



## Workforce Development Board

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Bringing Jobs & People Together

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### Board Meeting Minutes December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2015

**Call to Order:** Chairman Whitmore called the meeting to order at 7:57 am.

Chairman Whitmore welcomed everyone to the meeting, initiated a round table introduction of the attendees, and introduced Corrie Peckham, the new Employment and Training Assistant at The WorkPlace.

**Privilege of the Floor:** None.

**Minutes of Previous Meetings:** Chairman Whitmore asked for corrections or discussion to the minutes for the September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Board meeting. Director Mayforth explained a change in the minutes. Chairman Whitmore next asked for a motion to approve the minutes with corrections. Ms. Petrillose made a motion to accept the September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Board meeting minutes. Eric Virkler seconded that motion, all were in favor. Also discussed were the minutes from the November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015 Executive Board meeting. Mr. Britt made a motion to approve these minutes. Ms. Watson seconded that motion, all were in favor.

**Correspondence:** Director Mayforth shared a thank you letter that was received from South Lewis for Career Day.

**Director's Report:** Director Mayforth discussed events that have taken place since the last meeting. She next discussed the possibility of splitting the time of our Job Fair into a daytime session and then a short evening session for those people working. Further discussion ensued regarding this possibility. Manufacturing Day was the next topic of discussion. The South Lewis Career Day and Workforce 20/20 were also discussed.

**Financial Report:** Director Mayforth next presented the financial report to the board, and asked for comments or questions. There were none.

**New Business:** Director Mayforth reported that there are new WIOA regulations in the process of being established. These will hopefully be out by April 2016.

**Round Table Discussion on Area Workforce Issues:** Chairman Whitmore opened the round table discussion. He spoke of concerns with the increase in minimum wage and how it will affect the rental market in the area. The rental market may take a big hit and create more affordable rental prices, which may produce less desirable renters. Also, mentioned were the Fort Drum deployments; and that they are back in cycle.

Mr. Britt reported 150-180 job openings. Applications are being taken for all levels of employment from entry level to Director, and includes 65 CNA positions. Out of the area recruitment is taking place for some of the higher skill level positions due to the lack of local applicants.

Mr. Schantz shared concerns that attendance of new hires has not been acceptable. They have been receiving many applications from lower skill level applicants.

Ms. Watson also discussed concerns with the attendance of new hires. The new hires at Timeless Frames are required to have basic math skills, which has proven difficult to find among applicants. Overall, business is well.

Mr. Alexander stated that he is focusing on solving problem areas, specifically a strategy on how to react to the increase of minimum wage. New state mandates are forcing local governments to take a negative stance on the issue.

Mr. Hayden gave an overview of statistics for our workforce area and answered questions from the board.

Ms. Pettit reported that business is being hit in multiple ways, although they are faring better than others in the region. Canadian shopping is down due to the decrease of the value of the looney. Occupancy has been at approximately 30%. It is projected that the staff of 130-150 will be reduced to 99 due to healthcare requirement changes. Rotation of employees has been high, with an approximate 6 month period. There is optimism for the month of January.

Ms. Hetzner stated that there has been a new uptick of use of provided services in Lewis Co.

Ms. Jones shared that unemployment insurance is down, but a federal waiver for SNAP recipients was still received. Also changes in day care have proven to not be beneficial for entry level employees.

Mr. Stehlin stated that he has been receiving many applications, but is facing the problem of poor applicant follow up. For example: out of 20 applicants, 12 will confirm, but only 4 will report for the interview. He also explained the interview process. Further discussion ensued.

Mr. Burch discussed cultural changes in the area. He stated that there are less nurses due to a focus on outpatient care.

Ms. Petrillose reported difficulties finding adequate staffing for residential sites. State mandates have been overwhelming, as there have been changes in regulations without much guidance. She is waiting to see how the minimum wage increase will affect the organization.

Ms. Rolfe spoke of difficulties in qualified applicants. Also, that Canadian par has affected business.

Ms. Urbanowicz shared that the company has been experiencing growing pains. They are in need of CDL-A and CDL-B drivers. Travel has been the biggest issue for applicants.

Mr. Monaco stated that the tax cap has been an issue, as well as the levels of over testing. Substitute teachers are in short supply, with either none being available or available subs being of a lower quality.

Mr. Todd reported trying to fill employment needs has been stressful due to tax caps, mandates and teacher shortages this year. SUNY Potsdam has seen a significant decrease in the number of students graduating with teaching degrees, which could have a crippling affect in the next few years. Technical teachers and classes are faring better; and there are quite a few classes of upcoming graduates. Mr.

Alexander asked why there are so few teachers graduating, and Mr. Todd stated that decreased budgets and common core issues are major factors in this situation.

Mr. Murray stated that 2014 was the best year in agriculture in a long time, and went over some of the areas of growth. Unfortunately, agriculture went from record highs in 2014 to record lows this year. The minimum wage hike will have negative effects on the agriculture industry, as does the work ethic of the current generation of workers. Low unemployment rates have also had an impact on the number of candidates for agriculture positions. Mr. Murray is hoping dairy will turn next year, but expects corn and soy to stay down.

Ms. McCoy reported that overall life on campus is good. They are struggling to find students, and have seen decreased enrollments. A few smaller community colleges may have to close due to this. Mandates are also hurting community colleges, as will the minimum wage increase. Ms. Pettit asked why she thought less students were applying. Ms. McCoy stated there are fewer students attending two year colleges because the incentives to attend are now obsolete.

Mr. Virkler discussed the excess of milk currently occurring and the hopes for our area to take advantage of the situation through increases in production of milk related products. He also discussed the need for skilled workers and how to regionally recruit those higher level applicants. The lack of quality rental apartments and houses in Lewis County was also discussed.

Mr. Cooper stated that 2015 has been a good year for their company with a 20% increase in staff. It could have been a better year, but the lack of qualified applicants was a factor in their growth. Clarkson is graduating good sized classes of engineers, but it's very hard to attract them to this area. State mandates are a disadvantage to businesses, and BCA could have seen a 30-40% increase if not for those mandates.

Director Mayforth shared that our unemployment levels have been down, to the point that per capita, we are in a better position than NYC. The NCREDC is currently working on strategies at the regional level regarding career clusters where we need to see more graduates. The NCREDC has created open dialog in our seven-county region, which has allowed for a great flow of information and ideas. Coming soon will be the unveiling of GPS for Success. Further discussion ensued regarding this topic. Career Jam has also been scheduled for May 19<sup>th</sup>, and further discussion ensued on this event.

**Next Meeting Date:** The next meeting is scheduled for March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2016. Location and time are to be determined.

**Adjournment:** Chairman Whitmore asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Stehlin made the motion to adjourn. Ms. Pettit seconded that motion, all were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 9:24 am.

**Attendance:**

Current Members: Donald Alexander, Michael Britt, Eric Burch, Matthew Cooper, Cheryl Mayforth, Carole McCoy, Fred Monaco, Lynn Murray, Sandy Petrillose, Jody Pettit, Christine Rolfe, Michael Schantz, Dale Stehlin, Stephen Todd, Carol Urbanowicz, Eric Virkler, Kathy Watson

Others in Attendance: Anthony Hayden, Lisa Hetzner, Jennifer Jones, Tim Maloney, Angel Munson, Corrie Peckham