

## Sonoma County Workforce Investment Board

Minutes of September 10, 2020

**Members Present:** Ananda Sweet, Patrick Harper for Ed Barr, Robin Bartholow, Erin Carlson, Judy Coffey, Susan Cooper, Brad Davis, Keith Dias, Paul Duranczyk Nancy Emanuele, , Brandy Evans, Steve Herrington, Steve Herron, Kristina Holloway, Eddie Gilbert for Roy Hurd, Stephen Jackson, Judy James, Scott Kincaid, Chris Knerr, Anita Maldonado, John McEntagart, Michael Pickens George Steffensen, David Tam, Eliot Enriquez for Pedro Toledo, David Wayte, and Becky Sandoval for Audra Verrier

**Absent:** Sara Cummings Ed Barr, Ethan Brown, and Roy Hurd

**Additional Attendees:** Serene Cooper,

**Staff:** Katie Greaves, Patricia Andrews, Jessica Taylor, Shaydra Ennis, Amanda Gayda, Sharona Elfus-Schatzkin, 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 July 8, 2020**

The committee reviewed the minutes of July 8, 2020.

**Motion to approve the July 8, 2020 minutes: Brandy Evans /s/ David Wade.** 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, Anita Maldonado, George Steffensen, David Tam, Eliot Enriquez for Pedro

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Toledo, David Wayte, and Audra Verrier). There were no “nay” votes. George Steffensen, John McEntagart, and Michael Pickens abstained. The motion carried.

### III. **Announcements**

New proxies introduced themselves. Pat Harper for Ed Barr, Kim Kinahan for Brad Davis, Becky Sandoval for Audra Verrier. Ananda thanked members for recruiting proxies.

### IV. **Success Story**

Jessica shared about a client who stood out to her counselor as she was so eager and proactive. She was looking to get a Class A driver license and before coming to Job Link had already done the research requirements about the industry usually recommended when a client comes to us to get assistance with making a career change. She had even already applied for and received a scholarship from the Women In Truck Driving Association \$1K scholarship. She is now in the driving program and pursuing her passion. She hopes to find a job that will allow her to be involved in post fire clean-up work. She will be available shortly and we think she will be a hot shot employee! Anyone involved in hiring drivers to transfer fire debris should consider her. Frank Cuneo recommend referring this client to the Teamsters for employment and an attendee expressed interest in speaking to her.

**Action:** Manuel Benitez will reach out to Pat Harper to share more information about this client and forward her the Teamsters recommendation.

### V. **Networking / Member Update**

WIB Members broke into smaller groups to discuss challenges and trends they are seeing as we move into recovery. The groups reported out highlights of their conversations.

#### Business

- The Santa Rosa Metro Chamber recognizes many of our local businesses are struggling. Economists predict half of small businesses may fail before the end of the pandemic. The Chamber is providing support to the business community by talking to elected officials and others who can offer support. The Board of

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Supervisors recently allocated some grant funds to support small business. Other items the Chamber is working on include housing and childcare. The need for both of these services are magnified now. The silver lining is that after each crisis our community faces it is inspiring to see the people in this county come out strong to rally for each other.

#### Virtual Resources Available in the Community

- The Santa Rosa Junior College will be hosting a virtual job fair September 19 from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm. All are welcome to attend.
- Job Link has virtual workshops for resumes and cover letters coming up soon.
- Job Link as reopened their computer lab limited hours Monday through Friday for job search, resume work, and other client needs.

#### Labor

- There have been some COVID positive tests that have shut down a few jobs. In general there are fewer man hours and some infrastructure projects have stopped or been put on hold.
- A lot of apprentices are looking for work.
- There is a strong need for experienced electricians, not apprentices, which is unusual this time of year. Labor representatives are reaching out to contractors to understand why.
- Mason work is steady, they have new safety regulations in place, and less issues as the majority of their work is outside.
- Sheetmetal workers are doing okay, but work is down 5 or 10 percent.
- There is concerned about future work projects due to layoffs in architectural firms which could affect building in the future.
- The Trades Introduction Program (TIP) has gone online due to COVID. The Vallejo class just completed and they are gearing up for the next session.
- There has been a lot of bid activity in construction but not a lot of jobs starting for both residential and commercial buildings. This is mostly due to the difficulty of

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builders getting risk insurance on jobs where building have burned down.

- North Bay Construction Corps training program had:
  - 175 interested in their course
  - 32 completed their course
  - 19 graduates placed in shorter term shadow experiences
  - 8 graduates received full time work

Due to COVID it is not a perfect job market but good jobs and great employers are out there.

