



**NORTHWEST REGIONAL
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD**
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Board of Director's Meeting

Thursday, December 10, 2020 @ 12:00 PM

<https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/326041101>

United States: +1 (408) 650-3123 / Access Code: 326-041-101

In attendance: J. Wrinn, R. Bessette (on behalf of F. Spagnolo), N. Brown, W. Coleman, B. Dupont, A. Florez, S. Jannetty, G. LaCapra, K. Lucey, M. Rooke, C. Rafael, R. Richard, J. Ryan, F. Spagnolo, W. Pizzuto, S. Romano, W. Starbuck, L. Gold, B. Mattiello, E. Berns, R. Venturino,

Also in attendance: A. Blancato, B. Amin, F. Hardy, H. Pelletier, J. Reho, J. Amis, J. Huzina, K. Swol, K. Maness, M. Polzella, M. Sabol, M. Rubin, P. LaRosa, S. Barbieri, S. Domanico, T. McKaveney, T. Cunningham

Staff in attendance: C. Awwad, M. Hayden, C. Chasse, G. Fonseca, S. Mertz, A. Goncalves

Meeting began at 12:00PM

1. Approval of Minutes September 10, 2020.

A motion to approve the minutes from the September 10, 2020 Board of Directors meeting was made by F. Spagnolo and seconded by B. Mattiello. Motion approved.

Skipped to number 12d on the agenda because F. Spagnolo needed to leave the meeting early due to conflicting appointments in his schedule.

12d. Update: Youth Committee.

F. Spagnolo informed the members that a Youth Committee meeting was held on December 8th, 2020. With the departure of Bob Coatta and the onset of the pandemic crisis, the WIB has engaged in creative thinking and in transformations in shifts to service both Youth and Adult components of their program. The vendors servicing the youth attended the meeting. F. Spagnolo commended C. Awwad for the exceptional work that was done to provide a summer youth program and to continue to provide an in-school year youth employment program. Together they have put technology in place and established ways to deliver lesson plans and opportunities virtually. F. Spagnolo touched on the pitfalls that the Youth Committee faced and how those hurdles were handled and cleared. F. Spagnolo believes there is a good foundation to continue this program in a virtual atmosphere. The Youth Committee discussed the in-school program RFP that they are getting ready to launch. They will continue to meet regularly. F. Spagnolo found it important and unique to have all the vendors at the meeting to discuss how the performance of the WIB is positively impacting the program.



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F. Spagnolo had to exit meeting and R. Bassette continued to participate on his behalf.

C. Awwad welcomed the new board members: Evan Berns from Seitz, LLC, Shannon Jannetty from Kimberly Clark, and Adriana Florez from Trinity Saint Mary's Hospital.

2. Audit Presented by Mahoney Sabol - PY 2020:

M. Sabol and T. McKavene from Mahoney Sabol gave a presentation regarding the Federal and State Single Auditor's Report for year ending December, 2020. A digital copy of T. McKavene's presentation was provided to all board members present. A hard copy of the finalized Financial Statements will be mailed to all present board members via USPS once the bound copies are received by NRWIB in the mail. In summation, there were no noncompliance issues found, T. McKavene 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 (even given the COVID crisis which has caused delays everywhere else), and there were no difficulties in performing the audit.

C. Awwad would like to receive and accept the audit report so that the NRWIB can then complete the process by filing it with all the requisite agencies. A motion to approve the Audit Report, as described above, was made by J. Wrinn and seconded by L. Gold. Motion approved.

3. Approval of Revision to Bylaws.

C. Awwad stated that it was discovered during the contracting process of DECD for the CARES Act money that there was an error with the language in the existing Bylaws when referring to the position of Treasurer on page 6 of the Bylaws - the reference to "Chief Financial Oversight Officer," which is another name for "Treasurer." The NRWIB is 'cleaning' up that language with this revision. Under the NRWIB's Bylaw requirements, the change is presented at this meeting but cannot be voted on until the next Board of Directors meeting. The Board will vote on these changes at the Board of Directors meeting in March. The only change being made is to clean up the language to be consistent with the name "Treasurer," on page 6 of the existing Bylaws. The motion will be made at the March meeting.

