



**NORTHWEST REGIONAL  
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD**  
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**Board of Director's Meeting Minutes  
Thursday, December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 12:00 PM  
Hybrid Attendance**

**Held in person at the Wyndham Southbury, 1284 Strongtown Rd, Southbury, CT  
and VIA Zoom Virtual Conference Video Call at:**

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86290550136?pwd=dEZ3R2tHR1g2dnEvOWtYZnR4YWRLUT09>

**Meeting ID: 862 9055 0136**

**Passcode: 663561**

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**In-Person attendance:** G. Pisani; N. O'Leary; S. Romano; B. Dupont; J. Ryan; J. Wrinn; W. Pizzuto; G. LaCapra; J. Vrabely; W. Rybzyck; A. Canu; M. Palmerie; R. Richard

**Virtual attendance:** E. Hawthorne; C. Rafael; L. Gold; B. Mattiello; W. Starbuck; R. Bessette (on behalf of F. Spagnolo)

**Also in attendance:** S. Wilderman; M. Polzella; T. McKaveney(MahoneySabol), M. Sabol (MahoneySabol), K. Swol(MahoneySabol), K. Maness; B. Amin; C. Martin; D. Collins; S. Domanico; H. Pelletier; L. Lawrence; P. LaRosa; R. Venturino; W. Leach; T. Sanders; O. Blake; S. Boyce; T. Cunningham; M. Kordowski;

**Staff in attendance:** C. Awwad; M. Hayden; J. Amis; S. Mertz; D. Babcock; A. Goncalves

Meeting commenced at 12:04pm

Chairman G. Pisani acknowledged Mayor O'Leary of the City of Waterbury and Deputy Commissioner of the Department of Labor Mark Polzella, and congratulated Ed Hawthorne, the president of the Connecticut AFL-CIO.

A motion was made to add item \*5b. "Approval of Contract with Digicon, Inc. for Online Youth Employment System in the amount of \$29,848.00. (CYEP/ADS/DCF) " to the agenda. A motion to approve was made by L. Gold and seconded by G. LaCapra. Motion approved.

**1. Approval of Minutes September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021**

A motion to approve was made by J. Wrinn and seconded by L. Gold. Motion approved.

**2. Audit Presented by Mahoney Sabol - PY 2021**

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T. McKaveney from Mahoney Sabol gave a presentation regarding the Federal and State Single Auditor's Report for year ending December, 2021. A digital copy of T. McKaveney's presentation was provided to all board members present. A hard copy of the finalized Financial Statements will be mailed to all board members via USPS once the bound copies are received by NRWIB in the mail. In summation, there were no noncompliance issues found, T. McKaveney reported that the NRWIB had a clean audit which was consistent with all state and federal laws – the financial statements were free from material misstatement whether due to fraud or error, no material non-compliance of laws and regulations were reported, and no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses over financial reporting reported. Audit timing went as planned, and there were no difficulties in performing the audit. A motion to receive and accept the audit report was made by L. Gold and seconded by G. LaCapra. Motion approved.

C. Awwad also thanked the Finance Committee who heard the longer report the week prior and approved the report provided for the Board's review.

**3. Approval of Memorandum Agreement with Workforce Alliance for CT SAS Project in the amount of \$370,767.00**

C. Awwad advised the Board that this is a project that is a result of the five workforce boards coming together and applying to the federal government. They were successful in achieving the grant and the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board (NRWIB) will have the opportunity to participate in a statewide project. A lot of the project was born out of the pandemic, in terms of being able to provide assistance virtually. This project will allow the workforce boards to install a chat feature throughout the state, and will also fund a position at the NRWIB agency for a chat specialist who will be responsible during the work day for manning the chat and answering questions for participants. It also allows the state workforce boards to have the feature linked to their websites, and will be a great opportunity to increase their services to those that are not able to get to the American Job Centers. A motion to approve was made by L. Gold and seconded by J. Ryan. Motion approved.

**4. Approval of CT WHISP IWT-21-003 Contract Extension and Amendment with H-O Products Corp. for an additional \$5,000.00 from \$5,000.00 to \$10,000.00**

C. Awwad informed the Board that this is an incumbent worker training project that had been funded through the Connecticut WHISP, another statewide project that the NRWIB is participating in. This will continue to fund the training and advanced manufacturing for eight incumbent workers at H-O Products Corp., and the NRWIB is pleased to have them enter a career pathway ladder using this incumbent worker training grant. A motion to approve was made by W. Pizzuto and seconded by J. Vrabely. Motion approved.



