

**BERKS COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
(WDB)**

7:30 a.m.

March 20, 2020

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

Meeting Summary

Members Present (via conference call)

Ms. Jenny Batista
Ms. Auria Bradley
Mr. John DeVere
Ms. Marianne Egolf
Mr. Michael Fischetti
Ms. Kristi Gage-Linderman
Ms. Carole Homolash
Ms. Joanne Judge
Ms. Peggy Kershner
Mr. Lewis McCoy
Mr. Thomas McKeon
Mr. Thomas McNelis
Mr. James Nichols
Mr. Mark Pinkasavage
Mr. Michael Rowley
Mr. Mark Schlott
Mr. Russell Showers
Mr. Pablo Tejada
Ms. Tammy White
Dr. Anne Zayaitz

Members Absent

Ms. Debra Antol
Mr. William Dorward
Mr. Robert Harrop
Mr. John Morahan
Ms. Karyn Troxell
Mr. Barry Unger

Staff and Guests Present

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
Mr. Larry Melf	Educational Data Systems, Inc. (via conference call)

While the scheduled PA CareerLink® Berks County Room 100 meeting location at 1920 Kutztown Road Suite F remained staffed and open to the public with conference phone access, in keeping with COVID-19 precautionary social distancing guidance regarding gatherings of groups of 10 or more, a recommendation was directed to all board members to participate in meeting discussion via the teleconference 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. Fogarty on behalf of Ms. Gage-Linderman who was participating remotely by phone.

Mr. Fogarty 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 Revised PY2019 Budget (included in Finance Committee Report and distributed to WDB on 3/13/2020)
- Approval of 2020 Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) Contracts
 - ResCare in the amount of \$523,455.00
 - Goodwill in the amount of \$99,928.00

Hearing no such request, the consent agenda was adopted as presented.

The next item on the meeting agenda to be taken up was the Executive Committee report. Mr. Fogarty and Mr. Moser presented the board with the rationale behind the need for a new CEO/WDB Partnership Agreement and a draft of the proposed revised agreement. The new agreement will be effective April 1, 2020 through March 31, 2024 with a renewal evaluation to follow the start of new County Commissioner terms in January of that year. The Executive Committee unanimously approved the agreement and has recommended approval by the full WDB. Mr. DeVere motioned, and Mr. Showers seconded the motion, for a vote to approve the agreement. The vote to approve was unanimous and Mr. Moser will assist Ms. Gage-Linderman with acquiring the necessary signatures

Mr. Moser reviewed the PY2019 Second Quarter/Year-to Date WIOA Title I Performance Metrics. Mr. Moser reported that most performance categories are near or above targeted goals, but some metrics continue to lag below negotiated levels. Mr. Moser advised of two specific areas of concern, Adult Median Earnings and 4th quarter Employment Rate, with YTD performances at 75.2% and 68.3% of negotiated goals, respectively. Mr. Moser has addressed these with the Title I contractor and will continue to monitor monthly results for the remaining two quarters of the current program year.

Mr. Moser then reviewed our recently received very favorable local program and fiscal monitoring report for PY2018 issued by the PA L&I Bureau of Workforce Development Administration (BWDA). Employer engagement and monitoring tools/assessments were cited in the report as promising local practices.

Lastly, Mr. Fogarty reported that EDSI has been awarded a \$50,000 contract to conduct research and publish a report on WDB Strategic Local Employer Engagement and Employment Best Practices.

Mr. Fogarty began his COO report with a brief review of the calendar year 2019 Berks County labor market data, initial 2020 labor market data, and a discussion on the rising number of Unemployment Compensation (UC) claims in PA. New UC claims are expected to skyrocket due to state mandated COVID-19 business closures, Mr. Fogarty reminded the board of UC’s history of poor service levels for predictable seasonal spikes during even low periods of unemployment.

Mr. Fogarty provided details of the Berks County Board of Commissioners local disaster emergency declaration of March 12, made in response to the threat to local public health presented by the spreading COVID-19 virus:

- WDB Staff – Due to the current crisis, the County Commissioners have requested that Mr. Fogarty be reassigned to assist the County Leadership and HR Teams for the next six months. Effective Friday March 20 and until further notice, John Moser will assume full responsibilities as the WDB’s Acting Director. Rory Stevenson and Megan Noll will report to Mr. Moser and will work remotely unless and/or until otherwise directed. Patricia Spencer is on paid leave through at least March 31.
- CareerLink Staff and Customers – Following consultation with our CareerLink Partners, the decision was made to close the PA CareerLink® Berks County to the public at the close of business on Tuesday March 17, 2020. CareerLink staff are now providing services to jobseekers and employer customers via phone, email and social media until further notice. UC courtesy phones have not been available since March 16 and applicants/claimants will be referred to UC phone/online services, email and LiveChat for assistance.

