

**WASHINGTON COUNTY
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD MEETING
Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Woodbury, MN
October 21, 2009**

WIB Members and Partners Present

Nigel Bath	Lori Brink	Brenda Carlson
Duane Gatzke	Peg Killen	Jane Klein
Kim Luchsinger	Janelle Schmitz	Cherylee Sherry
Corrine Watson		

Workforce Center Staff Present

Nina Arneson	Robert Crawford	Beth Jameston
Rachel O'Connell		

Guests

Jill Aitchison	Carrie Hageman
Century College	

WIB Members and Partners Not Present

Jim Finley	Jeralyn Jargo	Stacy Kennedy
Lowell Reiks, Jr.	Dave Schaps	Patrick Singel
Russell Williams		

1. Call to Order and Introductions – Brenda Carlson, Chair

Brenda Carlson called the meeting to order and asked that everyone introduce themselves by giving the name, work and structure of their organization. *Brenda Carlson*, Entrepreneur's Source, a coaching and consulting firm that helps entrepreneurs start a business. She co-owns the franchise with her husband and they contract with a virtual assistant to do mailing and phone calls. *Peg Killen*, manager of the Vocational Rehabilitation office in Woodbury and West St. Paul. They assist Minnesota residents with disabilities in finding, getting and keeping employment. This is a federally mandated program and statewide there are 62 locations and 350 staff. *Kim Luchsinger*, Thomas Allen, a social service agency with group homes for adults with disabilities providing home services and case management. There are 550 employees; the majority is direct care staff working with clients with several supervisors. *Cherylee Sherry*, Public Health Consultant, KC Consultants. She works with a variety of organizations such as the Minneapolis Medical Research Foundation, Hennepin County Medical Center, and the state of Minnesota on health care reform. She does grant writing, program development, project management and policy. *Nigel Bath*, Director of Sales, Hilton Garden Inn, Oakdale, a franchised operation of Hilton Hotels Corporation. He's responsible for about \$3.6 million in sales a year. There are 43 hotels, a mixture of Holiday Inns, Radissons, and Hampton Inns. *Beth Jameston*, Business Services Specialist for Washington County. She visits businesses to find job openings and help with any issues they are having. *Janelle Schmitz*, Manager, City of Woodbury Planning and Economic Development. She works in the Community Development Department, does planning for new businesses and has branched into affordable housing. The city has over 200 employees providing basic government services. *Lori Brink*, Assistant Director of Community Education for Stillwater Area Public Schools which provides early education, parent education and adult education. Community Education includes the Division of Teaching and Learning and Division of Operations. They have 9 elementary schools, 2 junior highs, a high school and an alternative learning center employing about 1,000 people. *Jill Aitchison*, Century College (filling in for Jeralyn Jargo). She works on the student services side of a newly created task force focusing on dislocated workers and how their institution can serve them. *Carrie Hageman*, Career Services Director, Century College. She helps students make sure they have the tools and experiences they need to be successful in finding a job. *Duane Gatzke*: Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. They serve large and small businesses to

make a cleaner and greener Minnesota. They employ close to 1,000 people. His other job is representing labor. *Corrine Watson*, Community Services Liaison, United Way of Washington County East. Their United Way is a separate entity representing Washington County raising funds at workplace, union boards and non-union companies. They do community service and refer people to 32 agencies. They have 2 ½ staff, a 30 member board and a number of volunteers. *Rachel O'Connell*, support staff for the Washington County Workforce Center. She does orientations for people applying for the MFIP and DWP programs and assists people looking for work in the Resource Room. *Jane Klein*, Complete Sales, (one of three who own the company). She does sales on products and services for 12 companies in the industrial and manufacturing sector in Minnesota, the Dakotas, and Wisconsin. *Robert Crawford*, Division Manager of the Washington County Workforce Center. There are three locations in Woodbury, Forest Lake and Cottage Grove. There are about 35 employees, 25 county, and 10 with the state and other private non-profit agencies. The Workforce Center's job is to help people find training and employment. The Workforce Center is inundated with dislocated workers and close to running out of training money. The Workforce Center is expecting \$440,000 in January, but that will only cover those in school right now. My job is to find the resources and use them to spread the funds as far as possible. *Nina Arneson*, Supervisor, Washington County Workforce Center. Her main duties are to manage the DWP, MFIP and FSET programs.

