

Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board

Minutes of May 13 2020

- Members Present:** Ananda Sweet, Robert Austin for Ed Barr, Robin Bartholow, Ethan Brown*, Kristyn Byrne, Erin Carlson, Judy Coffey, Susan Cooper, Sara Cummings, Brad Davis, Keith Dias, Paul Duranczyk, Nancy Emanuele, John McEntagart, Brandy Evans, Steve Herrington, Steve Herron, Kristina Holloway, Roy Hurd Stephen Jackson, Judy James, Scott Kincaid, Chris Knerr, Anita Maldonado, George Steffensen, David Tam, Pedro Toledo, David Wayte, and Audra Verrier
- Absent:** Ed Barr and Michael Pickens
- Staff:** Katie Greaves, Patricia Andrews, Jessica Taylor, Shaydra Ennis, Amanda Gayda, Sharona Elfus-Schatzkin, Pam Hayne, Sarah Lewis-Crow, Manuel Benitez, Pedro Guevara, Michelle Revecho, Katie Stohlmann, Tiffany Hill, and Judy Oates

***Attendees with asterisks arrived late or departed early.**

I. Introductions and Public Comment

None.

II. Approve Minutes of January 8, 2020

The March WIB meeting was cancelled due to COVID restrictions.

Motion to approve the January 8, 2020 minutes: Scott Kincaid /s/ Brandy Evans. All approved (Ananda Sweet, Robert Austin for Ed Barr, Robin Bartholow, Ethan Brown, Kristyn Byrne, Erin Carlson, Judy Coffey, Susan Cooper, Sara Cummings, Brad Davis, Keith Dias, Paul Duranczyk, Nancy Emanuele, John McEntagart, Brandy Evans, Steve Herrington, Steve Herron, Kristina Holloway, Roy Hurd Stephen Jackson, Judy James, Scott Kincaid, Chris Knerr, Anita Maldonado, George Steffensen, David Tam, Pedro Toledo, David Wayte, and Audra Verrier). There were no “nay” votes and no abstentions. The motion carried.

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III. Announcements

- Votes will be via role call during WIB Zoom meeting sessions.
- Welcome to our three new members attending their first WIB meeting today: Judy James, Brad Davis, and John McEntagart.
- Stephen Jackson is the new chair Elect for the WIB Executive Committee. He will serve under Ananda for the next year and then step up as the WIB Chair for the following two years.
- Roy Hurd announced Robin Bartholow passed the bar to practice law. ***Congratulations Robin!***
- Paul Lozada was named the 16th judge to come from Empire College School of Law.
- Today is Kristyn Byrne's last meeting as a WIB member. We are deeply saddened but grateful for the time and effort she dedicated to the WIB.
- Shaydra Ennis introduced Lonje Deschamps as the new Job Training Coordinator and part of the Business Services Team.

IV. Success Story

Pam Hayne, Employment and Training Counselor, shared an inspiring client story. This client came to the Job Link office for services after being laid-off from her caregiver job when Villa Capri burned down in 2017. She was interested in becoming a medical assistant and with the help of her counselor and Dislocated Worker funding, was able to take the appropriate classes and then got a position working in her new field. Her counselor called last month to follow-up and see how she was doing at her new job, and she found that the client is now thriving. She loves what she does and happily shared details of her work and that she has gotten to assist with skin grafts and got to remove a fatty tumor. She loves it and she enjoys doing work others find "gross"! The office she works at is also supporting her long-term career goals of becoming a nurse, and then a nurse practitioner specializing in dermatology. She is happy and fulfilled with this work and grateful for the opportunity she received from being a Job Link client. This is a true rising from the ashes story.

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V. **Networking / Member Update**

WIB Members broke into small groups of four or five to discuss the challenges and trends they are seeing during the current crisis and what we expect as we move into recovery. Then the groups reported out highlights of their conversations. The items reported included the following.

