

BERKS COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD (WDB)

7:30 a.m.

June 19, 2020

**PA CareerLink® Berks County, 1920 Kutztown Road, Suite F, Reading, PA 19604
Meeting Summary**

Members Present (via MS Teams Meeting)

Ms. Auria Bradley
Mr. John DeVere
Mr. Michael Fischetti
Ms. Kristi Gage-Linderman
Mr. Robert Harrop
Ms. Joanne Judge
Ms. Peggy Kershner
Mr. Thomas McKeon
Mr. Thomas McNelis
Mr. James Nichols
Mr. Mark Pinkasavage
Mr. Michael Rowley
Mr. Mark Schlott
Mr. Russell Showers
Mr. Pablo Tejada
Mr. Barry Unger
Dr. Anne Zayaitz

Members Absent

Ms. Debra Antol
Ms. Jenny Batista
Mr. William Dorward
Ms. Marianne Egolf
Ms. Carole Homolash
Mr. Lewis McCoy
Ms. Karyn Troxell
Ms. Tammy White

Staff and Guests Present (via MS Teams Meeting)

Mr. Daniel Fogarty	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Mr. John Moser	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Ms. Megan Noll	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Mr. Rory Stevenson	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Ms. Helen Amole	PA CareerLink® Berks County Administrator
Ms. Amber Columbo	ResCare Young Adult Program Director
Ms. Bridget Wolf	ResCare Regional Director
Ms. Marybeth Ferguson	PA Dept. of Labor & Industry
Mr. Derrick Donnell	PA Dept. of Labor & Industry
Mr. Larry Melf	Educational Data Systems, Inc.

In keeping with COVID-19 precautionary social distancing guidance regarding gatherings of large groups, a notice was directed to all board members to participate in meeting discussion via the Microsoft Teams virtual meeting or teleconference call-in option. All board members complied, and an attendance roll call was taken. A quorum of members being present, the meeting was called to order at 7:30 a.m. by Mr. Moser on behalf of Ms. Gage-Linderman who was participating remotely by phone.

Mr. Moser introduced the Consent Agenda items on behalf of the chair and asked if any item should be removed for later discussion prior to the vote.

- Approval of Previous Meeting’s Minutes
- Approval of Updates to Employment Retention/Layoff Aversion Strategy
- Approval of Work-Based Training Policy Revisions / Incumbent Worker Training Matching Funds Reimbursement Increase
- Approval of PY2020 CareerLink Contracts/Extensions (as recommended by Staff and Committees)
 - *Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker Contract with EDSI*
 - *CareerLink Operator with EDSI*
 - *Community Based Pre-Apprenticeship Renewal with BCPS for “R3” (\$225,000)*
 - *State extensions until December 31, 2020 of Business Education Partnership and Teacher in the Workplace grants originally expiring June 30, 2020. These grants are with BCIU, GRCA, RMCTC, and BCTC.*

Hearing no such request, Mr. DeVere motioned for a vote and Mr. Showers seconded. Ms. Kershner announced her abstention. The vote being unanimous, the consent agenda was adopted as presented.

Mr. Fogarty stated that there would be no Executive Committee report for this meeting since the Committee meeting scheduled for June 11 was cancelled due to having no action items or important items for discussion.

The next item on the meeting agenda to be taken up was the Finance Committee report. Ms. Noll provided the PY2019 Finance Committee Report budget versus expenditure spreadsheet showing actual expenditures for the year through April 2020 are quite positive and are at or within budget for all programs. An updated spreadsheet showing current WDB Discretionary Grant fiscal status through April 2020 was also provided. Ms. Noll advised the committee of the state approved funds extensions for these grants as noted in the consent agenda and for the 2018/19 Rapid Response funds. Ms. Noll also informed the members that the Bureau of Workforce Development Administration is requesting a statewide extension for PY2019 TANF Youth funds.

Ms. Noll then reviewed the proposed PY2020 budget including some significant changes to several program line item budgets due to WIOA Title I allocations and the impacts on PY2019 expenditures of COVID-19. Mr. Moser commented that funding for the annual Individuals with Disabilities Symposium will be repurposed to provide research, development and publication of a study on issues and barriers affecting this population. The proposed budget has been recommended for full board approval by the Finance Committee. Following discussion, Mr. Showers motioned for a vote to approve the PY2020 budget as is and Mr. DeVere seconded. The vote being unanimous, the budget was approved.

