

**Orange County Workforce Development Board Meeting
Friday, January 20, 2023 – 8:00 a.m.**

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: Heather Bell-Meyer, Olga Campos, Amanda Dana, Susan Dean, Mary DeFreitas, William Edwards, Lisa Halpern, David Kohn, Cathy Parlapiano, Angela Patella, Scott Perry, Charles Quinn, Lori Yakawiak

CALL TO ORDER/OPENING REMARKS: Mr. Knob welcomed everyone back to the first live meeting since January 17, 2020 and thanked them for being present.

Mr. Knob asked for a motion to approve the minutes as presented from the September 16, 2022 WDB meeting. Ms. Parlapiano made the motion and Ms. Bell-Meyer seconded. Vote taken and passed unanimously.

DIRECTOR’S REPORT: Mr. Knob asked everyone present to go around the table and introduce themselves. New to the meeting was Ms. Karina Fabiano, ETA’s new Youth Coordinator. Ms. DeFreitas asked the members to please fill out and mail in their Board of Ethics Financial Disclosure Forms as soon as they receive them. Several members did not receive the forms. Mr. Knob will follow up with the Board of Ethics to assure that each member gets their form. Failure to submit the forms will result in being turned over to the District Attorney’s office.

Mr. Knob noted that ETA has experienced several retirements and operations have changed. The career centers are getting back to normal but the numbers on the public assistance are low and the number of people on UI is low as well. The Labor Department is still not bringing in a lot of customers (20%) and are still doing virtual and/or phone orientations with UI customers. Less staff is needed currently since there is less traffic in the centers, which has allowed more customers to be put into training.

The Fall Job Fair was held in October at the Newburgh Mall. Over100 employers participated and there were over 450 job seekers. It was quite successful. The employers were very happy with the event. The hours were changed to accommodate those people who were employed. It picked up after 3:00 but won’t go as late as 7:00 in the future. Unemployment insurance was at 2.6% as of November. A year ago, UI claims numbered 2100 in Orange County and in November there were 1000. The most jobs gained in the Hudson Valley were from November of 2021 to November of 2022. The biggest increase in hiring in Educational Health Services followed by Leisure/Hospitality. Nationally, there are 10 million job openings; There are 1.7 jobs per job seeker; In November, 4.2 million people quit their jobs and there were 1.3 million layoffs; 223 jobs were added in December; wages were up in 2022 by 4.6%; 4.2 million jobs were added in 2022, the 2nd highest ever with the 1st being 7 million in 2021; The participation rate is up. During covid the participation rate was below 50%, and is now up to 62.3%. It was close to 70% pre-covid however.

Mr. Knob stated that ETA is putting many people into training. Many are being trained in healthcare positions as well as receiving CDL training. There are a huge number of job orders at the career centers but there not many people to fill all of the available positions.

Mr. Knob announced that the Youth Request for Proposal (RFP) would be released for this Program Year in the next couple of months. He will be asking a few members to review the submitted proposals at the appropriate time.

Mr. Knob asked the members for their input as to what their employment issues are pertaining to their industries as far as hiring, retaining, benefits, etc. Ms. Bell-Meyer stated that the common denominator in area businesses employment problems is hiring employees. She has been surveying many members and the common denominator is having adequate staff to work. People who are chosen for interviews do not show up or if they work for a couple of days, just stop coming into work. The only company that does not seem to have any workforce problems is Medline. Ms. DeFreitas stated her company is doing marketing adjustments every day to keep wages competitive and is not sustainable. The Chamber is doing lots of counseling for its' members on how to attract employees. More employers are still offering remote/hybrid employment, but most industries are not able to operate that way. Ms. Halpern stated that she has increased wages for her employees (\$16-\$18/hour) and has started instituting a Lean Six Sigma program to earn a Black Belt. She has her first 3 people going through their training and are now certified at different levels. Her goal is to start standardizing jobs and so her employees will start feeling good about their jobs. Ms. Patella added that for her agency's hiring, they hire off of the NYS Civil Service lists which are mostly depleted for entry level and professional positions. She has many vacancies because of the lack of tests being given and civil service lists being unavailable. Ms. Patella said that there use to be 8 counselors in the Mid-Hudson area and now there are 3 counselors with caseloads up to 250-260 each. She cannot find an office assistant and if one is found, the wage is thought to be too low. Ms. Yakawiak stated that her agency had difficulties in hiring off civil service lists also. Mr. Quinn stated that childcare is a huge issue. Another issue is Family Medical Leave absences. Affordable housing is also a huge issue. Ms. DeFreitas talked about a program in the Newburgh Crystal Run facility that is run in collaboration with Newburgh Free Academy called Project Search that trains 6 senior students who are developmentally disabled and work with teachers and skilled trainers at Crystal Run, funded by ACCES VR, who do 3 clinical rotations in the following departments: materials, nursing, patient services, laboratory and in operations. The Crystal Run employees mentor and work with these students and they will be offered employment at the end of their senior year upon successful completion. Ms. Patella stated that ACCES-VR will pay the wages for employers to hire the disabled. The employer must put them on their insurance and give them a trial period of 6 weeks to see whether the employees will work out.

Mr. Kohn said that Empire State Development has funding available. The college has access to customized training for incumbent workers. ESD has 3 pots of money, one of which can be used to help develop a pipeline to jobs. He stated that he is very interested in working with members to help recruit employees and provide training for them. Mr. Kohn stated that he can provide incumbent worker training for employers where the employer pays 10% of the project costs and SUNY funding will pay the balance. He asked if anyone was interested in teaching Adult Ed classes at OCCC. They are having difficulty in hiring teachers.

Ms. Patella brought up the immigration movement into the area. She has information that she will send to the members about a state agency that will help them get their paperwork to work, with housing, ESL and other necessities to help them live and work in the country. Ms. Campos said it could take up to six months to a year to get the necessary permit to work. There is a huge workforce made up of immigrants that want to work and are able to do so. Housing and transportation are additional issues that also need to be addressed.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business to discuss, Mr. Knob asked for a motion to adjourn. Mr. Quinn made the motion. Ms. Campos seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 9:07 a.m.

NEXT MEETING: MARCH 17, 2023