Business

- Banks are working with loans for small businesses.
- Banks are concerned about other loans that might be coming due as people are not working and what might happen with those.
- The Santa Rosa Metro Chamber will be working with smaller businesses to help give them a blueprint on how to prepare to open on a limited basis when allowed.
- About 80% of business is small business in Sonoma County. Even though the governor says they may be reopening soon, Sonoma County is not ready and has not met the criteria yet. Even if they do, there is no child care or summer camps so it will be hard for parents to go back to work. Schools are looking at how they will work. We need these issues resolved so these parents can go back to work.

Healthcare

- Kaiser is expecting a decrease in their membership due to people being laid off work and not able to afford healthcare.
- There is worry about the smaller health centers that care for the underrepresented populations going out of business.
- Senior care facilities have not seen anything change from COVID-19. They still have their clientele and are still hiring and training staff.
- Some senior care facilities are offering an extra \$2 dollars an hour to retain staff March through June.
- Some medical sites are seeing patients in their vehicles as part of the solution to social distancing.
- Healthcare work is slower than expected as COVID-19 did not hit our county as hard

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as expected. Medical sites are experiencing fewer health care visits and elective surgeries as that space was saved for the wave that did not come.

Construction

- Construction saw a downturn in work. Outside construction has been allowed to continue but there have been restrictions for inside work.
- Construction industry has made the changes for social distancing and is continuing to work.
- Commercial general construction is doing okay in the short term, but could be impacted in the long term if we go into a recession. So far, most construction projects that already started have continued.

Education

- Empire College School of Law moved their classes to online. Empire College Business transitioned 210 students to online classes. The medical programs were more difficult as the labs need to be done in person. They are working with Board of Supervisors to get permission to continue classes with smaller groups.
- The Santa Rosa Junior College Workforce and Career Development department bridged services from onsite to remote. Some of the significant changes they made included the following:
 - Partnered with Sonoma State to offer a three-day virtual career fair with 45 employers. It was a new way to do recruitment and offer a virtual experience for students to engage with employers and be exposed to new opportunities.
 - Provided a number of workshops for how to look for employment during COVID-19. Participation has been good.
 - They are currently looking at the summer and fall schedules and reimagining how to best serve students.
- Parents and their children are working on distance learning at home.

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Non-Profits

- Conservation Corps North Bay are considered essential services so they have remained open. Youth are doing program participation through on-line classes, and small groups that meet in a large room with proper social distancing.
- Job Link made the switch from face-to-face visits to telephone calls and virtual meetings. They are also doing outreach for business to assist with unemployment and layoff aversion. Most of the businesses in our community are doing temporary furloughs and plan to bring people back as soon as they can. There have not been many requests for training yet, but once people are back to work we expect more requests. Please feel free to reach out to Job Link if you have any requests for assistance.
- Job Corps is doing distance learning and remote admissions.
- Goodwill pivoted in how they work with clients. They received a Paycheck Protection Program loan that allows them to keep all staff through June 15, after that it will depend on if they can open retail stores. They are keeping supportive services going as much as possible by using technology.
- Community Action Partnership of Sonoma County is open and providing service to clients.
- Social Advocates for Youth has continued work with youth services and housing programs.

Youth

- The WIB needs to talk about the future workforce. Today's high school graduates have been through fires, floods, and a pandemic - and now are starting college virtually in the fall. A lot of changes for them to experience as well as having to adapt to as they enter the workforce.

VI. COVID and Job Link Operations

Human Services closed their offices except for essential service as of March 18. When disaster strikes demand for our services increase. The Job Link office has been closed

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except for emergency services and staff have been setting up home office environments to continue to service our clients.

- Cal Fresh applications jumped from 300 per week to more than double.
- CalWORKs had a similar spike in cases. As unemployment benefits are starting to be received some of these numbers are going back to closer to normal.
- Unemployment Insurance claims went from 293 to 16,238 in Sonoma County. We are on a downward trend now, but still significantly higher than pre-COVID. The first day of business closures there were about 900 missed calls for the Employment Development Department (EDD). Five Job Link staff have been assisting with taking the unemployment insurance calls. To date we have responded to over 1,134 calls. The rate of calls is slowing but requests are becoming more specific and more often need to be referred to EDD staff for service.