Mr. Fogarty then surveyed the board members for comments/questions and reactions to Governor Wolf’s COVID-19 non-essential business closure guidelines issued on March 19 and the effects that they have had, and are anticipated to have, on member’s future business-related activity. In-depth discussion took place with numerous board members contributing feedback on their current operations situation and employee impact and staffing strategies. Several members relayed that they may remain open for business. Others reported having submitted requests to the state for the waiver of a non-essential business status. Mr. Fogarty commented on our largest local employer East Penn Mfg.’s (EPM) mandatory shutdown under the guidelines and asked for the member’s consideration of drafting a formal WDB letter in support of state approval of its revised designation as an essential business. Mr. DeVere informed that EPM supplies critical energy storage product to healthcare facilities, emergency services and other vital public agencies and recommended that the board support EPM’s reopening. A motion was called for and received approval of a WDB letter of support to be drafted. However, following discussion on appropriate selection criterion for WDB support and method of its conveyance, a postponement of further action was agreed to. Feedback continued with group sharing of guidance on safeguard protocols and information on resources for personal protective equipment and related safety supplies. Discussion regarding COVID-19 updates concluded with an extensive examination of the struggles that community-based organizations, such as the United Way of Berks County, face in providing services while keeping staff safe, the immediate increased need for volunteers, and suggestions for the public/private assistance that these agencies will require in providing the Berks County community with help in finding health and human services.

Mr. Fogarty reminded the board members that their statements of financial interest for the 2019 calendar year are due prior to May 1 and any still outstanding *should be forwarded to Mr. Moser.*

The following revisions incorporated into the PY2019 budget revisions were approved by the Finance Committee and presented for full WDB action taken as adopted under this meeting’s consent agenda. To review, these revisions include:

1. The transfer of \$200,000 of PY2019 Dislocated Worker Funds (as well as the associated administrative funds of \$22,222) to PY2019 Adult Funds.
2. Youth Committee recommended increase of \$118,214 in available funds as adjustments to the PY2019 WIOA Youth contract with ResCare.
3. Recommended contracted service adjustments, additional funding provided through discretionary grant awards, and a \$9,293 increase to Board Operation costs for the onboarding of a new WDB Fiscal & Quality Assurance Assistant staff position (original planned May 1st start date).

Ms. Noll provided the PY2019 Finance Committee Report budget versus expenditure spreadsheet showing actual expenditures for the year to date are at or within budget for all programs. An updated spreadsheet showing current WDB Discretionary and Competitive Grant fiscal status was also provided. Ms. Noll reported that her PY2019 fiscal monitoring for 9 of the 10 subcontractors has been completed and Mr. Fogarty reiterated that the good news that there were no negative PA L&I Fiscal Monitoring findings requiring a corrective action response from us.

Due to meeting time constraints, the report outs for the following WDB committees were abbreviated and discussion limited.

Mr. DeVere advised the members of the findings in the Pre-Apprenticeship/Registered Apprenticeship Report contracted with EDSI and presented to the Training & Industry Partnership Committee by Business Services Team representatives. Mr. DeVere followed with a final update on the highly successful 4th Annual Manufacturers Resource Center (MRC) Berks/Schuylkill “What’s So Cool About Manufacturing” middle school student video contest, partially funded by the Berks 2019/20 BEP grant, and recent developments in the creation of a MRC “Dream Team-Berks County,” funded with Berks 2020/2021 BEP grant funds.

Mr. McKeon commented on the Berks County WDB’s Committee on Increasing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities report. There has been some difficulty in identifying and securing a provider of contracted services for delivery of the 2020 Symposium planned for Fall 2020. No responses were received for the Employer Symposium RFP issued by the County. Under WIOA and County procurement rules we can now sole-source this service, so John Moser will directly contact potential contractors with the necessary capability. Mr. Moser is continuing outreach. Mr. McKeon also commented that the committee is considering a name change and will welcome suggestions.

Ms. Kershner provided the One Stop Oversight Committee Report. Planning for the April 27, 2020 PA CareerLink® Berks County Job Fair has been suspended pending further evaluation of the impact of the State mandated COVID-19 precautionary guidance on large group gatherings. A final decision to move forward will be made by April 1, however, it is expected that it will be rescheduled to an alternative later date or even a transition to a “virtual delivery” delivery via social media. Ms. Kershner referred to the 16,185 in PA CareerLink® Berks County foot traffic total for the period July 2019 through December 2019 detailed in the current By the Numbers handout. She added that 461 individuals attended orientation and 371 individual businesses have been served during the same period. Some group discussion followed regarding impending layoffs

due to the pandemic-caused business closures and how the PA CareerLink® Berks County can maximize its role as a clearing house for employment opportunities.

Ms. White briefly commented on the Youth Committee Report and stressed the importance of youth services during this time of crisis.

At this time, Mr. Fogarty called for public comment. No public comments were offered. Mr. Fogarty then opened the floor for Market Intelligence Discussion.

With multiple economic stimulus programs designed to counteract the effects of the pandemic expected to be announced shortly, Mr. McKeon inquired of any knowledge the group might have on federal incentive programs targeted specifically to workforce development. Mr. Fogarty responded with his belief that the main and most immediate focus will be expanding unemployment compensation benefits funded by the federal government.

Mr. Tejada commented that non-profits will surely be severely impacted by the pandemic and help from the WDB in planning strategies for continuity of services will exhibit great support. The group agreed and Mr. Fogarty recommended “circling back” with Ms. White to further discuss the who, what, when and how WDB expertise can be applied in the most effective manner.

Finally, Mr. Fogarty advised the board of the new leadership recently announced by the Greater Reading Chamber Alliance Board of Directors. On March 6, 2020 former US Representative Jim Gerlach was named as GRCA President and CEO.

There being no further business, 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, June 19, 2020 in Room 100 of the PA CareerLink® Berks County, 1920 Kutztown road, Reading, PA 19604.