

WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD

MAY 20, 2008

8:30 A.M.

TOMPKINS COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY

PRESENT: B. Bantle, B. Blanchard, R. Bohman, D. Bradac, D. Chadwick, M. Coldren, P. Gardner, D. Herath, J. Little, J. McPheeters, B. Myers, E. O'Donnell, L. Patz, A. Pedersen, J. Rossi, S. Sammis, M. Stamm, M. Turnbull, J. Wesche

EXCUSED: C. Haynes, L. Holmes, P. McKee, M. Stamm

ABSENT: P. Carey, L. Dillon, L. Leonard, K. Luz Herrera, D. Marsh, M. Opperman, R. Pass, M. Talarski

GUESTS: M. Armstrong, Tompkins County Area Development

STAFF: J. Mattick, Jennifer Luu

CALL TO ORDER

Chairman Pedersen called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Ms. McPheeters distributed information about community workshops for business leaders that are being jointly sponsored by the Chamber, Tompkins Cortland Community College and the Tompkins Trust Company.

Ms. Herath announced that a contest is underway to change the name of the Retail Training Center. The Center will be reopening on June 24th with the new name. She noted that most of the women who have attended the Center have become employed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was Moved by Ms. Blanchard, seconded by Mr. Wesche and unanimously adopted by voice vote of members present to approve the minutes of March 25, 2008.

WIB DIRECTOR'S REPORT

INTERNSHIP GRANT PROGRAM

The Tompkins County Chamber in collaboration with the WIB was successful in receiving a one-year grant from New York State totaling \$93,000 to operate an internship program for high school and college students in Tompkins County. The Program is only available to for-profit businesses, which will provide a bit of challenge in the County given the large number of not-for-profits. Internships will run for at least a six-week period and the employer will be required to pay the individual's wages. Recruitment has begun for the Internship Coordinator Position.

CUSTOMER SERVICE/HOSPITALITY TRAINING INITIATIVE

Ms. Mattick stated the WIB has been focusing on sector based training initiatives and spent time getting the machining skills training up and running. The WIB has also been approached by the Strategic Tourism Planning Board (STPB) to provide assistance in increasing workforce skills for workers in the hospitality and tourism industry. The WIB has been collaborating with the STPB and the Convention and Visitor's Bureau to provide a two-day customer service training in June for workers within that industry. The customer service training will be provided by TC3 and the second day will include a ½ day "FAM" bus tour that is designed to familiarize individuals within the hospitality industry with the local area and tourist attractions within the County.

The training is quickly filling up and this is an exciting opportunity. Additionally, the WIB and the Office of Employment and Training have submitted a proposal to the STPB to provide additional services that will build upon the two day training and create career ladders for individuals in that industry.

MYHEALTHCAREERS.COM

Mr. Pedersen convened a meeting of all of the healthcare providers in Tompkins County to collaboratively move forward with developing the MyHealthCareers Program. Attendees were very excited about the initiative and there was good alignment and conversation. A second meeting to discuss plans further will be held in the next month.

ONE-STOP REPORT

Ms. Bradac stated that following today's meeting a brief tour of the One Stop Center will be held for interested WIB members. She stated youth staff is busy gearing up for both the WIA Youth and TANF Summer Youth Employment Programs and the Adult program staff are busy with workshops and orientations.

Ms. Mattick stated \$325,000 has been received to operate the TANF Summer Youth Program; this is \$45,000 more than expected. Two contractors have been selected to operate the Program, the Office of Employment and Training, and the City of Ithaca Youth Employment Service. The Program provides summer work experience for youth 14-20 years old who have met the eligibility requirements of being at or below 200% of the poverty level. Staff is working very closely with the Department of Social Services and school districts to identify eligible youth. Worksites are desperately needed and anyone who may have a summer job opportunity available should contact the Office of Employment and Training or Youth Employment Service right away.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT COUNCIL REPORT

Ms. Myers stated the Council is focusing its June meeting on planning career/job fairs and bringing all of the partners together to look at ways of collaborating among organizations. It is important that quality experiences are offered to both the young people and the businesses that are asked to participate rather than duplicating efforts among several different organizations. They Council is also still discussing literacy issues and how to best prepare out of school youth for the workforce and building an integrated model that engages youth by building literacy into work skills.

TANF SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

It was Moved by Ms. Myers and unanimously seconded to confirm the Executive Committees action approving the Executive Director of the WIB negotiating contracts for the TANF Summer Youth Employment Programs with the Ithaca Youth Bureau and the Tompkins County Office of Employment and Training to operate the 2008 TANF Summer Youth Employment Program.

WIB RETREAT FOLLOW UP

The WIB held a retreat in April and the results from the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats analysis was reviewed from that meeting. The goal of the retreat was to come up with a couple of key areas of focus for the WIB to concentrate on in the next year or two.

