



**NORTHWEST REGIONAL
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD**
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DISABILITY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, August 10th, 2021 at 11:00 AM

VIA Virtual Conference Video Call at:

<https://zoom.us/j/93659963863?pwd=RDJZVnJ5cWZGV01nUjYzUk91MUhtQT09>

Meeting ID: 936 5996 3863

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Participating: C. Awwad, M. Hayden, J. Vrabely, C. Rafael, H. Pelletier, S. Mancini, M. Voghel, W. Coleman, J. Amis

Meeting Commenced at 11:00 AM

1. Approval of Disability Committee Meeting Minutes from April 19th, 2021

A motion to approve was made by C. Rafael and seconded by M. Voghel. Motion approved.

2. Ticket to Work Update

J. Amis advised the committee that the Ticket to Work program now has thirty-one participants. J. Amis acknowledged the tremendous job that Penny McCoy and Rukiya Borges do in regard to assisting persons with disabilities, which can sometimes be an incredibly challenging and sometimes discouraging job. For example, a new Ticket to Work participant was placed in a job that was not easy, and a week later decided to quit due to the uptick in Covid problems. J. Amis advised the committee that the NRWIB is still waiting for the Social Security Administration to provide them with the names and phone numbers of persons to connect with regarding the Robotext project, which has been discouraging and slow. J. Vrabely asked if this is the program that if the participant receives social security disability the NRWIB helps the individual back into



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the workforce market, and C. Awwad confirmed that it is. C. Awwad further explained that the participant risks nothing in terms of their social security disability benefits, it is merely an opportunity to re-engage them back into the workforce over time. Nonetheless, people are still fearful sometimes and J. Amis and his team do a great job with this program. C. Awwad hopes to continue to work with Social Security to get that data list so that the NRWIB can do some outreach and try to elicit some additional participation through their employment network. No motion necessary.

3. Collaboration with the Department of Aging and Disability Services Update

C. Awwad updated the committee that the current summer program with the Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) is off to a good start, and the NRWIB was pleased to acquire the contract, which had been a herculean task on both the NRWIB staff and the ADS staff. The students are currently in their summer program and the NRWIB hopes to continue some of those students in a year-round program. However, as with the launch of any new venture, there have been lots of hiccups to work through that with the team at ADS, and they have been very helpful. Albert Chabot and his team at the NRWIB have been very diligent at securing the work sites and the organization is pleased that that continues to go on. The contract is a three-year contract and C. Awwad believes that each year the summer program will get better. As the NRWIB continues to work through the year-round portion of the contract, additional work sites will be created and both the ADS student career counselors and the NRWIB staff will learn as they go, trying to make it a productive experience for the students. C. Awwad addressed C. Rafael and mentioned that the NRWIB does get calls from time to time from individuals that want the NRWIB's services that are co-enrolled in ADS and have a staff counselor assigned. C. Awwad believes that the NRWIB and ADS need to figure out a timelier process in both working with the customer and with each other, so there isn't a lag caused by communications between the staff counselor and finding a job for the participant. C. Awwad believes an integrated resource team where everyone is working together to address the barriers and get individuals back to work would be beneficial, but there is a challenge of timeliness to be as responsive to a participant as possible. C. Awwad would like to have inter-agency discussions about that with C. Rafael in the upcoming weeks to figure out how to streamline that process. C. Rafael concurred and expressed her appreciation for everything that the NRWIB staff has done to make the summer work-based experience happen for students. ADS processed twenty-seven students with sites, and some are still pending. It has been a learning experience, but overall, there has been a lot of positive feedback from students and their families about those young adults, getting their first-time work opportunities and learning what the expectations are of being out in the workforce. C. Rafael looks forward to continuing collaboration, continuing learning from this round, and improving it as it moves forward. The ADS staff has said that the NRWIB staff has been really great to work with and C. Rafael appreciates the "all hands-on deck," to make this a positive experience for so many students. In terms of AJC liaisons, Carmen Ocasio, ADS' AJC liaison, will be going in on Wednesday afternoons and there has been a schedule set up for the Torrington office. In the Danbury office, counselor Lucy Trusek will be the liaison, but her schedule is by appointment only. ADS is working on a set schedule. C. Rafael believes that future conversations regarding streamlining would be great. C. Awwad mentioned that she is pleased to have ADS back, even if

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it's by appointment only, to try to get more traffic into the building. With the recent uptick in COVID cases, the NRWIB has reinstated the mandatory mask policy for all staff members to wear a mask whenever leaving their cubicle or office, and in all public areas. M. Hayden added that Johnathan Alberto is also present at the AJC on Wednesday mornings from BESB, and the NRWIB is appreciative of that as well. No motion necessary.

