

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

**7:30 a.m.
December 10, 2021**

Meeting Summary

Members Present (via MS Teams Meeting)

Ms. Debra Antol
Ms. Jenny Batista
Ms. Auria Bradley
Dr. Karen Campbell
Ms. Ashley Chambers
Mr. John DeVere
Mr. William Dorward
Ms. Marianne Egolf
Ms. Kristi Gage-Linderman
Mr. Robert Harrop
Ms. Peggy Kershner
Mr. Thomas McNelis
Mr. Scott Mengle
Ms. Debra Millman
Mr. James Nichols
Mr. Rick Olmos
Mr. Michael Rowley
Mr. Russell Showers
Ms. Karyn Troxell
Mr. David Turner
Mr. Barry Unger

Members Absent

Mr. Michael Fischetti
Mr. Mark Pinkasavage

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
Ms. Matika Palmer	Berks County Workforce Development Board Staff
Ms. Patricia Spencer	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	PA CareerLink® Berks County Youth Program Director
Ms. Marybeth Ferguson	Bureau of Workforce Partnership and Operations (BWPO)
Mr. Andre Hardy	Educational Data Systems, Inc.
Ms. Yvelisse Gonzalez	Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
Mr. Nathaniel Beckham	PA Trade Navigator
Ms. Heather Berger	County of Berks Information Systems
Mr. Malcolm Townes	County of Berks Information Systems

All Board members and guests participated in the meeting via the Microsoft Teams virtual meeting or teleconference call-in option. The meeting was called to order by Ms. Gage-Linderman at 7:34 a.m. Mr. Fogarty announced that the meeting was being streamed for the public via YouTube through the County's website and was being recorded for minutes purposes only and that the recording would be deleted. An attendance roll call was taken, and a quorum was present. Mr. Fogarty thanked Ms. Berger for her assistance in the live streaming through the County's website.

Mr. Fogarty introduced the Consent Agenda items on behalf of the Chair and asked if any item should be moved for later discussion prior to the vote:

- Approval of Previous Meeting's Minutes
- Approval of Revised WDB Committee Charges as recommended by the Executive Committee
- Approval of PY2021 Revised Budget as recommended by the Finance Committee
- Approval of 2022 PA CareerLink[®] Berks County Holiday Schedule as recommended by the One Stop Oversight Committee

As no members requested any items to be moved, on behalf of the Chair, Mr. Fogarty moved to adopt the consent agenda and announced WDB approval of all Consent Agenda items.

On Ms. Noll's behalf (who was present on the call and available to answer any questions which might have been asked), Mr. Fogarty discussed the PY2021 Budget Vs. Actual report. Current expenditures are within the planned budgets. WIOA Formula Funding expenditures appear to be lower than expected due to no expenditures yet being reported against the Community Based Pre-Apprenticeship contract through October 2021.

Ms. Gage-Linderman reported that Ms. Rodriguez-Priest left Stevens & Lee on October 6, 2021 for a career change and therefore could not remain on the Board as a business representative. She thanked Ms. Rodriguez-Priest for her six-year commitment to the Board, including being an active contributor to the Youth Committee for four years and more recently assisting the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee. She also played an active role on the steering committee for the DEI's completed study that will be reported on later in the meeting by Mr. McNelis.

Mr. Moser reported on the WIOA Title I Performance Outcomes for the 4th Quarter PY2020 Program Year-to-Date Results which received desired "check marks" in both the Statewide and Berks outcomes. He noted that the Department of Labor revised which measures they will be focused on. Originally there were five measures; now there are two. For the 1st Quarter PY2021 Program Year-to-Date Results, both Statewide and Berks received check marks on performance.

Ms. Gage-Linderman paused the meeting to announce Mr. Moser's pending retirement on January 4, 2022. She stated that Mr. Moser had been with the Workforce Investment Board (WIB)/Workforce Development Board (WDB) for nearly 21 years, the past three years serving

as Assistant Director. She commented that the Board deeply appreciates Mr. Moser’s unfailing commitment and dedicated service over the past two decades to thousands of job seekers, hundreds of employers, and all who have had the privilege of working with him. Accordingly, a plaque on behalf of the Board was presented to Mr. Moser which read:

- *In grateful recognition of John W. Moser*
- *For outstanding contributions in support of the Berks County Workforce Development Board*
- *“You’ve checked all the boxes” ✓*
- *Congratulations. Best wishes on your retirement January 2022*

Mr. Fogarty reported on the successful monitoring report received from the Department of Labor and Industry (L&I). He complimented Mr. Moser and Ms. Noll on their collaborative work which resulted in that positive report. As noted in the cover letter received from L&I, there were no fiscal or programmatic findings or concerns. In addition, L&I noted two local “best practices”. Mr. Fogarty added that staff will endeavor to maintain Mr. Moser’s legacy of excellence.