2. Adopt Agenda – Brenda Carlson

A Motion was made to adopt the Agenda, it was seconded, and the Motion carried.

3. Approve September 2009 minutes – Brenda Carlson

A Motion was made to adopt the September 16, 2009 minutes. Rachel said Eric Harper on the original minutes has been corrected to Principal Aaron Harper. A Motion to adopt the minutes with this change was made, it was seconded, and the Motion carried.

4. Committee Reports

Business and Marketing: The committee did not meet. Robert said the chair needs to be replaced and the group reorganized. Jane asked about DEED's strategy and focus for business. Beth will forward this to the board as soon as a written report is sent to her.

Youth Committee – Cherylee Sherry: Carrie gave an update for the committee on Career Exploration Day March 12 at Century College. The planning committee is going over the logistics of bringing 600 10th graders on campus. Students will receive information on careers and learn about Century College and Northeast Metro 916. Alumni, current students and professionals will display information on careers according to the career clusters chart. A panel of professionals will talk about their career paths so that students understand it's a process and a journey. The Youth Committee will recruit business people to participate and will assist during the day. Carrie completed the Youth Annual Report and will send it to the committee. The committee discussed expanding the definition of homeless youth to include those who "couch hop" in order to have access to more resources. Robert complimented the Youth Committee in having a task and focus. There will be a presentation to the County Board in November on the summer youth program.

Policy and Law – Robert Crawford: Senator Al Franken was at the Anoka County Workforce Center October 10 and Jane and Robert attended. Senator Franken listened to a report on how Stimulus money was spent and how many people were served.

Robert handed out an executive summary of the Greater Twin Cities Health Care Workforce Advancement Initiative, a proposal from the Greater Metropolitan Workforce Council for a grant from the Department of Labor. The goal is to provide assistance in expanding healthcare capacity by putting 380 people into nursing professions.

5. Strategic Plan and Priorities: Review and Discussion – Brenda Carlson

For 2009-2011, how can the board fulfill its mission: to support business so they are able to hire people, support people in transition, and support the Workforce Center and let the community know about its work? What do board members see as far as the needs of business or those looking for jobs?

Problems faced by business: Beth said small businesses with between 5 and 10 employees that get a contract must hire quickly and staff needs to be trained in the specific skills of their business. She visited a business that does high quality leather crafting that is getting orders. The original business moved production to China and the product was inferior. Janelle saw businesses unable to access capital for expansion. More information and ideas of the company's direction are required which slows down the process. Brenda suggested we need alternative funding sources. Right now businesses are in survival mode. Jane felt employers wanted workers who were not just trained, but experienced. They also want cheap labor, in order to compete globally. Duane said the state's hiring freeze has made it difficult to hire anyone. Beth asked about referring people to private consultants. Brenda said there are businesses waiting to help and we need to get the communication between government, business and nonprofit flowing. Robert said we need to move past distrust of government because it can give incentives to private businesses to stimulate opportunities to create jobs. Brenda said listening to a networking group of 60 people – she sees that if the money started flowing, many other people could be employed.

Career Transition: Brenda said it's difficult to know what employers will need in the future. One customer received training in medical billing but found employers want experience in that field. Nina said there are different programs that offer training, but some aren't credentialed. Cherylee said training with externships can give that experience. Robert pointed out a lot of training is for projected future needs, not immediate, such as in healthcare and green jobs. The people left behind will be those with few skills – how do we get them into better paying jobs and off assistance? What we're doing is buying time; employers want people to be ready when jobs come back. We have people in training, but what may have worked better in Stimulus funding would be a balance between training and job creation. Jane said businesses will evolve and drive the future to provide what consumer or environmental groups want. She suggested a reverse job fair inviting the business owner to the table and asking what their needs will be in the future.