Mr. Pedersen stated that concurrent to the WIB's strategy and focus sessions, and since there are so many workforce issues needing attention at this time, an independent steering committee is also being convened to look at the data from the report compiled by Chmura Economics and Analytics that was prepared last fall.

The intent of that group is to identify areas of focus so a group of key stakeholders can be brought together later in the year to discuss the direction of workforce development over the next three to five years.

This is a process similar to the one used a few years ago when the Economic Development Strategy was prepared for the County.

Ms. Armstrong stated that three threats were revealed in the Chmura report; maintaining an adequate number of basic skilled workers, losing individuals in the County between 35-44 years old, and addressing the need to fill jobs being vacated by a growing number of retirees in the County.

There was lengthy discussion about the need to collaborate and strengthen the relationships with schools so they are aware of what the needs are as well as retaining a relationship with local government so they are aware of the impacts the loss of funding has on workforce development. Additionally, public relations are key to getting the message out about what the WIB does, workforce in the County, and how the overall system works.

Dr. O'Donnell spoke to the linkages with schools and noted that they must be aligned with curriculum. She states schools recognize readying students for the workforce is critical; however, their primary objectives are to meet the state mandates. She also stated that funding for workforce initiatives within schools does not exist.

Dr. Myers stated the workforce model begins at the 5th grade level and there needs to be engagement at that level; however, keeping a child's interest into middle school can be challenging because they are enthusiastic about being employed, but have restrictions placed on them because of their ages. She stated workforce development is a battle because schools are charged with readying youth to meet graduation requirements, funding is not available to support this type of programming, and there is no strategic approach to creating the school to career partnership. She stated in her experience she is used to working with a schools and careers partnerships board that has a strategic plan, but here in Tompkins County it is hard for a school to negotiate the services that are available. There is no comprehensive, strategic plan, or group designated to linking youth, schools, and businesses.

She stated another option that can be used when a strategic plan does not exist is the use of drill down theory by identifying what the needs are within the business community, identifying what services are needed and drilling down even further into the schools to get the students on board and into the appropriate programs. This is similar to what is being done around healthcare with myhealthcareers.org. She also noted that linkages need to occur at multiple levels within the schools. She stated in her experience where these linkages have been successful, they involved programs that had designated staffing. In Tompkins County, there are many programs doing different pieces, but not one collective body.

Mr. Pedersen stated this might be something that can be established as an objective or strategic opportunity for the WIB in terms of enhancing how the WIB helps link schools by providing the information in a way that creates a win-win within the school's constraints as well as with the students and employers. With commitments from the school and business communities a template can be created that can be operationalized. He stated the WIB has had several conversations of the years about this and it would be nice to put together programming that could be successful.

Ms. McPheeters stated that it could be possible to obtain funding from area foundations to help operationalize and support this type of initiative. Mr. Rossi noted the State also originates grants for all types of things; it might be worth looking into who is the person who allocates these grants to see if this were something the State would be interested in funding.

There was discussion about pulling together the appropriate stakeholders (schools, business, partner agencies) to have additional discussions and brainstorm ideas on how best to operationalize this type of initiative.

Mr. Pedersen stated that the current economic outlook, ie., gas prices versus basic skilled workers, it will become increasingly difficult to fill and retain entry level positions. Additionally, retention of workers between 35-44 is something that needs to be addressed, as well as what needs to be done to prepare workers

for the wave of retirements that are coming in the near future. He suggested the following three areas for the WIB to focus on:

1. WIB focus on how to enhance abilities to develop a upcoming workforce with interesting, appropriate career opportunities as well as create expectations for basic skill employment opportunities within the marketplace and making sure individuals know what those opportunities are.
2. WIB focus on retention of individuals currently in the marketplace that we want to retain here.
3. How are we going to address retirements and replacements of individuals approaching retirement.

The WIB could have very specific objectives based upon preparation for individuals coming into the workforce and reaching into the schools. The WIB could also link together with transportation and housing initiatives underway and how employers can help facilities the employment side as that which will provide a win-win situation.

Mr. Coldren stated it is important to consider what the Board can do as a collective body. For example, if pipeline is the issue then the issue is youth. What can the Board do to build awareness among area youth. If certain skills are needed, what curriculum should be developed to meet that need. He stated in the area of retention and retirement issues it is important to market to the older worker and capitalize on their knowledge beyond retirement.

Mr. Pedersen suggested next steps include pulling together today's information and getting it out to members for feedback so the conversation can continue.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m. The next meeting is scheduled for 8:30 a.m. on July 22, 2008 in the Borg Warner Room at the Tompkins County Public Library. **This meeting was canceled.**

Minutes submitted by Jennifer Luu.