



**NORTHWEST REGIONAL  
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD**  
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**BOARD OF DIRECTOR'S MEETING MINUTES**  
**Thursday, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at 12:00 PM**  
<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/350395237>  
**United States: +1 (571) 317-3122 / Access Code: 350-395-237**

**In attendance:** B. Dupont; E. Berns; G. LaCapra; J. Ryan; J. Vrabely; J. Wrinn; L. Gold; M. Voghel; M. Palmerie; P. Smithwick; C. Rafael; S. Romano; R. Bessette (on behalf of F. Spagnolo), S. Jannetty; T. Josef (on behalf of N. O'Leary); W. Coleman; W. Pizzuto; W. Starbuck; G. Pisani

**Also in attendance:** B. Amin; A. Blancato; C. Martin; D. Collins; F. Hardy; H. Pelletier; J. Reho; J. Huzina; K. Maness; L. Lawrence; M. Caffè; P. LaRosa; S. Barbieri;

**Staff in attendance:** C. Awwad; M. Hayden; C. Chasse; J. Amis; A. Goncalves

Meeting commenced at 12:00PM

*\*G. Pisani welcomed new board members W. Levy from Danbury Metal Finishing, Inc. and M. Voghel from the Waterbury Housing Authority.*

**1. Approval of Minutes December 10, 2020**

*A motion to approve the minutes from the December 10, 2020 Board of Directors meeting was made by J. Vrabely and seconded by L. Gold. Motion approved.*

**2. Approval of Revision to Bylaws (to clean up the language to be consistent with the name "Treasurer," on page 6 of the existing Bylaws).**

*C. Awwad reminded the Board that in the December Board of Directors meeting she pointed out that during the contracting process with DECD they reviewed the NRWIB's ByLaws and noted that they had referred to their Treasurer in a different term, so they made the necessary change to bring that into line. There were no other changes made to the ByLaws other than to correct this oversight. The NRWIB posted the change at the last meeting and now the Board must vote on it and move those changes forward at this meeting. A motion to approve the Revision to Bylaws was made by P. Smithwick and seconded by W. Pizzuto. Motion approved.*

**3. Recommendation of the One-Stop Committee regarding the outcome of the RFP review for the Career Services Provider**

*J. Wrinn thanked the One Stop Committee members for taking part in the review of two proposals for a new Career Services provider. The One Stop Committee met and scored the proposals, and while both proposals were good, the committee felt that Career Resources, Inc. had a bit of an edge in the services they provide to the population the NRWIB needs to reach. On*



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*behalf of the One Stop Committee, the committee recommends that the Board of Directors authorize the Executive Director to move into contract negotiations with Career Resources, Inc. as the most responsible bidder. J. Wrinn made the motion to give the director the power to negotiate the final deal and L. Gold seconded the motion. Beth Dupont abstained from the vote. Motion approved.*

**4. Update on CT – WHISP grant**

*C. Awwad informed the Board that late last year the five workforce board directors submitted an application using Capital Workforce Partner, the Hartford Workforce Board, as the lead applicant. The grant was successful, securing a \$10,000,000 grant to participate in training individuals in both entry level and incumbent worker training for advanced manufacturing and information technology careers. C. Awwad made the Board aware that the NRWIB is excited about this, and nearly \$2,000,000 of the \$10,000,000 will be allocated to our region. It is timely in that Angelo SantaMaria, who was running the TechHires program with James Amis will now slide into this position and manage this grant for the NRWIB. The timing was great considering the TechHires program is ending this month and the new grant technically started last month, but we're still awaiting some information and contract language from the Capital Workforce Partners. The NRWIB is excited to still continue to work with area manufacturers and some I.T. employers in the region to help them bring in new employees and upscale their current employees. The NRWIB will be reaching out with more information about how employers can access those dollars once they get all of the contract language from the Hartford Workforce Board. The NRWIB is very excited about the opportunity and is pleased that Angelo will be staying on with them. No motion necessary.*

**5. Updates:**

**a. Executive Director Update**

*C. Awwad personally thanked Evan Berns for his role in the plastics program that is up and running at MASC. There was a press release last month for the ribbon cutting of the new state-of-the-art advanced manufacturing intro to plastics program at MASC. C. Awwad thanked the City of Waterbury and Mayor O'Leary for his foresight and for stepping up and purchasing a state-of-the-art machine to make sure this program is as effective as possible. Area employers, including Evan Berns, Seitz, LLC, participated in reviewing the curriculum and making sure that it meets their needs and that they'll be able to hire immediately from this program. 60 people have already applied as a result of the internet and social media coverage the event received. The applications were reviewed and the first class will begin the week after next. The NRWIB hopes to get all 60 applicants through in the next 8-10 weeks. The NRWIB will seek additional instructors and have multiple cohorts running since the response was so great. C. Awwad also advised the Board that the five workforce board directors have had good and ongoing conversations with the Office of Workforce Strategy and the Governor's office regarding*