On behalf of Ms. Gage-Linderman, Mr. Fogarty invited Ms. Kershner to provide the One Stop Committee Report.

Before commenting on the *By the Numbers* report for the period July 2021 – September 2021, Ms. Kershner thanked Mr. Moser for his magical way of working in the bureaucracy.

Ms. Kershner reported that the number for Customer Foot Traffic of 6,308 has already exceeded the cumulative in-person customer visit number for all PY2020. She added that virtual services are continuing.

Mr. Fogarty noted that the left side of the report measures job seeker services, while the right-side numbers are supports to employers. The *By the Numbers* reports are updated quarterly.

Mr. Fogarty reported that Ms. Noll will assume the role of staffing/scheduling coordinator for the One Stop Oversight Committee activities.

Planning is ongoing for a proposed open job fair before April 30, 2022.

Mr. McNelis, reporting for the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee, said invitations had gone out to Board members and partners for a December 14th meeting with Thomas P Miller Associates to share the results/highlights of their recent study focused on the impact of the pandemic on local employment of adults with disabilities. Mr. McNelis thanked Mr. Moser for his outstanding help, especially during the bidding and award process. He said his association with Mr. Moser spanned a 20-year period of John’s steadfast commitment to persons with disabilities.

Mr. Rowley commented on the Planning Committee report. A Work Plan for the Berks County WDB Ad Hoc Task Force on Adult English Language Proficiency and Numeracy was

included in the Committee's report as well as a proposed timeline of work and composition of the Task Force.

Under the auspices of the Planning Committee, an organizational meeting of the Ad Hoc Task Force on English Language Proficiency and Numeracy was held on October 21, 2021. The Ad Hoc Task Force is co-chaired by Dr. Anna Weitz and Mr. Fogarty. The first "listening session" on Manufacturing/Construction/Utilities hosted by the WDB was held on December 15, 2021. The second "listening session" on Healthcare and Social Assistance hosted by the Literacy Council will be held on January 12, 2022. The third listening session on Hospitality/Retail/Other Services, also hosted by the Literacy Council, is planned for January 26, 2022. A White Paper will be developed and presented at a public meeting by the end of June 2022. Mr. Fogarty commented that the initiative grew out of the Planning Committee's meetings and the WDB's Four-Year Plan.

Mr. Fogarty added that Mr. Stevenson will take primary responsibility for staffing the Planning Committee and coordinating formal planning activities in 2022 with Mr. Fogarty to assist.

Ms. Batista thanked Mr. Moser for his attention to detail and keeping the Youth Committee "in the loop". She then asked Mr. Stevenson to summarize the 2020-2021 Berks Business-Education Partnership (BEP III) Grant Project of which the Berks County WDB is the Fiscal Agent. From the Project Summary, this project proposes to employ a multi-faceted approach to the continuing coordination and expansion of a framework of programs, inaugurated by the Career Reading Berks Pathways Alliance. This project is designed to leverage business employer engagement to enhance Berks County middle school/high school students, parents/guardians and educator awareness of and exposure to diverse, but realistic, education and career opportunities in the greater Berks County region. The design of each program either brings employers into the classroom to directly provide students with career education and skill attainment knowledge or brings the student to the employer to gain first-hand knowledge about a specific career as part of their Chapter 339 career awareness and preparation guidance plan.

Mr. Stevenson commented that the BEP III grant-funded "PA Dream Team Berks County" program, is receiving impressive acceptance by the Berks school districts since the project's official launch in September. The program introduces students (grades 5-12) to the value of technical training and STEM education, and to the many career opportunities available in modern manufacturing. Eleven young professional volunteers in STEM careers from seven area manufacturers have been recruited, onboarded, and trained for the PA Dream Team Berks County pilot program, preparing them to share their personal career stories in the classroom and other venues throughout the school year. Some current team members are bilingual in English and Spanish and, as team recruitment continues into 2022, more such talented bilingual team members will be added.