4. Update on Revision to Fiscal Policies and Procedures.

The NRWIB has added the position of Chief Financial Officer. Therefore, the Policies and Procedures need to be revised to reflect this change, address the Finance Committee, and some additional internal controls. C. Awwad stated that although we had hoped to bring to the Board a fully revised Fiscal Policy and Procedure for consideration today,



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due to delays caused by the COVID pandemic, a comprehensive document is not yet ready, and NRWIB plans to present it at the next Executive Committee meeting in January. A copy will be circulated to the full Board of Directors at that time for their review as well. No motion necessary.

5. Approval of Amendments to CYEP and CACYEP Contracts:

a) Waterbury Police Activity League – increase of \$25,876.34 in CHEFA Funding to support year-round programming.

C. Awwad stated that our Summer Youth Program is now in its year-round component and will be fully expended by the end of this fiscal year. Waterbury Police Activity League had some additional youth that they would like to serve. Funding was available under the CHEFA summer and year-round program that could be allocated to PAL to do so. An increase in their current contract is being made with the additional CHEFA money in the amount of \$25,876.34. A motion to approve Amendments to CYEP and CACYEP Contracts with an increase of \$25,876.34 in CHEFA Funding to support year-round programming was made by J. Wrinn and seconded by C. Rafael. Motion approved. R. Bessette abstained.

6. Approval of Revised Personnel Policy.

C. Awwad informed the Board that as the NRWIB moves to prepare for the federal compliance monitoring anticipated to happen next year, it is reviewing all of its policies and procedures, and a revision of the Personnel Policy has been completed. The language has been 'cleaned' up, and confirmation was made that NRWIB is conforming to all the new regulations. It will be provided to all staff members for their review and signature, confirming awareness. There are no significant changes of the material nature. Most changes are to 'clean' up the language and incorporate our remote work policy that was in place prior to the pandemic. There is a second pandemic remote work policy that was approved that NRWIB does not seek to amend or incorporate into the personnel policy as it hopes to do away with the pandemic remote work policy in the near future. A motion to approve the revised Personnel Policy was made by L. Gold and seconded by J. Wrinn. Motion approved.

7. Approval of new website hosting company – The WORX Group.

C. Awwad informed the Board that during the pandemic the NRWIB learned that its media and interaction with the public is driven by its website and social media content. It is now harder to work on the current platform and, therefore, an RFP was made by NRWIB for a new website host. Proposals from a multitude of web hosting and web design companies were submitted, reviewed, and scored by NRWIB staff. Interviews were also held. A decision was made to contract with the WORX Group to develop and implement a new and more robust and interactive website. C. Awwad asked the Board



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to draw it's attention to the new website that the City of Waterbury has put up as an example and representation of the WORX Group's work that can be anticipated for the NRWIB's new website once it is launched. A motion to approve the WORX Group as the new website hosting company was made by J. Wrinn and seconded by C. Rafael. Motion approved.

8. Approval of Meeting Schedule for 2021 (Full Board, Executive Committee, Finance Committee)

The Board is given the opportunity to review and approve all the committee meeting dates scheduled for 2021. Upon the Board's approval, Outlook calendar invites will be sent out to all members of the committees for advance scheduling. C. Awwad plans to work with the Chief of Police, F. Spagnolo, to establish dates for the Youth Committee meetings in 2021. A motion to approve the Meeting Schedule for 2021 (Full Board, Executive Committee, Finance Committee) was made by J. Wrinn and seconded by C. Rafael. Motion approved.

9. Approval of WIOA Contract Modification # 2 - Increase in Dislocated Worker Funding \$290,379.00. Increasing contract to \$4,241,407.00.