Job Link staff are adapting to the virtual world and refining our processes to assist clients. The WIB is in the process of receiving several grants for supportive services for clients. Job Link is adding a "Counselor of the Day" to the reception area who will help those coming in the door be quickly and efficiently moved through the system to the programs and benefits that are the best fit.

The Business Services is working hard to get up and running virtually.

- They received 151 WARN Notices in March and April. The Rapid Response Coordinator has been busy working with employers and employees of these businesses for training, marketing, and hiring needs. So far most of the layoffs we are seeing are temporary.
- The Business Services Team is doing outreach and as of May 8 contacted 535 businesses and additional support clients starting with WIB priority industries and then others.
- The team is updating the website with online resources for unemployment, and a rapid response web page that includes Rapid Response orientation videos.
- As we move forward the Business Services Team is working with EDD on further

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collaboration for Latino outreach, identifying emerging industry trends, and creating more virtual/non-virtual training programs.

- The Sunrise Senior Living cohort, designed to hire and train caregivers was delayed due to the pandemic. There is still a big need for caregivers and healthcare aids so we will begin to move forward on this project again.
- The English Language Learner Program was paused until the fall due to competing priorities.

Q. Are there any businesses or sectors that are looking at permanent layoffs?

A. This would be a question for the Economic Development Board as we do not have that information as this time. But one development we have heard of is that some business that are working with a skeleton crew are finding they can get by with less staff on a regular basis.

VII. Youth Contracts

Amanda Gayda shared that the WIB Executive Committee approved the funding recommendation for the My Pathway Program (MPP), formerly the Youth Education and Employment Services program at the WIB Executive Committee meeting earlier today. The contract will go to the Board of Supervisors for final approval on July 7. She highlighted the three changes to the program from previous years.

- 1) The Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps (SCYEC) work experience program is no longer part of the year-round contract. The Request For Proposals (RFP) for SCYEC was done January 2020 and awarded to Conservation Corps North Bay (CCNB) as the sole applicant.
- 2) MPP continues to offer the same core services as it has in previous years but proposes going forward with all paid work opportunities being developed in house by Job Link's WIOA Program Staff, Business Services Team, and Youth Programs Coordinator. This will allow us to leverage Job Link's expertise and let the youth program provider to focus on education support, training, work readiness preparation, and case management for the youth and young adults.

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- 3) The youth program provider is required to serve high need youth and young adults in all geographic regions of the County. This is a change from our previous five region approach and will allow us to maximize resources.

These changes were made because WIOA allocations have been decreasing annually and we no longer have enough funding to support the administrative costs of five regions. We believe this is the best way to maintain and strengthen the quality of the program.

Five proposals to provide youth services were submitted for review. They were scored by a Proposal Review Committee who concluded that one contractor could meet the requirements as specified in the RFP to provide county-wide services. The committee recommended Social Advocates for Youth to receive the funding contract as they had the highest score. The WIB Executive Committee accepted the recommendation of the Proposal Review.

VIII. WIB Business

A. Dashboard

Katie led a discussion of the department metrics noting the following highlights.

- Please note the AJCC numbers will be adjusted as we find a way to track visits that are being done virtually as the current method tracks when people come into the office.
- In a review of barriers our customers are facing homelessness was the largest barrier followed by lack of transportation, language barriers, lack of child care, justice involvement, disability, and others.
- Business Services had a big increase in layoff aversion actions. COVID has had a larger affect on unemployment and layoffs then the fires and floods combined.

B. Economic Development Board Statistics

Ethan reported that Economic Development Board (EDB) is aiding businesses to help them understand what resources were available and how best to modify their services to reopen.