- Member of the public who works in home energy attended the meeting seeking opportunities for green stimulus money program similar to what was offered in 2008. Would like to get information on how to access that if it becomes available.

#### Other

- Some two income families are losing one income as one parent needs to stay home and care for their children due to lack of childcare and/or help with school.
- Power outages are an issue for distance learning and those working from home.
- Workforce Services have been helping at local assistance centers for the LNU fires assisting people with FEMA, unemployment, and other resources.
- WIB is working on youth issues and youth employment.

#### Non-Profit

- Non-profits having difficulty finding employment opportunities for youth due to COVID/social distancing affecting many of the regular first-time jobs.
- Small non-profits have struggled from COVID related expenses for their staff and programs.
- Goodwill is seeing more candidates for positions than before and hosting an outdoor hiring event on September 18.

#### Education

- Empire College is continuing classes for their medical students and enrollment in classes due to their ability to offer remote learning and waiver for the hands on

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part of class needed.

- Sonoma County Office of Education has seen challenges with home schooling. Last semester many youth has their grades drop due to the challenges in completing the school year. Now and schools are trying to buckle down to get grades back up.
- Sonoma State University is seeing 2,000 less job opportunities for their students. They are encouraging students to do more online resumes and application processes.
- Petaluma Adult School is now providing all classes online and has had a big jump in students. They are the only adult education site that provides a diploma instead of a GED. New legislation has just passed allowing lower credits requirements for foster youth, justice involved, and homeless youth to receive diplomas.

#### Manufacturing

- The wine niche of manufacturing is doing well.

#### Healthcare

- Senior living facilities have had patient COVID issues but staff exposure has been minimal. There is a staffing shortage, but that is a standing challenge.
- People feel alone in senior facilities due to lack of visitation allowed and want to stay in their home as much as possible.
- Some people from the hospitality industry are moving to the healthcare industry in their search for new employment.
- Petaluma Health Center is leading the way on cleaning techniques and patient care. They have gained 2,000 new patients during the pandemic.

#### Hospitality

- Hospitality has not seen much of a change yet. Evacuees have temporarily increased business for some hotels. Many of the restaurants are pivoting on their approach to meal delivery.

### **VII. COVID, Fire, and Job Link Operations**

Katie led the conversation regarding COVID updates. There was an initial spike in

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unemployment claims after the shelter in place, but we continue to see a steady stream of initial applications that is above what we had before the pandemic. Job Link has made progress in virtual services despite the amount of movements turns and pivots we have had to do. Staff is primarily teleworking, with some limited services being offered on site. We are trying to normalize completing our mission while being nimble and doing care and shelter as needed as part of the Human Services Department. In the last three weeks workers have been diverted again to staff and support three evacuation shelters. Katie took this moment to acknowledge her staff for the lift they have done to maintain services for clients while providing emergency services to the community.

### **Virtual Services**

Sharona reported Job Link reopened with a Counselor of the Day to assist in getting people appointments with a case worker.

- From July 20 to today we have assisted with have taking 314 calls. Before July 20 most calls were about UI, now calls now are regarding job search and eligibility for the COVID grant.
- 97 people have had appointments with a worker.
- 33 clients have used the computer lab for emergency Job Search and to sign up for Cal jobs. The lab is open 8:30 am to noon with 15-minute intervals to keep everyone safe.

Sharona thanked Tiffany Hill, Josh Baum, Katie Stohlmann, and Blanca Becerra for their work on the new website for the virtual Job Link: [Caljobs.joblinksonoma.org](http://Caljobs.joblinksonoma.org). This site combines Cal Jobs and links with the Sonoma WIB website. It has an orientation, talks about available jobs, and lists our services. You can also sign up for the virtual workshops on this user-friendly site.

### **COVID Supportive Services Grant**

Patti is working on the COVID Supportive Services Grant which assists people negatively impacted by the COVID shutdown and allows them to receive a one-time stipend of \$400 or \$800 depending on the amount of salary they were missing due to being

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furloughed or laid off due to COVID. To date we have paid out \$94K of the \$120 we were allotted and helped 166 participants. We plan to pay out the remaining amount by helping about 40 more clients by the end of December. Jessica shared how impressive it was to get this grant out to clients to help them with COVID expenses so quickly. If you want feel good stories talk to Patti about what she has seen come through with the grant.

### **Job Link Services**

Normal services have been in place since July 1. We have worked with seventeen new clients for job search and career guidance, and six of those were funded for training.

The English Language Learner cohort is working with the Adult Education Consortium and paid for by WIOA funds. The team is working to sign up clients for this class.