C. Awwad informed the Board that as of today, the NRWIB has expended all its Dislocated Worker funding for the ITAs and OJTs. The DOL was able to find additional funding for this of \$290,000.00. This funding will go a long way in serving constituents in the region as serving the NRWIB tries to recover from the pandemic. A motion for the approval of WIOA Contract Modification # 2 - Increase in Dislocated Worker Funding \$290,379.00, increasing contract to \$4,241,407.00, was made by J. Wrinn and seconded by L. Gold. Motion approved.

10. Approval of contract extension for WIOA Demonstration Grant through March 31, 2021.

C. Awwad informed the Board that the NRWIB has been working with some demonstration money for the area of out-of-school youth, doing retail training and customer service skills. The pandemic has hindered their ability to do additional training, and DOL has allowed the NRWIB to extend these contractual dollars through March 31, 2021. The NRWIB is working with a vendor to train students remotely and were able to successfully run a class in October 2020. The NRWIB is looking to do this again to spend the funding before the timeframe expires. A motion for the approval of a contract extension for WIOA Demonstration Grant through March 31, 2021 was made by L. Gold and seconded by J. Wrinn. Motion approved.



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11. Approval of contract extension with Connecticut Merchant Retail Association through March 31, 2021.

C. Awwad informed the Board that this is a contract with Connecticut CRMA Retail Merchant Association for the delivery of customer service credential skills. There are two stackable credentials the participants will receive. C. Awwad believes the NRWIB will be very successful in recruiting another class before the funds expire at the end of March, 2021. A motion for the approval of a contract extension with Connecticut Merchant Retail Association through March 31, 2021 was made by J. Wrinn and seconded by C. Rafael. Motion approved.

12. Updates:

a. Executive Director Update.

C. Awwad updated the Board that the NRWIB has been overly cautious with staff's health to be able to conduct business and has continued to hold meetings virtually. She thanked the staff for their continued efforts on behalf of the constituents here in the region. Secondly, C. Awwad updated the Board on the Governor's Workforce Development Council. The strategic plan was released on October 8th, 2021. Chairman Garrett Moran has stepped down and the new chairman is Mark Argosh, the President of Social Venture Partners. C. Awwad encourages the Board to look at the new robust and aggressive workforce development plan for the state. There is a legislative package that is being put together in hopes of securing funding to move much of this forward as we continue to leverage our Workforce Investment Act (WIOA) and JFES dollars in support of this strategy as well. The NRWIB has applied EPA Brownfield clean-up grant on behalf of the city of Torrington, where some economic development is happening to remediate two buildings that will house a manufacturing firm. NRWIB will know in early January if the application was successful. C. Awwad updated the Board on the CARES Act money: this workforce board houses \$1,600,000 of the CARES Act money, of which \$1,400,000.00 has been shared across the state in the form of supportive services for clients that need a multitude of additional services including: technology through the issuance of Chromebooks and Wi-Fi devices, assisting clients that are behind on rent and other bills (the NRWIB can cover up to a month of that), and transportation needs to and from work. These funds are currently being expended across the state and they do wind down on December 30th, 2020. The NRWIB will continue to work with other workforce boards to assure that all these dollars can go to the participants that need them. The NRWIB has also developed the NextGen Manufacturing partnership strategy. NRWIB's core team, (that included a number of economic developments officials, local chambers, training providers such as community colleges), met over a period of three workshops and have selected

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manufacturing. C. Awwad happily reports that they continue to reach out and are met with great success in securing industry champions to move that partnership forward, and the Board will get more updates regarding this as they get ready to launch. C. Awwad notes that MASC has hired a new executive director, Cindy Zoldy, and NRWIB believes that MASC will reach unprecedented heights under Cindy's leadership. C. Awwad thanked all of the adult-ed providers who contributed to developing an application to submit to the "Re-Think Adult-Ed Challenge." The NRWIB will have an update whether the application was successful soon. An RFP was sent out for the NRWIB delivery of career services. That contract is \$2,500,000 on an annual basis. Our current provider is Career Resources. The NRWIB is statutorily required to complete this process every four years and it is underway now. The One-Stop Operator RFP will be released in January. The NRWIB will be under upcoming compliance monitoring and in preparation is making sure all policies and procedures are in place. C. Awwad is happy to participate and thanks the DOL for working with us on our internal review in preparation.

b. DOL – American Job Center Director Update.

