

**WASHINGTON COUNTY  
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD MEETING  
WebEx Meeting  
June 17, 2020**

**Members Present**

Christine Dressel	Christopher Eng	Susie Evans
Jordan Fry	Tara Gearing	Jeff Klemmer
Cynthia Larson	Rachel Perez	Monica Ramirez
Greg Renne	Lori Tapani	Tom Yuska

**Action Team Members**

Tom Colosimo	Andrea Dunn	Stan Karwoski
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**CareerForce Staff Present**

Tina Dudzinski	Robin Hakari	Rachel O'Connell
Karen Ritter	Rick Roy	Thai Yang

**WDB Partners**

Lee Okerstrom

**1. Meeting Called to Order by the Chair – Christine Dressel**

Chair, Christine Dressel, called the meeting to order. Members, Action Team Members, Partners, and CareerForce staff introduced themselves. It was determined there was a quorum of business members in attendance. A Motion was made to approve the Agenda, it was seconded, and the Motion was approved. Motions were made to approve the meeting minutes from December 18, 2019, April 15, 2020 and May 20, 2020; the Motions were seconded and approved.

**2. COVID Updates – Rick Roy**

**Operations Status Update:** Washington County is moving forward on opening up services. Woodbury staff are working from home (except for the License Center). The narrow reception area makes social distancing impossible and the conference room may be made into a reception waiting area. When WDB meetings resume in the fall, we will reach out to the library and other locations to see if there are rooms available.

Referrals to the Dislocated Worker program are down in part because Unemployment is no longer doing reemployment sessions onsite. People will soon have an idea if they are returning to their jobs or will need retraining. The \$600 federal benefit is a challenge for businesses who want their employees back because people are better off on unemployment unless they are making over \$20 an hour.

Robin Hakari and Cindy Hinderks have been managing virtual services and this may be one of the ways workshops will be handled in the future.

*Chris Dressel: Are you seeing examples of fraud with unemployment?* Robin Hakari replied she has heard reports from the community but not experienced it directly. Some people have received letters claiming to be from Unemployment that were not from the Unemployment office.

*Susie Evans: What about teachers who have a contract but are afraid to return to work?* Rick Roy said the chambers in Washington County did a workshop with a law firm which outlined the rights of workers and employers. For example, an employer cannot target a protected class (such as an older worker) in determining if they should go back to work. Those with underlying health conditions may get a workplace modification. Chris Eng added over 100 people attended and the workshop will be repeated soon. *Jordan Fry* advised teachers reach out to their union representative if they are having problems with their employer.

*Monica Rameriz: Century College will have different versions of classes coming back with face-to-face classes having the option of Zoom. Faculty members who feel compromised will have other options. Enrollment is down right now but fall enrollment is robust.*

*Chris Eng: The State Legislature has come to an agreement on the amount of federal CARES Act money that will be distributed to the counties and cities in the state. Washington County may receive \$31 million; this is in addition to what cities can receive. Some money can be used to help small businesses reopen with improvements such as modifications for social distancing. The money will be in the form of a grant and distributed through the Open for Business program.*

*Commissioner Karwoski: It will be a priority for the County Board to help small business as well as meet the needs of social services. The County is looking forward to getting the money to help with the budget and will make good decisions on its use.*

**HEROS Update:** Rick Roy said the Board approved a new letter that will be signed and sent to elected officials. The HEROS Act passed the House and the Senate will make a counter proposal.

### **3. Documents, Plans and Other Updates – Rick Roy**

**Memorandum of Understanding Approval (MOU) (Vote required):** The Federal monitors who visited in March were impressed with how we operate but required more clarity. In the MOU, we need to specify which partners delivering the programs were on site. The Community Service Block Grant and Housing and Urban Development were removed because they have no employment component. Referrals will be more purposeful with staff contacting the partner directly rather than giving the client a phone number. More detail is needed on how we make programs accessible to people with disabilities. Other changes include more direct citations to the law and a cleaner signature page. A Motion was made to approve the MOU, it was seconded, and the Motion was approved.

**Board Membership Policy Approval (Vote required):** Under WIOA, private sector WDB members must reside or have a business in Washington County. The intent of the policy is the employer hires from the local area and is engaged with the community. This is an issue for northern Washington County which is more rural. For example, Lori Tapani's business,

Wyoming Machine, is five miles out of Washington County but she hires from the area and is engaged with the Forest Lake High School.