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- Assembled a group of twenty-five economic development representatives/partners to meet regularly to discuss local business organizational challenges.
- The EDB is working with the Santa Rosa Metro Chamber to develop best management practices around reopening. Met with five industry work groups about what they are doing to prepare to reopen.
- The EDB has created a self-certification tool on their website businesses can complete to show they are ready to open and meet the requirements of the Health Department.
- Long range planning.
 - We are really just in the beginning this new economy and starting work on the data. We need to develop best management practices in the next few months.
 - The EDB has a contract with Dr Eyler, principal of *Economic Forensics and Analytics* to create reports on impacts to the economy.
 - The EDB released the first of a series of e-surveys to businesses recently. They will follow up with businesses weekly so they can measure changes over time to build a report.
- Information collected so far includes the following.
 - 50% of businesses were determined to be essential
 - 40% of businesses have reduced hours by 45%
 - 50% of businesses laid off or reduced their workforce
 - 72% of businesses saw reduced revenue.
 - 60% of businesses have accessed resources from the CARES Act such as disaster loans. The loans had a clunky roll out but there was a lot of access to funds for our county. The EDB will monitor over time to see how successful CARES funding was to keep businesses long term.

Ethan Brown left the meeting.

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IX. WIB Initiatives

A. Training and Supportive Services

Ananda reminded the group of the in-depth discussions the WIB had last year on supportive services where it was decided we could do more with the limited amount we have by being strategic and focusing on the chosen three industries of hospitality construction, and healthcare. This decision was pre-crisis so the WIB now needs to look at how things have changed and decide how to direct staff providing services in this rapidly changing world.

Staff recommends that the WIB approves an amendment to the current funding parameters for using training and supportive services funds by adding a fifth criteria. This amendment would allow the WIB Director to approve additional industries to receive training and supportive service funding specific to COVID for layoff aversion, or to meet safety guidelines in the public health order. This would allow staff to assist clients in real time without having to come back to the WIB for approval for each opportunity. The current four criteria are listed below along with the proposed addition.

1. Projected growth over the next five years.
2. Willingness to work with our populations
3. Career ladder available within the industry
4. Willingness to participate in workforce development system as business champions.
5. ***Due to COVID19: layoff aversion or to meet safety guidelines in public health order currently in effect.***

This amendment would allow industries facing layoffs to be eligible to receive training and supportive services such as on the job training, training cohorts, and incumbent worker training that address business workforce needs.

- Q. Does a business need to meet all five criteria, or only the fifth criteria with this change?

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- A. Only the fifth due to COVID. This could help small businesses re-open or remain open.
- Q. Are there any businesses waiting for services pending this decision?
- A. There are some manufacturing businesses that would be interested who reached out pre and post COVID.
- Q. Will there be targeted outreach to business eligible for services under criteria five or is it first come first serve?
- A. Targeted outreach was for priority populations. This addition is to help prevent lay-offs.

Motion to approve adding a fifth criteria to the current funding parameters for using training and supportive services funds due to COVID business conditions.

The supportive service funding criteria are:

- 1. Projected growth over the next five years.**
- 2. Willingness to work with our populations**
- 3. Career ladder available within the industry**
- 4. Willingness to participate in workforce development system as business champions.**
- 5. *Allow the WIB Director to approve additional industries to receive training and supportive service funding specific to COVID for layoff aversion or to meet safety guidelines in public health order currently in effect.***

This new criteria will be reviewed at the first WIB meeting of 2021, or sooner if staff recommends, to allow for its removal if no longer necessary. Sara Cummings /s/ Judy Coffey.

All approved (Ananda Sweet, Robert Austin for Ed Barr, Robin Bartholow, Kristyn Byrne, Erin Carlson, Judy Coffey, Susan Cooper, Sara Cummings, Brad Davis, Keith Dias, Paul Duranczyk, Nancy Emanuele, John McEntagart, Brandy Evans, Steve Herrington, Steve Herron, Kristina Holloway, Roy Hurd Stephen Jackson, Judy James,

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Scott Kincaid, Chris Knerr, Anita Maldonado, George Steffensen, David Tam, Pedro Toledo, David Wayte, and Audra Verrier). There were no “nay” votes and no abstentions. The motion carried.

Action: Staff will prepare a presentation with more data on workforce needs for the group to better understand and decide how to move forward as a workforce board.

Action: Robin Bartholow will share the local construction workforce survey North Bay Construction Corps she is working on when it is ready.

Thank you all for your thoughtful feedback today.

IX. Adjourn 5:01 pm

Next meeting: **July 8, 2020 via Zoom**

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