



## County of Mercer Workforce Development Board

Mailing Address: 640 South Broad Street, PO Box 8068, Trenton NJ 08650-8068

Administrative Offices Location: 26 Yard Avenue, Trenton NJ 08609

Phone: 609 989-6824 ▪ Email: [wdb@mercercounty.org](mailto:wdb@mercercounty.org)



Virgen Velez  
Acting Director

DAN BENSON  
County Executive

Keith Secrest  
Chairperson

### WDB General Board Meeting ♦ Chairperson: Keith Secrest

February 6, 2024 ♦ 12:00 pm (Zoom) ♦ Meeting Minutes

#### Attending:

**Members:** Keith Secrest (Kinetics Industries), Mary Gay Abbott-Young (Rescue Mission of Trenton), Anthony Carabelli (Mercer County Office of Economic Development), Matt Carey (MCTS/MCSSSD), Scott Elliott (PCIL) Kathy Fiery (Health Care Association of NJ), Katherine Kish (Einstein's Alley), Lesley Jack (NJ DVRS), Lillian Mauro (SBDC@TCNJ), Tyrell McCain (NJDOL employment Services), Scott Needham (Princeton Air), Taraun Tice-McKnight (Mercer County Human Services), Peter Tindall (Homasote), Latoya Wilson (WCR Consultancy)

**Guests:** Carmen Gates (African American Chamber of Commerce), Iliana Ivanov (NJDOL Business Services); Jim Harris (NJDOL Career Pathways); Umesh Patel (NJDOL OJT)

**Staff:** Virgen Velez

#### Welcome & Introductions

Keith Secrest opened the meeting and welcomed the group. Introductions were made.

#### Approval of October 31, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Scott Needham made the motion to approve, Anthony Carabelli seconded the motion. There was no opposition and the motion to approve the minutes was approved.

Mary Gay Abbott Young wanted to clarify a statement made at the end of the October meeting regarding the Rescue Mission's non participation in the October One Stop Job Fair. They did not participate as an employer and have provided notices of vacancies for their staff vacancies, particularly those they have difficulty hiring. Rescue Mission residents did attend & had good things to say. She appreciates the effort for their residents.

#### Presentations/Updates

##### County Department Economic Development - Anthony Carabelli

- ❖ Reported on statistics gathered for the State of the Economy
  - Largest job growth seen in last 10 years
  - Significant increases in transportation & warehousing industry

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- Uptick in administrative support positions - 7,500 new jobs
- Increase in company headquarters with over 2,000 managerial positions added
- Life Sciences - 6,000 new jobs
- New companies - both large & small from Princeton Penn & Capital Health to Rothman Orthopedics
- Retail has done fairly well
- We are in very good state as a County from industrial to retail - we are standing on good footing
- ❖ Academic side new Princeton AI Innovation hub - details are not cemented - but bodes well for our region for the University but also for workforce development; possible lab in Trenton that could benefit from the work that the hub will have
- ❖ Overall very good news
- ❖ Successful County grant program that started in February - \$3.5m & 361 grant awardees up to \$10,000 in funding. Also 0% grant program with 39 awardees, 30 of whom were women & minority businesses. County looking to add \$240,000 to 0% loan program

Q: Is there an update on the Airport? A: No real concrete decisions have been made on terminal timelines but the Administration is looking into making improvements into a new fire & rescue facility

Question/Comment: Need to see what MCCC is doing/can do to support the AI HUB. We can perhaps invite Dr. Preston to next meeting to address this.

#### **Small Business Development Corporation (SBDC) - Lilian Mauro**

Ms. Mauro shared her presentation - it is available by contacting the WDB Office

Question/Comments: Are there any statistics on businesses operated by relatively recent immigrants?

