

**NORTHWEST INDIANA WORKFORCE BOARD MINUTES**  
**Center of Workforce Innovations**  
**May 25, 2023**

**Present:**

Jim Clarida, Adam Collins, Louie Gonzalez, Sherri Green, Karen Kopka, Justin Mount, Anna Ortega, Katie Rounds, Barb Sacha, Martina Tovar, Lori Tubbs

**Absent/Proxy:**

Debi Baughman, Kevin Comerford, George Douglas,

**Staff:**

Andrea Proulx-Buinicki, Lisa Daugherty, Miche Grant, Kathy Neary, Erin Sizemore, Tammy Stump, Beki Vogelpohl

**Guests:**

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

**2. Board Business**

Nomination of Officers

On behalf of the Nominating Committee, Mrs. Sacha shared the nomination of officers including Karen Kopka as Chair, Lori Tubbs as Vice Chair, Jim Clarida as Treasurer, and Kevin Comerford as Secretary. Mr. Comerford will be replacing Africa Tarver, who has resigned from the Board. Those currently serving as officers agreed to serve another term, and Kevin Comerford accepted the nomination as Secretary.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Jim Clarida and seconded by Barb Sacha to approve the nomination of the slate of officers as presented. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Nomination of Youth Employment Council Chair

Mrs. Sacha presented the nomination of Martina Tovar and Justin Mount as Co-Chairs for the Youth Employment Council. Both Martina Tovar and Justin Mount accepted the nomination.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Jim Clarida and Adam Collins to accept the nomination of Martina Tovar and Justin Mount as Co-Chairs for the Youth Employment Council. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Recruiting New Board Members

As we have had multiple recent resignations from the Board, Ms. Daugherty presented three potential candidates for consideration, which include Chris Beebe, Chief Human Resource Officer at HealthLinc, Audra Peterson, Director of the Porter County Career Center, and Liz Negron-Haniford, Regional Support Manager with the Department of Workforce Development. Lori Tubbs has been communicating with another potential candidate that would serve on the Board from Economic Development.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Barb Sacha and seconded by Jim Clarida to accept the nominations of Chris Beebe, Audra Peterson, and Liz Negron-Haniford to serve on the Workforce Board. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Resolution to Accept Funding

Ms. Daugherty shared that the Resolution to Accept Funding is an annual request that gives CWI the approval to seek and receive funding on behalf of the NWI Workforce Board. The form will be updated to include Kevin Comerford, as he has been nominated as Secretary.

**Motion:** A motion was made by Jim Clarida and seconded by Justin Mount to approve the Resolution to Accept Funding for Program Year 2023-2024. All were in favor. **The motion passed.**

Open

Mrs. Kopka announced to the Board Members that Thomas P. Miller & Associates has been engaged for the Request for Proposal for the One Stop Operator, Adult & Dislocated Worker, and Service Provider procurement that is underway. TPMA's proposal recommendation is expected at the end of May, and Mrs. Kopka will be reaching out to the Board Members for approval in June.

Elected Officials Update

Ms. Daugherty shared that the Chief Elected Officials Board has met and elected a new Chair, Porter County Commissioner Barb Regnitz and thanked Commissioner Kyle Conrad for his service. The Chief Elected Officials were provided an updated of the strategic plan and the priorities and work that we will continue to focus our work on.

**3. Old Business**

There was no old business to report.

**4. Reports**

Youth Employment Council

Ms. Stump thanked Justin Mount and Martina Tovar for agreeing to serve as the Co-Chairs for the Youth Employment Council. Mrs. Sacha shared an update about the NextGen Expo took place at Purdue Northwest, with 48 exhibitors and over 300 youth in attendance. There were presentations on Technology with Wendell Mosby, Healthcare with Regina Beard, and Skilled Trades with Kevin Comerford. Ms. Stump provided updates from the YEC meeting including a youth participant sharing their experience from the Teen Center Academy with the Gary Boys & Girls Club, which includes safety training and work experiences. TradeWinds held a successful Lunch & Learn discussing their Pathway to Trades, which has led to working with the Hammond Area Career Center to present to their seniors in need of assistance and a workshop at East Chicago Central High School for seniors who do not plan to attend secondary education.

Mrs. Tovar shared information about a 13-week training in hospitality and food service in Muncie for those individuals with disabilities. Out of the Lake County office, 85% of participants are still employed at the jobs that they went through the training. Although the program is open to anyone, the cost of the training is covered in full for Vocational Rehab clients. There was discussion around the potential to bring this program to our local area.

The State Job for America's Graduates took place in March. JAG participants from Region 1 came in first for Career Presentation, second for Public Speaking, and third for Entrepreneurship Plan. Our Outstanding Senior received honorable mention and Hammond Central High School's commercial came in second place. The individuals who won first and second place, as well as the Outstanding Senior will be going to the National Career Development Conference in April.

Ms. Grant provided information about the Quest Program, which is a pilot program that the DWD asked Region 1 and Region 9 to participate in. Quest is an Adult Education Workforce Program assisting Adult Education students who qualify for training and employment needs and allows more programs to leverage their resources collaboratively which would help to move these individuals through our services faster and get them into employment.

Pulaski County Talent Working Groups

Mr. Collins shared that CWI, the NWI Workforce Board, employers, and community organizations in Pulaski County have been meeting in partnership with the Community Foundation. The intention is to use funding from the READI grant to address workforce needs and barriers for job seekers. In the first meeting, CWI shared data and information on wages, childcare availability, unemployment, education-to-wage relationship, and projected growth decline for Pulaski County. During the second meeting, they broke into 3 groups to discuss childcare, training and education, and community resources, which were the main topics that arose during the first meeting. **Childcare – landscape and need, identified the gaps supply and demand of services, underpayment of staff in childcare services, facilities and transportation needs. Training and**

education – higher education and training needs, identified gaps in training like management leadership training, digital literacy, soft skills, and general employability skills. Community resources – created a list of community organizations that offer assistance, and some of the gaps including lack of transportation, affordable housing, and other resources. During the third meeting, the group further discussed training and childcare. (31.35)

Pathways to Trades and Civil Construction

Gary Youth Initiative

Portage EDC Youth Career Event

President's Report

Ms. Daugherty provided updates on

Save the Dates

- **NWIWB Workforce Board Meeting** – July 27, 2023, at 2:00 p.m. CST – Location TBD

**ADJOURN**

Mrs. Kopka adjourned the meeting.

Beki Vogelpohl, Recording Secretary