Jessica expressed enormous gratitude to the folks on the front line. Good work Job Link team!

### **Dashboard**

Jessica led a review of the dashboard. Highlights included the following.

- Even though we were closed for a few months of the last fiscal year we had a lot of people accessing our services until that point.
- The challenges our clients faced were not easy or quick to resolve. Challenges includes homelessness, transportation, and being justice involved.
- Lay office response requests increased. Some temporary layoffs turned into permanent layoffs.

### **Business Services**

- Business Services is working with partnership with the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce on a COVID related reopening cleaning training for businesses. This began as a webinar but we have discovered that is easier to teach this subject in an outdoor, socially distanced, fewer people, training space. The class also includes home safety and disaster preparedness. Classes begin this Friday and continue each

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Friday until mid-October at multiple locations in county. We plan to educate up to 70 people for 35 business.

#### **VIII. Youth Ecology Corps & Other Youth Updates**

This is the 12<sup>th</sup> summer of the Sonoma County Youth Ecology Corps program. COVID had an impact but did not stop us. Three crews of eight ages 18-24 were led by Conservation Corps North Bay. They worked with the Sonoma County Water Agency, County of Sonoma Transportation, City of Santa Rosa, and Ag and Open Spaces. The work they do helps the community by preventing flood damage, improving trails and reducing fire fuel loads. The first crew started mid-June and ended mid-August. The second ends in October and the third December. These jobs teach youth critical work readiness which includes career exploration and job readiness activities. Thank you to the WIB volunteers that assisted with the mock interviews. We were also able to host a zoom Bite of Reality event thanks to Redwood Credit Union.

Amanda shared a success story of a youth from the program who was hired as a creek maintenance worker at the end of the summer making \$20 an hour. This job also takes him a step closer to his goal of being a park ranger in the future.

The year-round My Pathway Program helps with youth 16-24 with education and training for permanent employment. Target population are youth who not working and not in school, current and former foster youth, and/or youth who have other barriers. We have contracted with Social Advocates for Youth to recruit and enroll participants and they provide most of the core program service including readiness training, career exploration, career pathway planning, education, and one on one support to remove barriers. The one on one support extends a year after they exit the program.

Here is an example of a My Pathways client: Ad young woman participated in SCYEC for a summer, then returned to enroll in the year-round program. She dropped out of high school as a freshman due to mental health issues. When she was ready she returned as a My Pathways client at age 22. Her case manager helped her look into secondary

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education programs, choose, and enroll in Youth Connections in Santa Rosa where she received her diploma. This client is now looking to pursue art class at SRJC.

Paid work experience is a high priority for the program. Amanda is working with Business Service Staff to provide internship opportunities or temporary work experience opportunities that align with our youth's work interests. Business Services is also connecting youth 18 and over with On-The-Job training opportunities, training cohorts, and other transitional jobs. Three of our program participants were recently offered positions as park aides.

**IX. Panel Discussion COVID & Impacts on the Labor Workforce**

***Letitia Hanke (LIME Foundation)***

***Michael Pickens (Operating Engineers)***

***Robin Bartholow (North Coast Builders' Exchange)***

***Q. Can you tell us about the impact of COVID on the industry and your experience?***

***Letitia Hanke (LIME Foundation)***

Moral is really important for our workers. We thought COVID would be short term now we are over six months into dealing with it and it is causing moral issues. We mainly do remodel work not new construction. We need to socially distance the crew when working so the jobs are taking longer, pushing out the start on each new job later dates.

***Robin Bartholow (North Coast Builders' Exchange)***

After the initial shut down of Shelter In Place construction got fairly busy. Negative pressures include an increased cost of materials and available dollars lent for projects. There is still a lack of construction workers.

In August the Builders Exchange did a workforce needs survey asking if projects were cancelled or delayed due to COVID. The results were:

- 21% said none, 58% had 1-5 cancelled, 13% had 6-10 cancelled, 3% had 11-15 cancelled, and 2% had 16-20% cancelled.
- Three companies had more than 20 jobs cancelled or placed on hold.

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Michael Pickens (Operating Engineers)

Initially there were significant impacts on activities. April hours were down 20%, May and June hours were down 12%. As the industry could meet the new regulations and were deemed essential with bridges and infrastructure work we saw good uptick in July and August hours bringing us on par or better than last year. We are bringing in new people last few months and hopefully will continue to grow for rest of the year. Our people do a lot of hazardous work and already familiar with PPE equipment and distancing while working so were able to hit the ground running. One different process is we have to work with the contractor to stagger people as they come on and off the job to maintain social distances. Once we were past the learning curve people were able to get out there and facilitate projects.