A: There are no specific statistics in regards to immigration status - that question is not asked

Comment: Only ask because immigrants are important to NJ's economy

Q: what is considered small in terms of the SBDC? A: 500 employees or less

#### **Mercer County Technical School (MCTS) - Superintendent Matt Carey**

- ❖ MCTS is up & running & long towards planning for the 24/25 year; looking to complete articulation agreement with the College - seeking more dual credit opportunities
- ❖ Reviewing the Adult Evening programs - they need upgrading & revamping. For many years the school had been focusing on High School programs - but will place more focus on adult programming for the remainder of the school year - particularly looking to programs that lead to industry-based credentials. Currently other than cosmetology - there are no end of course assessments or industry-based credentials at the end of other Adult programming - it is almost an exploratory program where students get exposure to courses like welding, plumbing, HVAC which give them something to put on a resume. Also, they currently have no real job placement component.
- ❖ Looking to attract someone to focus on the Adult Evening program to grow that component.
- ❖ Hosting annual job fair in March 14 primarily to provide job opportunities to the adult students & graduating seniors. Flyers will be sent to all.

Q: Do you currently have a welding instructor? A: Yes - welding program had been in hiatus - the instructor will be on staff now for 2<sup>nd</sup> half of year, revamping shop to get things in order and accepting students for the 24-25 school year

Q: How many are in the Adult program? A: 325 currently which is a 200% increase from previous enrollments

Q: How competitive has it become? A: For adults - not competitive at all. For high schoolers quite competitive - currently have admissions policy. Currently have more students that are interested than available seats.

Comment: WDB Chair Keith Secrest stated that it was great to hear - MCTS seems to be going in the right direction. Vice Chair Scott Needham agreed he was delighted to hear about the progress. MCTS had lobbied for Tech Education teachers - pay is a bit more competitive.

- ❖ There is an entirely new administrations - new team bringing many new ideas. MCTS is ten years behind the curve - others have taken advantage of expansion grants & are in line with what today's consumer market is looking for; MCTS has not been modernized - but they do have a strategic plan. Their Board has strong understanding of what is being done and there is a strong relationship with sending districts

Katherine Kish commented that she was happy to hear about benchmarking with other counties - need to do more of that - the more we can learn - the better.

Matt Carey ended with the quote "Good to great - we area doing good but can always to great."

### **Executive Committee - Keith Secrest**

- ❖ Mercer has a new County Executive - a meeting will be scheduled to discuss issues i.e. Board member recruitment and also to hear some of his priorities & training programs thoughts
- ❖ Rule changes mandated by State & federal contracts that have to go out & separation
- ❖ Summer Youth program

### **Committee Reports**

#### **Advanced Manufacturing - Scott Needham**

The minutes were distributed via email. Highlights include the following:

- ❖ Continue to seek new members
- ❖ MCCC is seeking Adv. Mfg. instructor. They are also assessing student interest in these courses
- ❖ Princeton Air has their 1<sup>st</sup> apprentice graduate - young man is now a journeyman - received technical instruction from MCTS. Scott commented how this youth may be competitive down the road. Very proud. It was noted that OJT funds could be available for that student
- ❖ Princeton Air has first female technician - plumber - very exciting. Word gets out that you participate in apprenticeship - that may encourage potential employees.

Comment: Keith Secrest stated that over the years we have had problem with how do we create a buzz? These kinds of things are making it happen.

Question/Comment: Katherine Kish: does the Board need to have a social media account? Perhaps a Communications committee? A: We can pursue with new administration; Comment: Latoya Wilson: this is especially important in outreaching to youth - everything is about Tik Tok.

Comment: Scott Needham: wanted to recognize the efforts of Jim Harris for his work with the Central NJ pathways

#### **Disabilities - Scott Elliott**

The minutes were distributed via email. Highlights include the following:

- ❖ Part of our discussions is to build partnerships
- ❖ Highlights/updates were presented from other agencies around the county, i.e. County Human Services Aging & Disability Connection; MCCC Transition, Mercer DVRS
- ❖ Developing partnership with MCCC adult program for adults with special needs
- ❖ PCIL is providing an exciting program for obtaining drivers' licenses

## **Health Care - Kathy Fiery**

The minutes were distributed via email. Highlights include the following:

