

**Orange County Workforce Development Board Meeting
Friday, November 19, 2021 – 8:00 a.m.
Zoom Meeting**

MISSION STATEMENT:

MISSION: To create effective strategic alliances that supports the development of talent to meet the workforce needs of job seekers and regional businesses.

PRESENT: Gillian Barrett, Heather Bell-Meyer, Olga Campos, Amanda Dana, Susan Dean, Mary DeFreitas, William Edwards, Elizabeth Holbrook, John Malmgreen, Cathy Parlapiano, Angela Patella, Scott Perry, Charles Quinn, Lori Yakawiak – QUORUM PRESENT

EXCUSED: Mark Casey, Lisa Halpern, David Kohn, Tarsha McNeil

CALL TO ORDER/OPENING REMARKS: Mr. Knob welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked them for being present. Since a quorum was present, Mr. Knob asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the September 17, 2021, meeting as presented. Ms. Bell-Meyer made the motion and Ms. Yakawiak seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Mr. Knob announced that the Unemployment Rate was at 4.3%. A couple of reasons for that is because the workforce participation rate is the lowest it has been since the 1970's. More women have dropped out of the workforce in the last year and a half since school's have not been open on a steady basis due to the pandemic. Childcare is a main problem for working parents and is very hard to find. Many people are living off their savings and some people haven't been paying their rent. The moratorium is going to end in January so people are going to have to start paying rent again. More positions were filled in the last month and people are slowly returning to work. Last year, in his region which consists of Rockland, Westchester and Orange, there were 23,000 more jobs that were filled between October, 2020 and October, 2021 and 11,000 were in the Hospitality Sector.

The Job Fair was held on October 27th at the Newburgh Mall. Mr. Knob said that 96 employers were there. The job fair was heavily advertised but there may have been approximately 250 job seekers, which is low compared to previous job fairs. At the 2019 Newburgh Job Fair, there were 650-700 job seekers. ETA will do another job fair in April at the Galleria in Middletown and will continue to do the virtual job fairs on a monthly basis, by sector (distribution, manufacturing, hospitality, etc.).

Amazon and Medline will be opening their huge facilities in the near future. At a recent Economic Development meeting with the County Executive, which is held once a month, Mr. Fioravanti stated that speculation for warehouse square footage would amount to 4 million square feet in the future.

Ms. Holbrook announced that she was on the board for the Childcare Council and asked if anyone knew someone who was interested in working in the daycare system. Facilities cannot find enough staff to work in their daycare facilities which in turn is not allowing parents to return to the workplace. Ms. Defreitas stated that many of her full time staff have dropped to part-time or per diem status. She said that from November 2019 to present, there will probably be 3 times the number of per diem staff than 2 years ago, due to childcare issues. Mr. Knob said that with the Welfare to Work participants, their childcare is paid for below a certain income level. The facilities that are being used are full and cannot accept new children.

The Governor just approved CDL license training funding for those 18 and older. There is a tremendous shortage for truck drivers. Ms. Dana asked if the hour requirement for a CDL license is still the same, which is 400 hours.

Mr. Perry said that another drawback is the cameras on the drivers and the “Big Brother” aspect which is insurance mandated, but scaring potential drivers away.

Mr. Knob updated the Board on the Gun Violence Prevention Grant. Orange County received \$925,000 to get 18-24 year olds in Newburgh and Middletown to get them engaged in the workforce or into a training program. ETA is purchasing Visa gift cards. They get \$50 for coming in and doing an intake. They then go to a series of workshops including interviewing skills, soft skills, dress for success, resume prep, budgeting, conflict resolution, etc. which lasts about a week for a total of 12 hours. After completion of the workshops, they get a gift card for \$150. If they get a job after completion of the workshops and keep it and bring in a paystub, they get \$500. If they then keep the job for 90 days, they get a gift card for \$1000. In Newburgh, there are 20+ that have gone through the first 2 steps and there are 8 that have been placed in paying jobs. There is money available for supportive services. A young man who needed \$80 to get his driver license back due to unpaid tickets, received the money to get his license back and got a job at Amazon as a driver. Many of these youths were pushed by their mothers and grandmothers to participate in the program. These youths are definitely in need and economically disadvantaged and need to be engaged in the workforce. A couple of the youths are considering CDL training. Mr. Knob met with Mr. Quinn at RECAP to get the program going in Middletown with the help of Orange County Probation’s roster to find eligible participants. Mr. Knob stated that there was a shooting in Newburgh and the day before in Poughkeepsie. We are working with the GIVE Program which the DA’s office runs along with city police departments and Probation to reach out to these youth who are carrying the weapons in order to engage them and get them out of that lifestyle. There is one year to spend the money until the end of September, 2022.

NEW BUSINESS/OLD BUSINESS: Mr. Knob announced that under WIOA funding, the Workforce Development Board needs to approve a Self-Sufficiency Policy. There is a dollar amount that an individual makes, where you can be employed and still be eligible for the Adult Program. Over the years it’s been \$10 or \$11 an hour, usually around the minimum wage. Currently, the Self Sufficiency amount is \$15.00 an hour. If an individual is making that amount and working part time, and still on public assistance, he or she can still be put in a training program. Mr. Knob has spoken to staff from a couple of other counties to find out what their Self Sufficiency Policy and amounts are and their’s is \$25.00 an hour. Discussion followed.

Mr. Knob proposed the following WIOA Self-Sufficiency Guidelines for WIOA Adult for the Board’s approval:

Effective 11/19/2021, the Policy is as follows: Individuals meeting the criteria below are eligible to receive services provided through WIOA Adult funding. The Employment and Training Administration Director has the authority to grant reasonable exceptions to the wage limit based on each individual’s circumstances and the type of training being funded.

All individuals who meet one of the following criteria:

- Current wage level is \$25 per hour or less.
- Does not qualify as WIOA Dislocated Worker.

Mr. Knob asked for a motion to approve the policy as presented. Mr. Edwards made the motion to approve. Ms. Holbrook seconded. Vote taken and unanimously approved as presented. Ms. Yakawiak, from Orange-Ulster BOCES abstained.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned. Mr. Knob thanked everyone for attending and wished Happy Holidays to everyone.

NEXT MEETING: JANUARY 21, 2022