4. Other Business

a. Indicating disability when registering with CTHires

C. Awwad advised the committee that the NRWIB continues to work with career navigators on how to teach registrants what to ask and what to look for when registering with CTHires. Although the NRWIB suffered a loss in staff resulting from a reduction enforced due to the loss of some federal funding, the current staff is well aware of what they need to do and have good interviewing skills to make sure that if there are any barriers, including disabilities, that they are recorded. The staff are making sure they are as attentive and assistive as possible to the clients and to make it work for them. No motion necessary.

b. Request for American Sign Language Interpreter Services

J. Amis advised the committee that there have been fewer requests for interpretive services as of recent than in the past years, which is mainly related to the pandemic. However, this is something to keep in mind so when the times comes the NRWIB will be prepared. C. Awwad would like to make sure that coordination is on board so that the NRWIB will be able to get that sign language interpreter in when they need it. With the career center now being open, the opportunity for participants to access the assistive technology at the NRWIB has been restored, and C. Awwad believes they are moving in the right direction. J. Vrabely commented that he believes the outreach in how to draw people with disabilities into the placement centers are key, because those individuals are not as fortunate to find those services. No motion necessary.

Under discussion, J. Amis advised the committee that something he believes is necessary is a bus stop shelter on Thomaston Avenue in Waterbury to help persons with mobility issues who are either going to ADS or the job center. He also believes it would be helpful if individuals with physical disabilities were able to enter the job center building through the Department of Labor front door. A third concern J. Amis had was to have prominent and legible signs posted in the building that indicate that the American Job Center and the NRWIB are 'hidden' within the building, and that ADS is also located in the DSS section of the building. C. Awwad advised the committee that she will reach out to Northeast Transit to find out if the NRWIB can request a bus stop shelter or if Northeast Transit are responsible for those themselves. If allowable, the NRWIB will put in a request with the CDBG office in the City of Waterbury for a bus stop shelter. M. Hayden mentioned that there were initial conversations within the last months regarding placement of signage in front of the building with Patrick Tallarita, the Director of Facilities for the Connecticut

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Department of Labor, and with the landlord David Silverman. M. Hayden will revisit those conversations, as he believes there was a design made and ready to go.

C. Awwad advised the committee that the NRWIB will anticipate a federal compliance monitoring in either March or April of next year, and the NRWIB will be making sure that all of their necessary assistive equipment is in place and operational. The organization will make sure all of the required signage is posted, and it has been noted in these minutes to look to address the issue regarding the bus stop shelter on Thomaston Avenue.

J. Vrabely asked C. Awwad when to expect the next Disability Committee Meeting, and C. Awwad advised the committee that it should take place in October or early November of 2021. C. Awwad would like to try to hold these meetings quarterly and believes the next meeting should come ahead of the full Board of Directors' meeting in December. J. Vrabely will report the outcome of this meeting at the next full Board of Directors' meeting on September 9, 2021.

W. Coleman advised the committee that on Thursday, September 23rd, 2021, his organization will hold a Community Relations Council Webex Meeting, and on that day a "Drive-by" Luncheon will be provided by the students of the New Haven Job Corps Culinary Arts Program after the meeting. C. Awwad mentioned that she received the invitation and will send it out to the full Board of Directors for distribution. C. Awwad asked W. Coleman if the NRWIB wanted to drive by and pick up some lunch if there will be a limit per car, or if would be appropriate if one person from Waterbury were sent to pick up a couple. W. Coleman responded that that would be fine, and C. Awwad can email W. Coleman at the time with the requested amount. C. Awwad commented that the NRWIB will be respectful in their request but will look to enjoy the fine culinary cuisine preparations by the students. W. Coleman thought that would be great. C. Awwad mentioned that the Community Relations Council meetings are great meetings, as she has attended them in the past, and enjoyed hearing the kids speak as well as to hear the community partners that have been engaged at the New Haven Job Corps Center. C. Awwad encouraged everyone on the committee meeting to participate in that event.

5. Adjournment

A motion to adjourn was made by J. Amis and seconded by W. Coleman at 11:23A.M. Motion approved.