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**5a. Approval of CT WHISP IWT-21-004 Contract Extension and Amendment with Wittmann Battenfeld, Inc. for an additional \$21,250.00 from \$21,250.00 to \$42,500.00**

C. Awwad explained to the Board that this contract is similar to the to the above aforementioned contract with H-O Products Corp. This contract will continue to fund incumbent worker training of the same nature for twenty people at Wittmann Battenfeld, Inc. Wittmann Battenfeld, Inc. has been a great a partner to the NRWIB and to their manufacturing pipeline, in that they were the agency that donated some machinery to the MASC tech center. Their organization continues to grow its OEM business in the Torrington area, and the NRWIB is pleased to afford them this opportunity. A motion to approve was made by J. Ryan and seconded by J. Wrinn. Motion approved.

**\*5b. Approval of Contract with Digicon, Inc. for Online Youth Employment System in the amount of \$29,848.00. (CYEP/ADS/DCF)**

C. Awwad advised the Board of Directors that every year the NRWIB manages the Connecticut Summer Youth Employment Program for the forty-one towns of the region it serves, and that the pandemic drove the workforce board into an online application process. The NRWIB put something together over the last year and have looked to refine that system. They have gone out and found a system that they believe is more responsive, easier for the student to use to apply, easier for the NRWIB to manage administratively, and also allows them to interface with the vendors that run programs throughout the region. C. Awwad asked the Board for their favorable consideration to enter into the contract with Digicon, who provides a very similar service in Maryland, and actually manages it for the city of Baltimore, which runs a very large Summer Youth Program. A motion to approve was made by G. LaCapra and seconded by J. Wrinn. Motion approved.

**6. Approval of Revision to MOU/IFA with CT Department of Labor**

C. Awwad relayed to the Board of Directors that Deputy Commissioner M. Polzella and her have spent a significant amount of time on the MOUs, and every year they update Board on their Infrastructure Funding Agreements (IFAs). This year, this MOU/IFA took somewhat longer with the CT DOL as a result of reduction in staff that took place in July, 2021. The NRWIB was able to reduce their footprint in the comprehensive office in Waterbury, and therefore had to look at the new space in cost analysis so that they were only paying for the cubicles on the Department of Labor side of the house that they were using. As a result, the NRWIB is presenting the Board with a revision – Modification Number 3 – to this MOU, that reflects the change to that space in cost analysis and reduction in the NRWIB’s obligation to DOL. Chairman G. Pisani and Mayor O’Leary were both present at the time of the meeting to sign the document for M. Polzella to take to the office with him, which satisfies the signatory requirements of this MOU/IFA. A motion to approve was made by J. Vrabely and seconded by W. Pizzuto. Motion approved.



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**7. Approval of Authorization to accept \$10,000 grant from the United Way of Greater Waterbury to support the HomeWorks program**

C. Awwad explained to the Board that a few years ago the NRWIB started a HomeWorks program after seeing a iteration of that out of the U.S. Conference of Mayors in Hawaii, which has been very successful. The NRWIB had the opportunity to place sixteen homeless individuals into a short-term subsidized apartment, with the promise that they would enter into the NRWIB's training programs and seek employment within those six months. The United Way has been very helpful in supporting the NRWIB in that the funding that they provide the workforce board allows them to pay the rent to the landlord, who has been very gracious in working with the NRWIB. The NRWIB asked United Way to provide them with additional funding to continue to support this program. United Way has allowed them an additional \$10,000.00, along with the funds that the NRWIB did not spend last year that United Way allowed them to keep, so the HomeWorks program is now fully refunded for the coming year, with a \$35,000.00 budget that supports not only the rents, but also support services costs to the participants, in terms of bus passes and gas cards, and allows the NRWIB to outfit the rooms for them with clean sheets, a mattress pad, and some sanitary supplies. The NRWIB is very thankful and would like to continue this program with the Board's approval. A motion to approve was made by L. Gold and seconded by W. Pizzuto. Motion approved.

**8. Approval of Foster and Associates recommendation for revised Staff Titles and Organizational Chart**

C. Awwad advised the Board that in their packet they would see that the NRWIB reached out to Earl Foster of Foster and Associates, a human resources management consulting group out of New Haven. Earl has been doing work for the workforce boards across the state, and over the course of the past couple of years it became apparent that the NRWIB is the only workforce board in the state that still has the positions of Executive and Deputy Director. To bring the NRWIB's verbiage into line, the NRWIB approached Earl about information regarding what the other workforce boards did to change those titles. Before the Board was the new organizational chart that will change the tile of Executive Director to President and CEO, which is the title that all of the other workforce board executive directors have. It will also change the title of Deputy Director to Chief Operating Officer. At a management level, it will change the title of Manager of Workforce Programs to Director of Workforce Programs, so that across the top of the NRWIB's hierarchy there are director level positions, and below that would be manager level positions. Some other title changes are: Joe Diorio, who has served as Compliance Monitor, will now become the Manager of Construction Services, as the NRWIB looks to launch a more robust construction funnel, in light of the upcoming infrastructure funding. The new organizational chart will also change the title for Angelica Heron, who was the Director of Youth Programs, to Manager of Youth Programs, signifying the hierarchy within the organizational chart. C. Awwad



