

**NORTHWEST INDIANA WORKFORCE BOARD MINUTES**  
**Center of Workforce Innovations**  
**March 23, 2023**

**Present:**

Debi Baughman, Jim Clarida, Adam Collins, Kevin Comerford, Sherri Green, Karen Kopka, Anna Ortega, Katie Rounds, Barb Sacha, Shanita Starks, Africa Tarver, Martina Tovar, Lori Tubbs

**Absent/Proxy:**

George Douglas, Louie Gonzalez, Justin Mount

**Staff:**

Andrea Proulx-Buinicki, Lisa Daugherty, Cole DeVitt, Miche Grant, Ami Reese, Erin Sizemore, Tammy Stump

**Guests:**

Kathy Jaworski, Roy Melton

**CALL TO ORDER**

Karen Kopka called the meeting to order.

**1. Board Education – Featured Workforce Innovation Leader – American Licorice Company**

Karen welcomed the Board members and CWI staff to American Licorice Company.

**2. Presentation – Youth Engagement Specialists with Dominique Smiley, Daniel Dabney, Owen Manns, and Brandon Winston**

Dominique Smiley, Director of Youth Engagement shared that she has been supervising and working with our Youth Engagement Specialists. They have participated in over 36 events, meetings, and trainings. The Youth Engagement Specialists are learning soft skills, how to be leaders, and how to collaborate and build partnerships. The Youth Engagement Specialists have also been working with Ami Reese, Director of Communications and Marketing on creating content for our social media platforms to learn about marketing, advertisement, and communication. Mrs. Smiley shared that the team has been working well with our WorkOne team, management team, and leadership team.

Daniel Dabney shared that in the 4 months that he has been in this role has furthered his interest in helping others while targeting youth in outreach and being a voice for those who may know how to be a voice for themselves. Daniel would like to pursue a career in social media management. He shared that skills he has learned include time management and has increased his communication skills.

Owen Manns shared that he began working for CWI 2 months earlier as a marketing intern. He shared that he has learned about managing social media, marketing job fairs and the challenges that come along with it. Owen shared that the experience has taught him to be open minded to failing and learning from the errors to make it work the next time. He shared that the skills he has learned include time management, leadership, schedule management skills (as a full-time college student with 2 part time jobs), and his creativity and innovation with idea creation.

Brandon Winston shared that post high school graduation, he did not have a plan for his future or a job. His Aunt suggested that he attend a job fair at the Railcats Stadium, where he met Mrs. Smiley who presented him with the internship opportunity. As Brandon's first job, he is learning how to speak for himself. While growing up he preferred to have people speak for him. He shared that he has also learned how to communicate with his peers, what a job setting and office setting are like, how to sell ideas to people from marketing and social media, and scheduling and balance. Brandon wants to pursue a career with content creation.

The NextGen social media links can be found on: <https://linktr.ee/nextgennwi>, which includes TikTok, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook.

**3. Consent Agenda**

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

**Motion:** A motion was made by Jim Clarida and seconded by Adam Collins to accept the consent agenda as presented. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

#### 4. Board Business

##### Board Resignations

Mrs. Kopka shared that Tony Ferracane and Africa Tarver have resigned from the Workforce Board. Mrs. Kopka shared her appreciation of the work and efforts that Mr. Ferracane and Mrs. Tarver shared while serving on the Board.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Jim Clarida and seconded by Martina Tovar to accept the resignations of Tony Ferracane and Africa Taver from the Workforce Board. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

##### New Board Member Recruitment

Mrs. Kopka stated that there are currently vacancies on the Workforce Board that need to be filled and shared that are specific guidelines that must be followed within categories that are outlined in state and federal regulations. Mrs. Kopka shared the areas that we are seeking representation in, including industry and geography. There was discussion around possible candidates to join the Workforce Board. The Board members were invited to share any potential candidate recommendations to herself, Lisa Daugherty, or Beki Vogelpohl by March 31, 2023.

##### Appointing Officer Nomination Committee

Mrs. Kopka requested volunteers for the Nominating Committee to meet and discuss officer nominations for the new program year. Adam Collins, Barb Sacha, Debi Baughman, and Shanita Starks volunteered to serve on the committee. The current slate of officers will be reviewed to determine if they are able to serve for another term. The Secretary position will need to be filled as Africa Tarver was serving in that role.

##### Youth Policy Change

Ms. Stump shared that the Department of Workforce Development recently updated their definitions and requirements for youth eligibility. In addition to being income eligible, youth must also have a number of barriers to receive services. Key changes include additional assessment tools that staff are allowed to use, language on the ratio of in-school and out-of-school youth, and acceptable source documentation for youth program eligibility.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Jim Clarida and seconded by Barb Sacha to approve the changes to the WIOA Youth Policy as presented. All were in favor. **Motion passed.**

Mrs. Kopka shared that Kevin Comerford's term is coming to an end and requested that he reach out to herself or Mrs. Vogelpohl to let them know if he would like to continue to serve on the Board.

#### 5. Old Business

#### 6. Reports

##### Youth Employment Council

Ms. Stump and Ms. Starks provided an update from the Youth Employment Council meeting, which focused on the planning of the NextGen Youth Expo, hiring of 5 Engagement Specialists, employment opportunities, and the Jobs for America's Graduates State Career Development Conference which took place in February. Five individuals from our region placed at the state conference. The next Youth Employment Council meeting will take place in April at the Boys and Girls Club in Gary, with a tour of the Best Buy Teen Tech Center. Ms. Starks invited the Board members to attend the meeting if available.

##### President's Report

Ms. Daugherty provided updates on the READI grant funding and what CWI will be focusing on with the funding, including expanding our JAG program and number of classrooms, hiring a Director for the READY NWI education consortium to focus on pathways and helping educators understand what employers need by bringing the employers into the conversation, employer upskilling and workbased learning investments. The intention was to expand on our current infrastructure with the more flexible READI funding to work with employers. We have identified 10 different communities across our region to convene and discuss workforce related issues. These convening sessions have been launched in Pulaski County and will expand

through the entire region. Ms. Daugherty shared a presentation with eye-opening data that was collected and shared with the group in Pulaski County.

Save the Dates

- **NextGen Youth Expo** – April 24, 2023 – 10:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.  
Purdue University Northwest – Hammond – Student Union Building
- **NWIWB Workforce Board Meeting** – May 25, 2023 at 2:00 p.m. CST – Location TBD

**ADJOURN**

Mrs. Kopka adjourned the meeting and stated that the planned Executive Meeting would take place over email.

Beki Vogelpohl, Recording Secretary



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