S. Romano updated the Board that the American Job Center in Waterbury has been closed to the public because of the high COVID percentage rates in the region. They continue to monitor this and, working with the DOL, have been able to provide a lot of services virtually. The American Job Center has their virtual workshop scheduled posted for their North Central Region in their CT Hires business system and have been referring a lot of job seekers to that. They also have an online link on their website where any customer can process the link and send the American Job Center an email and receive a reply with any employment services they need. This has been in place for a month now and their numbers are increasing. They are also back to their virtual service delivery of RESEA, which is a program where unemployment insurance recipients are mandated to participate in a half-day employment readiness program where they are evaluated for their job readiness, and made sure that they are compliant with all the rules and regulations of unemployment insurance. The participants are assigned to a mandatory re-employment activity. This has been taking place for a few weeks now and helps everyone in the system because the American Job Center refers many people to the various grant programs. The program has launched, been working well, and slowly increasing. The American Job Center also continues to meet as a business services unit, (a work group), every month and those meetings have been going well. The first partner meeting will be held virtually on December 11th, 2020 with all the mandated partners at the American Job Center. S. Romano also provided some

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unemployment insurance updates regarding the PEUC program and the PUA programs. Their last paid week will be week ending December 26th, 2020. Aside from the standard 26 week unemployment program will be the Extended Benefits Program and that's based on a three month unemployment rate of 6.5% or less, and when that occurs that program will have a last payable week as well. There are no current updates on that end date as of today.

c. Career Resources Vice President Update.

K. Maness updated the Board that the American Job Center staff is still working on staggered days, with the two teams working in the office on the appropriate day and then telework on the alternating day. The Staff continues to contact the customers by phone, Zoom meetings, and email to deliver the wheel of services. K. Maness continues to have weekly staff meetings via Zoom. The career navigators are now training to get certified to conduct the CASAS training virtually and all the career navigators will be certified to conduct testing. The customers should start E-Testing by the end of the month. Currently, the ITAs issued for a PY2021 which started July 1st, 2020 and it will be through December 4th, 2020 are: WIOA Adults – 14 ITAs, WIOA Dislocated Workers: 16 ITAs, the construction funnel – 2 ITAs, the Apprenticeship Connecticut Initiative Program – 5 ITAs, the Opioid Grant – 7 ITAs, and the Homeworks grant – 1 ITA, for a total of 61 ITAs. The total of money disbursed is \$167,734.00.

d. Committees:

- **Personnel**

There were no updates on the Personnel Committee.

- **Youth**

See F. Spagnolo's update reported above (12d).

- **Finance**

W. Pizzuto updated the Board that on December 8th, 2020 the Finance Committee reviewed the draft audit report by Mahoney Sabol for 2020, reviewed the budget versus the actual expenditures, and spoke of revising financial policies and procedures that were mentioned today with intent involving the Chief Financial Officer. The finance committee spoke of the agency utilizing tools such as using a credit card versus a debit card. Due to the exposure of a debit card, a credit card may be a better option. The audit was forwarded to the full Board and Mahoney Sabol gave their audit report presentation at this meeting today. There was no material non-compliance of laws, and the regulations report showed that there were no significant deficiencies or material weaknesses.

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- **Disability**

There was no update on the Disability committee.

13. Financial Report.

Reviewed. No motion necessary.

14. Other Business.

No other business conducted.

15. Adjournment.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00pm.

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