Mr. Moser advised the board of COVID-19 impacts to PA CareerLink® Berks County (PACL Berks) services and provided the members with an in-depth breakdown of the plan for a phased reopening the PACL Berks facility, including expanded hours of operation, staffing schedules/PPE requirements, virtual and/or by appointment only services, health screening protocols and communication to the public of these changes. Initial targeted dates for the reopening are as follows:

- Current red phase: State-supplied PACL Berks facility disinfection (Red phase continues)
- June 29: CareerLink leadership returns. (Yellow phase begins.)
- July 6: All staff return as appropriate. Security will come on-site at some point this week to perform “dress rehearsal” for the reopening.
- July 13: CareerLink begins appointment only reopening (Green phase begins)

Mr. Moser then went on to advise the board that, per Labor & Industry directive, Unemployment Compensation claims assistance via dedicated courtesy phones will continue to remain unavailable at PACL’s across the state due to public health and safety concerns.

Ms. Kershner provided the One Stop Oversight Committee Report. Planning for a rescheduled PA CareerLink® Berks County Job Fair in July has been suspended due to continuing state mandated COVID-19 precautionary guidance on large group gatherings. It will be rescheduled to a possible October date or even a transition to multiple industry sector-focused “virtual job fairs” delivered via social media.

Ms. Kershner then commented on the Berks Connection/Pretrial Services collaboration with the PACL Berks on R3 program enrollment. Ms. Kershner noted that the process has become much more efficient now that inter-office logistics has been finalized.

Lastly, Mr. Moser advised the members that WIOA Title I program performance metrics through the 3rd quarter of PY2019 are within the overall “green” or acceptable range. He further reported that the EARN Request for Proposal review has been completed with contract approval expected at the County Board of Commissioner’s June 25 meeting. July 1, 2020 is the start of a two-year agreement with Educational Data Systems, Inc. (EDSI) as the provider of services.

Mr. Moser provided the Youth Committee report on behalf of Ms. White. The following updates on Youth/Young Adult Program activities were presented:

- ResCare is working with Mr. Moser on a proposal for the purchase of Chrome Books to be provided to each enrollment in the program at a cost \$250 per enrollment under supportive services.
- “Box of Care” as a supportive services incentive: \$25 value of items to be delivered to Young Adults who have been actively participating. This would include paper, pencils, snacks to show we are here for them, and appreciate their continued participation.
- 4 Virtual enrollments in the month of May. It appears that due to the pandemic our 150-performance enrollment goal will not be met by June 30th.
- Paid Work Experience (PWE): 1 Virtual PWE at CH Briggs has continued through the pandemic, this has been successful. Both the participant and employer have been happy this was able to continue. In June, two Young Adult Participants will participate in PWE one day at week at the Penn Street Market; PPE measures will be put into place.

Mr. Fogarty then gave the members an update on the proposed response to the COVID-19 precipitated TANF Young Adult program summer employment scale down, a Berks Service Corp 2020 Program for 18 to 24 year old participants who will be employed in community-based work experience at non-profit organizations who are dealing with reduced volunteerism due to safety concerns of traditionally reliable age groups while experiencing a considerably higher volume of public need for assistance. A Service Corp Advisory Committee has been constituted in partnership with the United Way Berks County. ResCare will serve as the employer of record

with responsibility to identify, recruit and place a select, targeted group of eligible young adults into paid opportunities to serve and learn about our Berks community. The program will run for up to four months from mid-July through mid-November with a placements of a minimum of four weeks with between 25-30 hours per week at \$9.50 an hour.

Mr. DeVere provided a brief revisit of the revisions incorporated into the Berks WDB Layoff Aversion/Employment Retention Strategy document and the Work-based Training Policy on Incumbent Worker Training Matching Funds reimbursement presented in the consent agenda. Mr. DeVere then advised the members of the need to approve a contract to be entered into with the Economic Development Company of Lancaster County for the purpose of research and development of an Advanced Manufacturing Skills Gap Study and presentation of its findings at a community forum in January 2021. The Training & Industry Partnership Committee having given its prior recommendation, Mr. DeVere requested a motion for full board approval of said contract. Mr. Harrop motioned for a vote, and Mr. Rowley seconded. The vote being unanimous in the affirmative, the contract was approved.

