. Johnsville. Gail shared that she thought it was encouraging that even though Montgomery County is somewhat distant from the rest of her district, which is more along the Hudson River, she seemed to be equally committed to Montgomery County.

The final thing Gail shared is that she, along with Mary Hill and Mary's Summer Youth Employment Counselor, were on a Zoom meeting regarding the Summer Youth Employment Program. They were talking about some of the ways that NYATEP, which is our state membership organization, can help us by advocating for us with OTDA (Office of Temporary Disability Assistance, formerly state DSS). Across the state, we have concerns regarding the timeliness of notification of funding in that we usually don't find out until, at best, a month before we're ready to go that we actually have funding to run the program. We're trying to work with the state so that they can get the funding allocations out to the counties earlier. They also looked at some of the ways we could serve youth and businesses in the past and how during COVID much of the summer youth programs just collapsed. Businesses were laying people off and they couldn't or didn't want to bring summer youth in. Summer youth and their parents were afraid to go anywhere, for fear they bring COVID home to the family. They talked a little bit about ideas and techniques to bring businesses and youth back with COVID easing up. Hopefully we will have more information to share at the next Board Meeting. Mary shared that she wished they had more time to hear what the other breakout rooms in the Zoom meeting discussed, but that she came away with some great ideas and has already started to schedule what's going to be happening. Gail stated they were all in different break out rooms and were able to hear different things and can share their notes.

VI. Board Member Go Round:

Laurie Bargstedt (HFM BOCES): Gave their first TASC exam to a small group, and it worked well. Will continue to do this for the next 6 months with small groups of people so that they can continue to move forward with their job goals. Encouraged businesses that if they require high school equivalency as a minimum for employment or if they have a language barrier, to refer them to her, and HFM BOCES will help prepare them for employment. Same for bi-lingual.

Donna Becker (Schoharie County DSS): Shared that it is not just the Department of Social Services that is hiring in Schoharie County. There are openings and opportunities in a lot of departments. All available job postings are listed on the county website.

Kerry Brunner (Roses Brands): Seeing an uptick in business so he is cautiously optimistic. They have hired some new employees but are still short staffed. It is all hands on deck as employees learn new skills that they have never used before.

Marty Callahan (Gehring Tricot Corporation): Slight improvement in supply chain but price increases have been staggering for the last four months. There has been a global search for raw materials. Prices have gone up enormously on the yarn side. Their recruitment efforts are plugging along; they still have openings and it's a struggle. Marty asked if there were any further talks about the drive by Job Fair at the college. Andrea Scribner stated that she would attempt to get an answer as to whether FMCC could offer one on site in the parking lot. Amy Rogers mentioned that she was in touch with Mark from the Chamber of Commerce and that they are moving their offices so he's not able to do anything there yet for a boutique job fair.

Roger Cusano (Universal Plastics): Everything is strong. They are an essential employer because they do a lot of work with biomedical equipment. It is tough getting new employees or getting people back to work. They could use more hands on deck.

Dave Fariello (St. Mary's Healthcare): Uptick in COVID patients in hospital. 13 as of yesterday, but interestingly enough, no one that is critical or anyone that has already been vaccinated. He has a lot of confidence in the vaccine. It is showing a 91.75% effective rate 6 months out. From an employee standpoint, he shared that they were averaging four to maybe six positive cases a week with employees and they've only had one in the last two weeks. 80% of their staff have been vaccinated and they have reached herd immunity level staff wise. They have 18 Registered Nurse position openings. Andrea reiterated that it is important for people to get vaccinated, and get tested when necessary. There are many places available for testing. She also stated that just because you have been vaccinated doesn't mean you can't still get it. Dave shared that over the last two weeks, six staff members who were vaccinated that had high level exposures in their own family they were living with and none of them developed symptoms or tested positive. They do have a quarantine procedure for staff who have been exposed.

Andrea Fettinger (Fulton County Office for Aging): Very busy with COVID vaccination projects. Hosted clinics for Senior Housing so that individuals who live in senior apartments could get their vaccination in their own building. Their second dose clinic is April 8th with 4 locations and about 250 people finishing up their second dosage. On April 14th they have a larger pod at FMCC where they will be able to vaccinate over 500 people including community members, senior citizens and essential workers. Early on there were no vaccinations available or targeted for older adults and a lot of advocacy had to be done. Fulton and Montgomery County worked with Kinney's drugs to bring the vaccinations to older adults. OFA is trying to determine when they should open to the public. Currently, by appointment, by telephone or car side. They are looking forward to having some opening criteria that is approved by the county in the near future.

Pamela Goldswor (Townsend Leather): Business as usual. 25 new hires in the last couple of months. They are still seeing issues with transportation and childcare. Seeing some of their US based customers in the office, such as New Balance and LLBean. They are working to get all staff vaccinated.

Melissa Johnston (NYS DOL): Unemployment Insurance extended until September. Claimants still have to look for work and be ready, willing and able to work and certify to that extent every week when they certify their benefits. If there's a situation where we know someone is not, we still do report that into unemployment for review. UI claims continue to be busy.

Kathleen Kilmartin (Community Health Center): They have recently hired 1 RN and 1 Speech Therapist

Allene Monaghan (ACCES VR): They have not been open to the public since last March. Plan to reopen in July, by appointment only. Staff will be in more than they are now, but not FT. They will be working remotely the days they are not in the office. There is a return-to-work plan that all ACCES-VR district offices need to submit into the Central Office in Albany. Will continue to do Community Information Sessions (CSI) remotely.

Donna Pesta (SUNY Cobleskill): 5 ½ weeks left in the semester and they are trying to keep students healthy, on campus and wearing their masks. Trying to figure out a way to safely hold on campus classes for the fall semester.

Amy Rogers (Keymark Corporation): Been working on trying to get as many employees vaccinated as possible. Trying to make some internal adjustments to make things look a little bit better for recruiting purposes. Still actively looking and trying to get people to come to work.

Andrea Scribner (Fulton-Montgomery Community College): There is a scholarship program that they are trying to promote called the Educational Incentive Program. It's for employees working in permanent positions from an approved licensed daycare facility or early childhood setting. If any of them want to attend a SUNY or CUNY school part time, they can receive up to \$4,000 in benefits toward tuition or other training. For more information they can go to the following link: <https://www.ecetp.pdp.albany.edu/eip.aspx>. And finally, Dr. Gregory Truckenmiller was named the 9th President of FMCC at the April Board of Directors meeting. Andrea stated that it was a long process.

Don Snoop (Midtel Cable TV): Nothing new, all is good.

Jeannette Spaulding (Schoharie County Community Action Program): Agency is open with some staff working on a rotating basis. WIC still has waivers for in person appointments, but this will be re-evaluated on April 15th. They are still doing taxes, HEAP season is pretty much done.

Peter Stearns (Laborer's International Union of North America): Things are good, with the laborers. A lot of work going on and looks to be a busy year.

Guest Go-Around

Tracy Paradise (Montgomery County Department of Social Services): They still have a waiver and can't require job searching. They are still not allowed to attend any job fairs. Looking forward to when things go back to normal, and we can start getting people out in the workforce and helping them be self-sufficient.

VII. Board Member Feedback?

VIII. Adjournment:

Motion to close the meeting:

Motion: *Amy Rogers* Seconded: *Melissa Johnston*
Meeting Adjourned at 5:28 p.m.

The next Board Meeting will be held on May 5, 2021 at 4:30 p.m. via Zoom.