Brenda learned from a research study that if a worker, age 50, making \$100,000 a year is laid off, it takes a minimum of one year to find a job again. That job will pay 50-70% of what he or she was making before and will last 2.3 years before another lay off. It will take another 12 months to find a job again. The person may lose his/her house, family and self esteem. Another possible path is becoming a small business owner. Yearly income may be lower, but equity will be built in the business, there is some financial security, and a job is created for the owner and others. For 10-15% of the population it can work. Beth knew of someone who was making \$100,000 a year in sales and has been laid off for 1 ½ years and hasn't looked into the Dislocated Worker program, stuck in the mental place of being unemployed. Robert said people wait until UI runs out and are in desperation mode. People need to get through the anger and grieving period before they can develop a plan. Janelle asked if the Workforce Center could speak at Chamber meetings to explain their services and learn about businesses laying off or hiring. Lori says people of school age children are cutting back on child care and the schools are trying to be more flexible in staffing to meet parents' needs. Everyone has to understand we're in a new normal and everyone has to do business differently because of what's happening to families.

Corrine said the building and construction trades are important to getting the economy going. Workers who are laid off are expecting construction jobs to be the same when they come back. Infrastructure related jobs like bridge repair will be needed but workers aren't being trained in those skills. Peg said people who have been laid off may try a career path they've always wanted to go into, but don't look at the job market to see if the job will be in demand after they train for it. Kim noticed when she is reviewing resumes, people struggle with how to transfer skills from one field to another and how to communicate that on their resume. Jill Agenmen said employers need soft skills such as general professionalism, written and verbal skills and critical thinking – the rest they can train. Peg pointed out that job seeking for older people is totally different now than when they first looked for work.

Nigel asked about Minnesota as an employment-at-will state and felt it was too easy for people to quit or employers to fire someone. In other states, it's customary to give a month's notice for quitting or firing. Beth said there was a show on PBS on the effect of an Electrolux plant closing in Sweden compared to a closing in the U.S. In Sweden, people's basic needs were taken care of and they were continually retrained. Duane pointed out that with a union, a person can't just be terminated. Colleen said states with higher union percentages have higher wages and benefits in all jobs raising the economy as a whole. Nigel asked about military recruitment and Robert said their goals are being met because of the bad economy. Beth said "The World is Flat" talked about people working in their own companies in rural areas, rather than for one company. Nigel said there is not only outsourcing, there is in-sourcing where people come here on work visas and do projects. We've lost those jobs.

Conclusions:

WIB Focus: Jane suggested the WIB focus attention on the needs of local employers. Lori felt there should be face-to-face outreach, rather than doing an online survey. Robert said job creation should be a focus. There is a pilot in northern Minnesota and it could be expanded to help small businesses grow quickly. Brenda said the goal could be "Help small businesses expand quickly". Small businesses will stimulate new small businesses or entrepreneurs. Colleen talked about a subsidy that helped Giant's Ridge expand and area towns are still doing well because of it.

People in Transition: Jane thought the WIB can support the Workforce Center by letting policy makers know what is needed. Private industries are strictly profit driven. The public entity has to look at what private industry needs and reach out. Peg said Voc Rehab's approach is to show employers the advantages of hiring people with disabilities. Nina said Pam Mund from East Suburban Resources sells her supported work program by talking about the bottom line and how she can save them money. Lori asked if it was possible to invite a panel of business owners to discuss what they are seeing locally. Robert suggested inviting someone from a different industry to the WIB meeting every month. Duane said sometimes people get hurt on the job and have to be re trained for another job. Peg added small businesses don't have the expertise to modify the job so the person can do it.

Brenda asked that members think of two communication goals to support the Workforce Center. The outline notes from the meeting will be distributed to members shortly.

6. Report on Tri-WIB Activities – Nina Arneson

The Tri-WIB met through a conference call October 6. The group is exploring the possibility of being a part of Career Day or doing something related to it. The group is focused on doing an occupational "road show" and is researching opportunities, how to market it, and the costs involved. There's another meeting scheduled October 30 and the youth councils will get involved after that.

7. Business Services Update – Beth Jameston

Beth will forward a list of business visits to the board. She attended the Minnesota Department of Health Hearing Implement Dispenser Advisory Committee meeting, which is looking at having two different levels of training for hearing aid dispensers.

8. Announcements

Brenda announced there is a new location for Fare for All in Lakeland on the second Tuesday of every month. Beth added to her report that she has information from DEED on targeted industries. In Washington County there are no companies of over 250 that are hiring.

9. Adjourn – Brenda Carlson

A Motion was made to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded, and the Motion carried.