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did mention that if there are any questions, Earl Foster did provide backup documentation for the Board's review, and C. Awwad did want to point out that there are no salary adjustments, it's just simple title changes going forward. G. LaCapra asked C. Awwad how much Earl Foster charged for his recommendation, and C. Awwad answered \$1,500.00. C. Awwad also advised the Board that as the NRWIB signs new contracts, they will provide Foster and Associates with today's ratification with the changed titles. There is no necessity to file anything, the NRWIB will just inform their contractors of the change in the titles. The state will be submitted the new organization chart after the Board's approval today, if they approve it today, and that will be part of the new monitoring for DOL and for the federal government when they come in March, 2022. A motion to approve was made by L. Gold and seconded by G. LaCapra. Motion approved.

**9. Approval of Meeting Schedule for 2022 (Full Board, Executive Committee, Finance Committee)**

C. Awwad informed the Board that included in the packet of attachments they received with today's agenda was the schedule of the meetings, keeping with the same schedule for the full Board, which is the second Thursday of each month, on a quarterly basis; the Executive Committee meeting the first Wednesday of each month; and the Finance Committee quarterly meeting the first Thursday of each month, before the full Board of Directors' meeting, so that they may execute any necessary documents ahead of the full Board meeting. A motion to approve was made by W. Pizzuto and seconded by L. Gold. Motion approved.

**10. Approval of Revision to Accounting & Financial Policies and Procedures Manual**

C. Awwad advised the Board that earlier in the year the NRWIB underwent a compliance monitoring for their Youthbuild Program, which has now ended its active participation as of November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021. During that time, the NRWIB's federal project officer reviewed their financial policies and procedures and recommended a few changes, which have been presented to the Board today. There are four changes that have been asked of the NRWIB to make, which they have done so. For the purposes of not overwhelming the Board with the one hundred forty-page manual, the NRWIB just outlined the changes, and C. Awwad made sure to state that if anyone had any questions or concerns that she would be to be happy to discuss those with them. These changes are just to bring the NRWIB into better compliance when the full onslaught of the federal monitoring begins in March, 2022. A motion to approve was made by J. Ryan and seconded by W. Pizzuto. Motion approved.

**11. Financial Report**

S. Mertz informed the Board that with the agenda attachments was the Profit & Loss Budget vs. Actual for July through October, 2021. The NRWIB's expenditures are reviewed, in align with their budget, and on track. If anyone has any questions, S. Mertz is available via email and phone. A motion to approve was made by J. Vrabely and seconded by G. LaCapra. Motion approved.



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**12. Updates:**

**a. Committees**

- **Personnel - JoAnn Ryan**  
Nothing was reported.
- **Youth - Fernando C. Spagnolo**  
R. Bessette (on behalf of F. Spagnolo) had nothing to report.
- **Finance – William Pizzuto**  
W. Pizzuto thanked S. Mertz and the whole MahoneySabol team for the consistently clean reports year after year. W. Pizzuto just wanted to recognize S. Mertz and her whole team for a job well done.
- **One Stop - Joseph Wrinn**  
Nothing was reported.
- **Disability - Joseph Vrabley**  
Vice Chairman J. Vrabley reported that there is a very well-established Disability Committee in place, and they are meeting regularly. There is nothing significant to report, but J. Vrabley will be spending some time at the AJC with C. Awwad at the end of the month to discuss different topics. J. Vrabley and the committee take the role very seriously and they will have new reports in the future.

The reports were accepted by the Board of Directors as submitted.

**b. Executive Director Update – Cathy Awwad**

C. Awwad updated the Board on the current busy office at the Northwest Regional Workforce Investment Board. The NRWIB has launched their Next Gen Manufacturing Sector Partnership, and C. Awwad thanked G. LaCapra for hosting the partnership for an event in January. The NRWIB has a strong Next Gen Partnership, that has been recognized by the state. There was a hiring event held in September, 2021, that was attended by approximately thirty employers in one day at three different locations, and was very successful. At the end of January, the NRWIB plans to launch a Next Gen Healthcare Partnership. They are finalizing their industry champions, and asking them to send a letter out to invite like-minded business partners to participate throughout the Northwest corner of Connecticut. The Board might have heard some funding that will be available through a program called CareerConneCT – the Governor’s Office of Workforce Strategy and the Governor’s Workforce Council will shortly be releasing a request for