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*two legislative bills, Senate Bill 881 and Senate Bill 885, that initially looked to have serious repercussions for the workforce boards. Through conversations and negotiations, the OWS has been very willing to work with the workforce boards to understand some of the language changes that they asked for, as well as understanding the OWS' intent for some of the bills going forward. The workforce boards are more comfortable and continue to work with the Governor's office and the OWS, which is primarily important.*

*M. Hayden then addressed the Board regarding additional funds coming into the NRWIB. After conversations with the OWS, it was known that there are some CARES funds coming into play along with some additional funds from the Governor's office and the Office of Early Childhood. In light of the revelation, members of the NRWIB staff have put together a survey that will be sent out region-wide in hopes to gauge the interest of constituents, and to learn what their job training interests are. The NRWIB has come across short-term trainings including CDL, HVAC, and Brownfields, and are also looking to partner with Building Pathways. The NRWIB is looking to reach out to some of the Board members to send out the survey on the NRWIB's behalf. There will be a \$100 Amazon gift card prize awarded to one selected participant for submitting the survey.*

*C. Awwad informed the Board that the NRWIB will be reaching out to all the lead elected officials to ask them to make this survey available through their social media, as well as the school districts, utilizing 'Parent Square' or 'Power School,' or whichever distribution system the schools use to reach out to parents. The purpose of this survey is so that un-employed and under-employed individuals throughout the region have the opportunity to share with us what they'd like to consider for training to re-enter the workforce. C. Awwad also advised the Board that the NRWIB has been working diligently to ready the summer youth employment programs. The NRWIB will run their traditional Connecticut Youth Employment Program, as well as their Department of Children and Families funds that are dedicated to those kids. The NRWIB is happy to announce that they have been in conversations with the Adult and Disabled Services Department in the State of Connecticut, and hopes to host up to fifty disabled youth and place them in employment opportunities this year. There are also hopes to link the disabled youth with peer mentors during their employment. ADS has confirmed that they will be providing a job coach for the disabled youth that will be participating, should they be in need of a job coach to have a successful summer. Lastly, C. Awwad advised the Board that the NRWIB applied for an EPA Brownfields grant and will be hearing on that. The grant will be dedicated to the City of Torrington, and the NRWIB is very excited about that. C. Awwad also let the Board know that the City of Torrington was successful in its referendum in securing the 'ok' to go out and build a new state-of-the-art middle-school and high-school complex. The NRWIB is working with them to shape their career pathways and the types of curriculum and credentials that they will be able to offer to both their middle-school and high-school students from career awareness to career pathways and industry recognized credentials as they walk across the stage. The same is happening in*

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*Danbury. A portion of the old Union Carbide headquarters facility will now become a Career Academy High School for the City of Danbury. The NRWIB is working with the Danbury Board of Education and the Danbury School District to help them learn from Waterbury's best practices on how to institute what career pathways they should take from there. C. Awwad announced that the NRWIB offices are open by appointment and seeing the public on an appointment-basis. The NRWIB is following all Covid-related protocols for questionnaires, masks, and temperature taking. C. Awwad thanked Kathy Maness for her diligence in resuming the CASAS online testing and expressed her excitement on the matter. C. Awwad also informed the Board that the agenda for the June Board of Director's meeting will be extremely busy. The MOUs, infrastructure agreement, and budget work will all be put forth to the Board in June. The NRWIB is out to bid for multiple services considering the pandemic hindered much of the bid process in the year of 2020, and much of the bid process was waived. This year the NRWIB will be out to bid for a number of services and the results of those procurements will also be brought forth at the June meeting. C. Awwad advised the Board to plan for the June meeting to be longer than usual. There were hopes to have Commissioner Lehman speak at this current meeting, but unfortunately, he was called away for a commitment with the Governor. C. Awwad hopes to have him speak at the June Board of Director's meeting about his vision of Connecticut's recovery from the pandemic, as it relates to both economic and workforce development opportunities.*

*M. Hayden added that the NRWIB is working with the Worx Group to completely re-design their website and are very excited to get this updated. There are hopes to launch the website some time in May, and the Board will be informed about this in the June meeting as well. M. Hayden expressed his appreciation for the work the Worx Group has done so far and mentioned that the NRWIB staff has had a lot of input for the re-design of the website. The NRWIB will present the re-design of the website to the Board of Directors at the next meeting on June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021.*