Mr. McKeon advised the board of the issues negatively impacting the delivery of the 2020 Employer Symposium planned for the Fall. It is acknowledged that attracting an appropriate audience to an event that most assuredly must be delivered virtually given the pandemic safety precautions would be impractical. Mr. McKeon commented that while the Committee on Increasing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities has impaneled a Marketing subcommittee to still explore Fall activities. It is recommending repurposing those funds originally earmarked for the symposium to conduct a study on the impact of COVID-19 on the hiring of individuals with disabilities from the employer and job-seeker perspective. It is anticipated that such a study will be on a similar scale as the 2017 Disconnected Youth Study.

To finish his report, Mr. McKeon advised the board of a request for approval of renaming the Committee on Increasing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities to the “Diversity, Equality and Inclusion (DEI) Committee”, as recommended by the committee, to better reflect the committee focus. Mr. McKeon requested a motion for full board approval of the committee name change. Mr. DeVere motioned for approval, and Ms. Bradley seconded. The vote being unanimous in the affirmative, the committee name change was approved.

Mr. Fogarty began his COO report with a brief review of the 2020 Berks County labor market data as of February, initial COVID-19 related impacts and a discussion on the rising number of Unemployment Compensation (UC) claims in PA, as well as locally and regionally. New UC claims are expected to continue to skyrocket and Mr. Fogarty advised the board of UC’s problematic service levels, limited response capabilities, staffing shortages and reluctance to employ viable solutions to meet the rising customer demand. In-depth member discussion followed on what steps the Berks WDB can take to reverse UC inaction and to communicate the PA Career-Link® Berks County’s limited options to the public.

Mr. Fogarty then moved the discussion to Workforce Adjustment & Retraining Notifications (WARN)/Rapid Response related activities for workers newly dislocated from multiple Berks County employers that have been affected by major layoffs, furloughs and business closures in recent months.

As an update on COVID-19 WDB staff impacts, Mr. Fogarty reported that his temporary reassignment to assist the County Leadership and HR Team’s response to the pandemic threat to

local public health ended in late April. However, at Mr. Fogarty's request, John Moser effectively continued interim responsibilities as the WDB's Acting Director to date. This allowed Mr. Fogarty to focus on planning and external outreach to key stakeholders during these initial months of the pandemic. Mr. Fogarty noted how effectively WDB activities continued to function over the past three months under Mr. Moser's leadership and thanked him for his tremendous efforts and results. As of this meeting, Mr. Moser will return to his regular Assistant Director duties and WDB staff will once again report to Mr. Fogarty and primarily continue to work remotely. Patricia Spencer (Executive Assistant) and our part-time staffer Luther Huyett will remain on indefinite furlough until external conditions allow for their return.

Mr. Fogarty then reported on renewed local and regional recovery planning. The Policy, Planning & Priorities (PPP) Committee, chaired by Mr. Rowley, relaunched in June with a new lineup of experienced and informed members to review and develop near-term priorities and our local Berks WDB WIOA four-year plan. During the June PPP video conference, EDSI presented a revised plan as forced by the pandemic that will regenerate outreach and response to a newly modified online survey as research for the Employer Best Practices Study. Employer response will lead to virtual focus groups to further explore employer engagement and employment best practices engagement in July.

Finally, Mr. Fogarty advised the board of departures from and new additions to the Berks WDB membership. We say goodbye to Ms. Judge, Ms. White and Mr. Schlott, as well as Mr. John Morahan who retired May 1, with sincere thanks and gratitude for their guidance, professionalism and many years of service to the board. We wish them well in all of their future endeavors.

We also warmly welcome Ms. Ashley Chambers (United Way of Berks County), Ms. Jennie Rodriguez-Priest (Stevens and Lee/Griffin), Mr. Scott Mengle (Penn State Health-St. Joseph), and Mr. David Turner (First Energy Corp./Met Ed), newly appointed to WDB membership by the County Board of Commissioners for three year terms commencing July 1, 2020.

Following the completion of the committee report outs, Mr. Moser opened the floor for Market Intelligence Discussion. Mr. McKeon commented on new Logistics Sector projects under development, new business interests for locating in Berks, growth in new job and non-resident attraction to Berks County, and the resultant potentiality for tax growth. No further member remarks were offered.

At this time, Mr. Moser called for public comment. No public comments were offered.

There being no further business, Ms. Gage-Linderman called for a motion to adjourn. Ms. Judge motioned and Mr. Schlott seconded. The vote being unanimous, Ms. Gage-Linderman adjourned the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

The next quarterly meeting of the Board will be held at 7:30 a.m. on Friday, December 11, 2020.