- ❖ Met Jan 17
- ❖ MCCC is setting up another round of funding for City of Trenton residents
- ❖ Info session at One Stop have not had great turnouts - perhaps working with townships i.e. through newsletters, etc.
- ❖ Successful in dialing back the CNA trainers' requirements; additional training for instructors has been scheduled; recent graduate from Mercer;
- ❖ MCCC is pursuing site for partnerships;
- ❖ Continued hope to have a hospital representative

## **Literacy - Acting Chair Keith Secret**

The minutes were distributed via email. Highlights include the following:

- ❖ shortage of chair,
- ❖ Committee is regrouping
- ❖ EMR (Early Mercer Reads) needs to be discussed - virtual or in-person?
- ❖ ESL is a major issue in our community as programs at MCCC are full & have waiting lists undocumented individuals cannot be served due to federal funding
- ❖ ESL is important to employers business vocabulary will be a priority

## **YIC - Latoya Wilson**

The minutes were distributed via email. Highlights include the following:

- ❖ Need more members & partnerships
- ❖ Isles is our only contracted services ending June 30; will receive update at next meeting
- ❖ Will start planning for with summer program;
- ❖ Climate change is being mandated into school curricula;
- ❖ Seek to obtain SYWEP worksites associated with climate change.
- ❖ NJ Career Pathways - purpose is to partner with community colleges to focus on effectively engage k-12 students & students not interested in entering college

## **WDB Updates - overview of these issues**

- ❖ WDB Certification every 3-4 years SETC reviews to show we are meeting requirements - currently being generated
- ❖ OS Partners MOU/IFA - complete by 3/31 has decided Board would give Executive Committee authority to review & approve for the board
- ❖ USDOL Comprehensive Site Visit
  - Every 3-4 years USDOL monitors the State & select local areas
  - We will undergo a comprehensive review- in packet there's detail on what they will review
  - They will be on site March 11 - 15
  - We do not anticipate major finding or disallowed costs - looking to PY 22
- ❖ Career Services & OSO Procurement - committee will be put assembled to review proposals
- ❖ NJDOL Audits -
  - PY 19 & 20 have been completed & closed
  - PY 21 remains open with about \$18,000 in questioned
  - PY 22 not started yet
- ❖ SYWEP 2024 - proposals to be submitted to NJDOL

**Priority of Service Policy** - our commitment mandated by DOL but we must review, discuss & vote. This policy is in effect if there is limited WIOA Adult funding, priority policy as mandated by US/NJ DOL will be followed, currently have sufficient funds for WIOA adult. A motion to approve was made by Kathy Fiery, and seconded by Scott Needham. The policy was approved.

### **Expenditures**

- ❖ Continue to spend PY 22 - balances are still available through June 2024. We anticipate lowering the current balances. TANF, GA will most likely be rescinded as the expenditure period is over.
- ❖ PY 23 - not high expenditures as we are using PY 22 in following the First in/First out rule meaning that we must use last year's money first. We have until June 2025 to spend PY 23.
- ❖ Training numbers are going up - In PY 22 we served 20 people, to date we have 30 - have no concern that we will spend 23 funds.

### **Common measures**

Of the required 14 measures - we have exceeded 7, are not meeting 6 & meeting 1 - very low numbers based on exits not current individuals. At this point there are no areas of major concern

**OSO Update** - Continue to have monthly meetings to address operational concerns; status quo; partners continue to share best practices

**OS Services Report** - included in the emailed packet - any questions or additional areas of reporting please contact WDB Director. The report includes:

- ❖ customer flow
- ❖ job seekers services,
- ❖ business services,
- ❖ Occupational training,
- ❖ Youth Services
- ❖ Summer Programs
- ❖ Job fairs

**Announcements:** none

**Adjournment** Motion to adjourn was made by Latoya Wilson, seconded by Scott Elliott. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned at approximately 1:21 p.m.

**Next Meeting:** Tuesday, April 30, 2024 12:00 - 1:30