Mr. Stevenson reported that WDB staff met virtually with our Career Ready Berks (CRB) partners on October 13 to discuss possible projects to be included in a 2022-2023 BEP Grant proposal. Over the next month, CRB partners and stakeholders developed an agreed upon, comprehensive BEP IV continuation grant proposal submitted to L&I on November 17. Under WDB direction, the grant partners were asked to introduce strategies into their individual projects for

reaching our significant Berks County Latino student/parent population, specifically, incorporating elements of equity in inclusion, participation, and translation of related classroom curriculum into Spanish. Lastly, Mr. Stevenson advised that the new grant timeline will run from February 1, 2022 through December 31, 2023 and the announcement of awards is expected in January.

Mr. Fogarty reported that the Disconnected Youth Study White Paper has been completed by Equus and delivered for review as of September 15, 2021. The study was placed on a priority list for the first quarter of 2022. The Youth Committee is working together with the Planning Committee and the study is also tied into the WDB's Plan.

Mr. DeVere also thanked Mr. Moser for his technical assistance to the Training and Industry Partnership Committee, specifically with formulating language to the Committee's charge composition.

He commented on the October 27, 2021 Manufacturing Summit event hosted by RACC and organized by Greater Reading Chamber Alliance's Greater Reading Advanced Manufacturing Next Gen IP. The WDB's Greater Reading Advance Manufacturing Skills Gap Study produced by the Economic Development Corporation of Lancaster County was a significant focus in the Manufacturing Summit presentations.

Mr. DeVere asked Mr. Showers to comment on the Healthcare industry. Before he started, Mr. Showers congratulated Mr. Moser for all the help he gave to the Board and that it has been fun working with him.

Mr. Showers reported that the healthcare sector is going through a transformation as never before. The industry has had to learn to adapt to the shortages in all areas of healthcare due to the pandemic. Over a span of three years, 500,000 people have left the industry in the United States. The pace of those entering is not matching those who left. The pandemic put people in circumstances of choosing what they want to do and where they want to work. The nursing shortage is acute. Medical schools are slow to respond to expand doctor enrollments. Training systems are not responding to gap issues. The dilemma is how to create new and affordable responses. There are also problems in affording new medical equipment. Certain pieces of equipment must be upgraded regularly, and the funds are simply not there to afford the upgrades. COVID has exacerbated the issue of competitiveness for talent. People could choose to work in retail with little risk of health-related issues. Surgeons' schedules have increased with less time off to recuperate mentally and physically. Hospitals are using technology to schedule appointments using limited in-person scheduling. The industry is also seeing changes in executives retiring. There is a battle for talent. How do we create a talent pipeline within our own organizations? We want to grow people through career paths. In conclusion, healthcare should definitely be a priority of this Board.

Mr. Fogarty thanked Mr. Showers and Mr. DeVere for their presentations.

Mr. Fogarty referred the Board's attention to the local labor chart in his COO report. The number of U.S. residents applying for initial unemployment benefits steadily fell over the past year, reaching pre-pandemic levels by the end of November. As reported to the WDB in June,

the number of Americans quitting their jobs in April 2021 reached nearly 4 million—the highest figure on record going back to 2000. Since then, the national number of monthly voluntary “quits” has just continued to grow—reaching another record of 4.4 million in September 2021.

He commented that new hire “churn” and retention continues to be a challenge. There were almost 15,000 new hires locally during the period of April/June 2021, but overall employment is not keeping up. People are moving from one job to another often leading to significant increases in pay.

The WDB published its employer best practices report in October 2020. A key finding of the report is that employers would be well advised to focus on retaining current employees as well as hiring new ones.

Mr. Fogarty asked for market intelligence comments from Board Members.

Ms. Troxell reported that there are great challenges for the transportation and warehousing industry including continuing to struggle to identify appropriate wages while attempting to be competitive with other industries such as retail, manufacturing, and hospitality. Industries are competing on not just wages, but also benefits and incentives being offered. She added that the churn has become so much a bigger area of focus. In many locations they are losing employees which subsequently causes much more stress on managers and supervisors.

Mr. Showers stated that there is an unwritten relationship between management and employees. Employees themselves are redefining what the job will entail including their tolerance levels to remain in a position.

Regarding the churn, Ms. Batista stated that policies that have never before been written are now necessary to make sure doors do not close on potential applicants. She added that Human Resources staff are overwhelmed and tired.

Mr. Turner commented that HR folks in utilities industries are struggling with the same issues. Utility sector employers must look outside the region for talent and make jobs attractive to those coming into the region. Mr. Turner thanked Ms. Gage-Linderman for her assistance in filling several entry-level positions. He said Gage Personnel redefined what his company could do to attract and retain personnel.

There being no public comment, Ms. Gage-Linderman adjourned the meeting at 8:57 a.m. wishing everyone Happy Holidays and Merry Christmas!