

**NORTHWEST INDIANA WORKFORCE BOARD MINUTES**  
**Center of Workforce Innovations**  
**January 26, 2022**

***Present:***

Debi Baughman, Frank Cardello, Adam Collins, Kevin Comerford, George Douglas, Tony Ferracane, Louie Gonzalez, Sherri Green, Karen Kopka, Justin Mount, Barb Sacha, Shanita Starks, Africa Tarver, Martina Tovar, Lori Tubbs

***Absent:***

Debi Baughman, Jim Clarida, Arlene Mitchell-Pace, Anna Ortega

***Staff:***

Andrea Proulx-Buinicki, Amy Burke, Lisa Daugherty, Miche Grant, Ami Reese, John Schlatter, Erin Sizemore, Tammy Stump, Beki Vogelpohl

***Guests:***

Kathy Jaworski, Liz Negron-Haniford

**CALL TO ORDER**

Karen Kopka called the meeting to order.

**1. Consent Agenda**

Mrs. Kopka asked the Board Members to review the items on the consent agenda.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Frank Cardello and seconded by George Douglas to accept the consent agenda as presented. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

**2. Board Business**

Audit Report

Ms. Sizemore shared that per policy, a procurement was done this year to select auditors to conduct the annual audit. Comer Nowling & Associates was selected to conduct the annual audit. Ms. Sizemore shared that there was a clean audit with no findings. CWI is considered low-risk.

WIOA & Migrant Seasonal Farmworker Monitoring Report

Ms. Grant provided an overview of the WIOA Monitoring Report from the Department of Workforce Development. CWI did receive a compliance finding, some resources were missing the EO tagline and one of our websites did not have the TTDY present. These issues have been rectified, along with corrective action to prevent oversight in the future that was accepted by the DWD. There were multiple noteworthy efforts noted in the monitoring report.

The Migrant Seasonal Farmworker monitoring took place along with the WIOA Monitoring. The report was clean, with an area of concern noted. CWI is not heavily involved in the MSFW program, as Proteus provides direct services. As an American Job Center, we are to recognize and track migrant seasonal farmworkers and job opportunities. CWI did not have any during this program year. Additional efforts have been made to increase staff awareness of potential migrant and seasonal farmworker clients, as well as our business services team providing more outreach, and job fairs that are closer to agriculture-related jobs. CWI sent corrective action to the DWD which they stated was acceptable. The Board members shared their appreciation for staff and their work.

**Motion:** A motion was made by George Douglas and seconded by Barb Sacha to accept the results of the WIOA and MSFW Monitoring Reports as presented. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Introduction – Amy Burke

Ms. Daugherty provided an introduction to Amy Burke, who was recently hired as the Director of READY NWI and One Stop Operator. Mrs. Burke has relaunched the READY NWI meetings and has been working with John Schlatter, Director of Talent Solutions, to identify employers and bridge the industry sectors. The relaunch of the One Stop Partners meetings is in the works. Mrs. Burke shared that her vision is to continue

to make connections and create opportunities for youth in the workforce through exposure and empowerment.

#### Hydrogen Hub

Mr. Schlatter provided background on the Hydrogen Hub project, which started approximately 5 months ago. The Indiana Economic Development Council reached out to CWI and Purdue Northwest with an opportunity to apply for funding from the Department of Energy to create a clean Hydrogen Hub in NWI. Mr. Schlatter and Mr. Sahlhoff worked together on the concept paper with other partners from the region. The concept paper was one of 33 out of 77 that have been encouraged to move forward with the application process. CWI has been working on the community benefits plan portion of the application, specifically community and labor engagement and the investing in the American Workforce section, as well as two additional pillars.

#### Portage Location – Partner Hub

Ms. Daugherty provided an update on the Portage WorkOne location. As our lease is coming to an end, we began to analyze the data, which shows that our current location is not within our census tract. We began looking at potential spaces and gave staff opportunities with human-centered design to share their input on how we could make our space more client-friendly. Discussions began with other partners, including United Way, Goodwill, and JobWorks on how we can collaborate on providing services in a larger space. Economic Developers in Portage recommended a landmark building that would require renovations and has brought the Mayor of Portage and the Superintendent of Portage Schools into the conversation to create a partner hub. This could potentially bring even more service providers to our communities all in one centralized location, including possible daycare as clients are receiving services and training. Ms. Daugherty has begun discussions on how this model could be used in other areas, including Michigan City, Hammond, and Jasper County. This is all in the early stage of development. Board members shared their support around the potential partner hubs.

#### Resignation of Frank Cardello

Mr. Cardello has submitted his resignation from the NWI Workforce Board. Mr. Cardello stated that he has been on the Board for the past 12 years and that he plans to remain involved with sharing the importance of work ethic in the community. The Board members and CWI staff expressed their gratitude to Mr. Cardello for his years while serving on the Board.

**Motion:** A motion was made by George Douglas and seconded by Martina Tovar, on the condition that Mr. Cardello provides a recommendation for potential members. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

### **3. Old Business**

### **4. Reports**

#### Youth Employment Council

Ms. Stump provided an update from the last Youth Employment Council meeting. Since the last meeting, CWI has hired 5 Youth Engagement Specialists and TradeWinds has hired one. Under the strategic initiative of preparing youth for employment, a Tech Conference session took place in December to discuss bringing tech opportunities to prepare students for future jobs. There was also a discussion about mentoring programs. Ms. Mancusi Shreve is putting together a virtual work ethic series for out of school youth, which will be piloted through Adult Education. Planning has begun for the Spring NextGen Expo which will likely take place in April. The JAG Career Development Conference will be taking place on January 27<sup>th</sup> at Valparaiso Ivy Tech. Ms. Stump thanked all the Board members that volunteered to serve as judges for the event. The Skilled Construction and Trades Day took place in November, with 16 different Trades representatives and over 500 high school students that attended the event.

#### Strategic Plan Update

CWI Staff Members, including Andrea Proulx Buinicki, Lisa Daugherty, Miche Grant, John Schlatter, and Tammy Stump presented the finalized CWI Strategic Plan. CWI worked with SmallBox to host a variety of convenings with CWI staff and community stakeholders, focus groups with community and business leaders, current CWI customers, and youth, 1-1 interviews with subject matter experts, and a survey with over 100 responses. After taking all of the data gathered, SmallBox narrowed the information down to five pillars, including Accessible Employment Opportunities, Informed and Engaged Youth, A Supported Workplace, Aligned and Activated Partnerships, and An Inspiring and Trusted Leader. CWI shared information on each of these pillars and how the work will be done to meet these goals over the next five

years. The Board members shared their thoughts and comments on the strategic plan and thanked everyone for all of the hard work that went into creating it.

#### Good News

Mrs. Sacha extended a thank you to Joe Jokantas, Business Services Representative, for the tremendous help he has provided to her and her team on the incumbent worker training fund grant. Ms. Starks shared that she will be participating in an upcoming Communi'Tea conversation with Purdue Northwest, with additional panel speakers in February.

#### **ADJOURN**

Mrs. Kopka adjourned the meeting.

Africa Tarver, Secretary

Beki Vogelpohl, Recording Secretary