Rick raised the issue with the federal monitors about that citation to the law. He proposed the County Commissioner can approve one WDB member per category that meets the requirements. This policy will be submitted to the State Association's "Gang of Eight" for statewide approval. A letter will be added to the WDB application attesting that the business hires from the County and is involved in the community. The policy will also be added to the WDB Bylaws. A Motion was made to approve the Board Membership policy, it was seconded, and the Motion was approved.

**Bylaws Update (Vote required):** The only change to the Bylaws is the incorporation of the language about the Board Membership Policy. A Motion was made to approve the Bylaws as amended, it was seconded, and the Motion was approved.

**Board Member Application Process (Vote required):** Private sector appointees are required to have decision making authority such as hiring for their company. If someone does not have that authority, they can still join the Board but need a letter giving them permission to represent another person from their company who has decision making authority.

*Chris Dressel:* What if a person from Washington County could not get on the Board because of members outside the county? Rick replied 19 is the minimum number of Board members, but we can add more as long as 50% are from business and 20% from labor. Anyone can participate by being on an Action Team.

*Jeff Klemmer* suggested a letter be created in advance to speed up the process.

A Motion was made to accept the change in the Board Member Application process, it was seconded, and the Motion was approved.

**Remaining Issues from Monitor Visit:** Mike Dophin, Metronic, and Julie Stromin, Renewal by Andersen, are in the process of joining the Board. We need one more member and have asked for 90 days to complete that requirement. The other issue is we can't monitor ourselves and have asked if DEED can be in that role. We need an agreement with DEED and Rick with meet with Marc Majors, Employment and Training program director to comply with that requirement.

**GANT Chart Review and Feedback:** Rick would like to meet with the Board Chair, Committee Chairs and staff this summer to review the chart. Covid-19 changed many of the things we were planning to do. The Board's oversight responsibilities are getting done, the Bylaws are completed, and Board membership is ongoing. The state will address the Local Plan this fall and negotiations on performance are underway with the Department of Labor (DOL).

The Oversight Action Team has been effective in keeping communication going between the teams. The Career Pathways Action Team was going to do an assessment on what the schools are doing but was unable to complete it because of Covid-19. Adesewa Adasiji from DEED is working on a Health Care Initiative which will be followed by a Manufacturing Initiative this

fall. The CareerForce Team was planning a community event to bring together resources and conducting workshops. The workshops may be done virtually working with the chambers. For CareerForce awareness, Rick wrote five stories and will try to find more channels to distribute future stories. Robin Hakari, Career Services Senior Specialist, oversees many of these relationships and will be joining the CareerForce group in addition to providing additional oversight to comply with the monitor's recommendation.

The Youth Development team learned local school districts have a difficult time connecting with business, something the WDB can help with. Schools in Washington County are offering courses based on preparation for career pathways. While the Tree Trust contract was cancelled, we have a project with them at Lake Elmo that can be completed with social distancing. We are working with South Washington County and Forest Lake schools supporting summer work employment and summer school credit recovery. Youth Program eligible students are working with a work based coordinator from the schools who was hired on a short term contract. A final project with Tom Yuska, Family Means, and Amber Shanahan, 4-H Program Coordinator, is "Youth Teaching Youth" <https://www.startribune.com/in-4-h-program-kids-are-teachers-and-students/191153571/> Through these different programs, about the same number of youth are being served as through Tree Trust and we hope to increase the number next year.

**Comments:**

*Susie Evans* is also working with credit recovery and wants to be included in that group.

*Stan Karwoski* commented he is happy to see the schools focus on career pathways and sees that as a way to achieve greater racial equity.

*Tom Yuska* added they are working with youth of color in Landfall and Cimarron, sometimes going beyond what the schools are doing.

*Greg Renne* said the Finishing School Technical Institute just had six students graduate from their ESCL program and high school. They partner with local and alternative schools to encourage young people to work in the trades.

**4. Q&A with Board Members**

*Greg Renne:* Their Worker Readiness Training Program begins August 17 through September 18 with another session following September 21<sup>st</sup>. This program focuses on women and minorities but is open to everyone to introduce them to the finishing trades. The programs are funded by the Department of Labor and Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry APEX grant partnering with Washington and Ramsey Counties.

*Jeff Klemmer:* Real estate showings are 12.8% higher than last year at this time and average home prices have dropped just slightly, showing the pandemic has not had a significant impact on the housing market.

**5. Meeting Adjourned – Chris Dressel (Vote required)**

A Motion was made to adjourn the meeting, it was seconded, and the Motion was approved. The Board will be on recess for the summer and the next meeting will be September 16, 2020.