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proposals or approximately \$60-\$70 million in training funds. The workforce boards are playing an integral part in that proposal process, and have been asked to shepherd the roles to make sure that they are not duplicating services throughout the state. The NRWIB has been asked to step up and draft a statewide proposal to that fund to augment transportation solutions for people looking to get back and forth to work. At this point, all of the workforce boards have all of their own independent transportation solutions that are funded for clients that are enrolled in programs. This would be a more robust opportunity for employers and job seekers that may not be in the WIOA or JFES populations that need assistance or may just be over an income limit. This is designed to assist the universal population in Connecticut, not just those that are enrolled in those specifically funded programs. Lastly – the NRWIB has had a few departures – including Kevin Canady who ran the NRWIB’s Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative and is leaving the organization to become a career counselor at Tunxis Community College to become a Career Counselor. Recently, the NRWIB had Angelo SantaMaria step away, after serving the NRWIB for five years, running the TechHires program. The Executive Director report was accepted by the Board of Directors as submitted.

**c. DOL – American Job Center Update – Deputy Commissioner Mark Polzella, Steve Romano**

S. Romano advised the Board that the DOL finally put on a Business Services Representative in the Waterbury American Job Center named Rocky Young. Rocky has hit the ground running and has been involved on an Afghan Resettlement Project, as well as the DOL’s labor exchange initiative in the agency and has done a fantastic job. Rocky is under the tutelage of Michelle Caffè, the DOL’s former business services representative, so he has been getting great ‘schooling’ and learning a lot of skills. S. Romano expressed that the DOL is very happy and excited about that, and he believes that there will be a seen difference in the job center and the employment services traffic seen in that office. The recruitment traffic is just starting to ramp up now, and the DOL is hoping it will ramp up even more. S. Romano also advised the Board that the DOL is putting on another “DVOP” – a Disabled Veterans’ Outreach Person – whose name is Todd Bennon and he starts December 17<sup>th</sup>. He is a coronel in the army national guard, a very impressive gentleman, and S. Romano is looking forward to getting him help serve the veterans in the region as well. S. Romano commented on the general traffic at the AJC – they are probably averaging 250 people a week of walk-in traffic. Still, the vast majority of that traffic are individuals seeking unemployment insurance. The DOL is doing their best to provide employment services to those individuals, but there’s just a general consensus that people are starting to become less fearful of coming to the American Job Center. S. Romano has noticed their traffic ramping up and the DOL is looking forward to that traffic ramping up even more.

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M. Polzella thanked Chairman G. Pisani for the opportunity to speak to everyone. He mentioned there was a reason that he wanted S. Romano to speak first to everyone, because you could hear the enthusiasm and excitement of S. Romano related to the work that is being done in the American Job Centers, but he also wanted to re-ground everyone to where the workforce boards were back in March, 2020. As an agency, they were down about 50% staffing over the course of the last three decades. By the time the pandemic hit and over 580,000 individuals required the assistance of the American Job Center in unemployment, the AJC was working with a 40-year old legacy system, standing up over eight federal and state programs, and over ten billion dollars was paid out in income support to individuals across the state. As S. Romano stated, the AJC has started to see that people have started to get back into the workforce and the DOL wants to be there to assist them. The DOL as an agency is looking at re-assessing and re-defining their role in the workforce development system with the NRWIB and the other four regional workforce development boards, in really looking at how they can best assist those who are unemployed and collecting unemployment benefits link up with employers who have opportunities. M. Polzella feels that is one of the missing links that the DOL has seen, over the course of time, and the DOL wants to re-vamp that, re-invigorate that, and really be a key component in that partnership of getting people back to work. M. Polzella is really looking forward to partnering with the NRWIB and other workforce boards, as well as working with the Office of Workforce Strategy and the Governor’s Workforce Council, in making those things happen; connecting all the various programs together to lead into one funneled area, where they can have a group of qualified individuals who they can send out to employers who are looking to rebuild their workforce. The DOL is very enthusiastic about that and very excited to share that news with everyone, and looking forward to partnering with everyone moving forward.

The reports by Deputy Commissioner Mark Polzella and AJC Unit Director Steve Romano reports were accepted by the Board of Directors as submitted.

**d. Career Resources Vice President Update – Kathy Maness**

K. Maness reported the following total ITAs that were issued from July 1<sup>st</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup> of 2021:

Total ITA’s issued for PY 21 (July 1, 2021-November 30, 2021) <b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>ITA’s</b>	<b>AMOUNT</b>
WIOA – Adult	7	\$17,256.75
WIOA – DLW	23	\$67,859.00
Apprenticeship CT Initiative (ACI)	16	\$63,200.00
Apprenticeship CT 2.0 – Plastics	13	\$90,935.00
CARES II	34	\$123,876.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>\$348,144.00</b>





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**13. Other Business**

No other business was conducted.

**14. Adjournment**

A motion to adjourn was made by W. Pizzuto and seconded by G. LaCapra at 12:47pm. Motion approved.

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