**b. DOL – American Job Center Director**

*S. Romano informed the Board that the Department of Labor is also in the process of preparing for their Phase 2 opening, which will consist of scheduled appointments to utilize their career center. The career center has 26 public PCs positioned in the room and DOL will use 6 of those PCs for now. The computers can be used for a wide variety of services, including unemployment insurance purposes and employment services. In hopes to target more employment services, S. Romano and supervisor F. Hardy will screen the requests and that will get going in a couple of weeks. The DOL is planning for that and are excited to slowly get back into the mode of re-opening and scheduling walk-in traffic. The DOL will have more updates for the Board on this at the next meeting in June. S. Romano also thanked the One Stop Committee for the Career Services RFP reviewal and acknowledged that it is always enlightening to learn*

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*about the programs and the organizations that provide services for those programs. He mentioned that he learned a lot from the committee and thanked C. Awwad and M. Hayden for proctoring the process and providing him and F. Hardy the opportunity to participate. On the unemployment side of things, S. Romano recognized that it has been about a year since the Covid pandemic broke and in the next eight weeks the DOL will be handling the bulk of the million claims that were filed. S. Romano advised the Board that in the unemployment industry there is a term called "Second Benefit Year," and the benefit year is actually one calendar year, so that year will be up now. Those claimants will be prompted to file Second Benefit Year claims, which will result in tens of thousands of individuals filing additional or Second Benefit Year claims, and those claims being processed. It will be a busy time for that side of the house in the DOL. Their contact centers are keeping up with the claims as best they can, but there are epic volumes of work in that area. S. Romano also announced that in this region, former Business Services Representative Michelle Caffè, who is currently on the meeting, was recently promoted to Program and Services Coordinator, and she will be on the Board of Directors meetings going forward to help out in any way she can. C. Awwad wished Michelle great success and acknowledged that her work in her prior position will certainly be missed. Several board members also congratulated Michelle on her advancement.*

**c. Career Resources Vice President Update**

*K. Maness referenced to her report which was provided for the Board as an attachment to the meeting agenda. She highlighted that in addition to the AJC's reopening by appointment only, there are virtual hours available through Zoom from 9am to 4pm. Constituents are welcome to ask questions about the services that the One Stop offers and information on how to register for the virtual info. sessions, which are held 3 times a week on Tuesday afternoons, Thursday mornings, and in the evenings on an as-needed basis. K. Maness also updated the Board on the number of ITAs that have been written to date. Of the 6 programs, the WIOA Adult Program has written 13 ITAs, the WIOA Dislocated Worker Program has written 29 ITAs, the construction funnel has written 2 ITAs, the ACI program has written 11 ITAs, the Opioid Grant has written 17 ITAs, and the Homeworks grant has written 2 ITAs, for a total of 74 ITAs in the amount of \$267,588.00 from July 1, 2000 through February 28, 2021.*

**d. Committees**

- **Personnel**  
*No report.*
- **Youth**



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*No report.*

- **Finance**

*W. Pizzuto reported that the Finance Board has met recently and are in the process of procuring the audit and monitoring services.*

- **Disability**

*No report.*

### 6. Financial Report

*C. Awwad referenced to the financial report that the Board received as an attachment to the meeting agenda. This was the same financial report the Finance Committee received. The NRWIB is doing extremely well and anticipates additional funds coming forward. Currently the governor's budget holds a \$5,000,000.00 allocation for the summer youth, of which the NRWIB will receive approximately \$1.1M of. There is potential that there will also be another \$250,000.00 of ADS money available, as well as approximately \$100,000.00 of DCF money, totaling \$1.4M, which will bring the NRWIB's available grant funds budget back up to \$15,000,000.00 for this year. The NRWIB continues to undergo monitoring and C. Awwad thanked their partners at the Connecticut DOL for doing their fiscal monitoring. On a mutual agreement, the NRWIB has asked the DOL to be especially tough on them because the federal government will be coming in for a consolidated review of the state and the workforce board will be part of that. The NRWIB has asked the DOL to fine tune their review to make sure they're ready for the larger federal review next year. C. Awwad thanked the NRWIB staff and Bibi Amin who was on the call, for her patience during the pandemic while it takes some time to gather the proper documents.*

### 7. Other Business

*No other business was conducted.*

### 8. Adjournment

*A motion to adjourn the meeting to June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021 was made by G. Pisani and seconded by P. Smithwick at 12:26PM. Motion approved.*

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