***Q. What are the general workforce needs and changes due to COVID impact?***

Robin Bartholow (North Coast Builders' Exchange)

Our survey showed the following staffing changes due to COVID.

- 13% had a reduction in employment, 3% had an increase in staffing, 84% no change.
- 73% plan to hire more staff in the next 12 months. Of those people 66% of them will be skilled trades people.

Letitia Hanke (LIME Foundation)

We have moved away from hiring skilled workers to hiring more entry level people. This way we can train them ourselves meet our needs and expectations. We are finding a lot of people who lost their jobs are looking for new opportunities are moving to construction as it is essential business so we are not having an issue finding new workers. We see that as a trend in non-profit trades as time goes on.

Michael Pickens (Operating Engineers)

At the start of COVID we were in a holding pattern, and then moved into recruitment mode as things picked back up. What will hurt our industry in the future is we had to

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shut our apprenticeship training down and lay off our trainers. In next few years will see a shortage of apprentices from this.

Currently employers are looking for skilled training positions for foreman, equipment operators, painters and more for local employers. We have a shortage of skilled workers now and expect that to continue.

***Q. What do you see as long-term impact from COVID on the trades?***

Michael Pickens (Operating Engineers)

The 22/23 fiscal year is when you will see the most impact from the lack of travel, tourism, tax revenue, and the draw created on public funds. This will cause less infrastructure work. We meet annually with our associations and contractors to look at trends like this. Right now we are busy and have a back log of two years' worth of work projects to complete before we feel the impact on local labor.

Letitia Hanke (LIME Foundation)

Expect a lot of remodel and new construction due to changes in how buildings are being used due to COVID and all the rebuilding due to fires. We expect a lot of hiring due to strong demand. We are offering training for workers on Zoom. Our contractors are hiring as quickly as they can train new workers. As people keep losing jobs in other industries we think they will see construction a good place for them to start a new career.

Robin Bartholow (North Coast Builders' Exchange)

As an industry we are used to bobbing and weaving and trends changing.

- More people are working at home and will continue to at least part time as employers are finding they are productive. Homes will have a more utilitarian need and people are remodeling for spaces to work from home more productively.
- Commercial property is impacted negatively by same trend of working at home and this can lead to some interesting and creative ways to use those buildings. Office buildings and malls may become affordable housing or other things. All of this will

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affect construction. Construction training is also changing and more internet based. It won't be the same as hands on for weight and sounds, but in part is a safer training space. This is an exciting time by force as we change to meet needs.

***Q. What support do you need, and what should the WIB know about your changing industry?***

Letitia Hanke (LIME Foundation)

A lot of our employees were affected in different ways by COVID. We used to have our workers meet at the office and travel to jobs together. Now employees all drive to the job individually which costs them more in fuel.

Would like to find a way to help new workers with the cost of basic tools and find a program to help cover that expense.

Robin Bartholow (North Coast Builders' Exchange)

We would like to find a program to pay for the cost of basic tools for those entering the trades the same as Letitia mentioned. Also we would like to let people know about all the trade training possibilities around them. When the contraction center in Petaluma comes online there will be more opportunities to provide training to provide the more skilled workers that are in such need right now. It can be a hub for industry training. Right now there is TIP, Next Gen, SCOE and Adults Education construction. The more we can work together the more we can find the fit for anyone looking to get into construction.

Michael Pickens (Operating Engineers)

Be mindful and have the conversations like this with us talking about the pulse of the industry and our recruitment needs in the future. We will share for what we are looking for when we are actively recruiting.

Just to note - union training centers are free for the apprentices. It costs the union \$75 to 100K to put someone through four years of program. That is why we recruit through the TIP program. We want to be sure they understand what this work is and that it is a

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pathway to get a good job with a retirement plan. If you see potential candidates let them know when a TIP program class will be coming up. If they work with their hands or have any interest in the trades have them attend a TIP and see where they will fit in as a part of the trades. He found the trades through an underprivileged youth program through Job Corps. Now it is 20 years later, he is making a good living, and has a retirement plan. This is also a good path for those coming out of the justice system. Even if the industry is slow when you meet someone you think would do well in the trades send them to us to get on the list and we will reach back out to them when busier.

Ananda thanked the panel members for their time and invited them to come to future WIB meetings and/or to reach out if they have information to share or questions.

**IX. Adjourn 5:01 pm**

Next meeting: **November 18, 2020 via Zoom**

The third Wednesday of the month due to the holiday on November 11.

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