

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern Galloping Hill Park and Golf Course
3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, September 27, 2023
MEETING MINUTES

Board Members Present

Dr. Kamran Tasharofi, Union County Healthcare Associates (Chair)
Stan Robinson Jr., SHR Marketing, LLC (Vice Chair)
Hilary McCarron, Port Authority (Secretary)
Debbie Ann Anderson, Union County Department of Human Services
James R. Brady, The Savor Group
Juanito Chiluisa, NJ Department of Labor
Jessica Cohen, Bristol-Myers Squibb
Jenny Davis-Toth, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
Melynda Disla, Gateway Family YMCA
Gloria Dunham, Qunnection Management
Kelly Drakeford Ledet, Kean University (Craig Coughlin)
Bernadette Griswold, Community Access Unlimited (Sandra Lynch)
Dr. Margaret McMenamin, Union College of Union County, NJ (Dr. Lisa Hiscano)
Daryl Palmieri, Union County Schools K-12
Erich Peter, Union County Economic Development Corp
Gwen Ryan, Union County Vocational Technical School
Teresa Soto-Vega, PROCEED (Srabanti Sarkar)
Morgan Thompson, Prevention Links (Dominique Garnett)
Courtney Villani, Villani Bus
Roshan White, UA Local 24 Plumbers (Chadrick Garris)

Board Members Absent:

Curry Bucu, Trinitas Regional Medical Center
Richard Capac, Crowne Property Management
Edward Faver, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Paul Belardo, KML Carpenters
Tina Earley, American Water
Salvador Garcia, MAS Development Group
Edwin Gomez, Barcode Elizabeth
Richard Malcolm, Ironworkers Local #11
Alan Rutan, Rutan Mechanical LLC

Conflict Counsel:

Kraig M. Dowd Esq., Weber Dowd Law, LLC

County of Union:

Amy Wagner, Department of Economic Development
Antonio Rivera, Workforce Development Board
Meredith Barracato, Workforce Development Board
Gina Tuesta, Workforce Development Board
Lisa Bonanno, Workforce Development Board
Robert Croom, Union County American Job Center

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Lillian Roman, Union County Job American Job Center
Hawa Bonds, Department of Human Services- Division of Children and Youth Services

Guests:

Isaias Rivera, Union College of Union County, NJ
Jessica Pena, Atlantic Health System
Ana Marie McNamara, Union County Vocational Technical School

I. Call to Order & Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Kamran Tasharofi, Chairman Workforce Development Board, at 9:03 AM.

II. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America was recited.

III. Open Public Meetings Act

Meredith Barracato read the Open Public Meetings Act Statement below into the record:

PURSUANT TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF N.J.S.A. 10:4-10 OF THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT, ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THIS MEETING OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD HAS BEEN GIVEN BY MAILING THE YEAR 2023 ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE TO THE NEWSPAPERS CIRCULATING WITHIN THE COUNTY OF UNION AND DESIGNATED TO RECEIVE SUCH NOTICE, AND BY POSTING THE YEAR 2023 ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE IN THE COUNTY COURT HOUSE, THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD WEBSITE, AND BY FILING THE YEAR 2023 ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE WITH THE OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK.

FURTHERMORE, ADEQUATE NOTICE OF THE LOCATION OF THIS MEETING HAS BEEN GIVEN BY PROVIDING AT LEAST FORTY-EIGHT HOUR NOTICE TO THE NEWSPAPERS CIRCULATING WITHIN THE COUNTY OF UNION AND DESIGNATED TO RECEIVE SUCH NOTICE AND BY POSTING THE SAID NOTICE AT LEAST FORTY-EIGHT HOURS PRIOR TO THIS MEETING IN THE COURT HOUSE, THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD WEBSITE, AND BY FILING THE NOTICE AT LEAST FORTY-EIGHT HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THIS MEETING WITH OFFICE OF THE COUNTY CLERK.

THE OPEN PUBLIC MEETINGS ACT STATEMENT SHALL BE ENTERED IN FULL IN THE MINUTES OF THIS MEETING.

IV. Roll Call

Meredith Barracato conducted the roll-call of the Union County Workforce Development Board members in attendance. Union County employees present

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and guests were acknowledged on the record, as reflected on page one of these minutes.

V. **Approval of the Minutes**

The minutes of the July 26, 2023 meeting were presented for a vote.

**BOARD
ACTION**

Stan Robinson Jr. made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for July 26, 2023. **James Brady** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

VI. **UCWDB Report / Resolutions of the UCWDB**

Director Rivera provided an update on project management, highlighting key milestones and the need for an Executive Committee meeting in December to address important board matters. Specifically, the current Memorandum of Understanding-Infrastructure Agreement expires on December 31, with a new one set to begin in January. Director Rivera noted that the renewal of the Memorandum of Understanding and Infrastructure Agreement has been managed collaboratively with American Job Center counterparts.

Regarding unemployment rates, Union County is at 5.1%, and New Jersey is at 4.7%, showing a slight increase in line with statewide trends. Despite this, there are numerous job opportunities in the market.

Director Rivera also mentioned the purchase of \$90,000 worth of computer equipment for the American Job Center, with installation procedures under consideration.

Director Rivera presented the statewide performance data for the past five years. Each column in the data set addressed various performance measures within the One-Stop career system. Director Rivera revolved the discussion around using performance data and the specific measurements required at the local level. Director Rivera noted the key performance measures which include employment second quarter after exit, fourth quarter after exit, credential attainment, and measurable skills gains.

Director Rivera noted that the adult participants in this table were essentially anyone employed six months after exiting the program. The measurement for adults was taken six and 12 months after their exit, with a particular emphasis on unsubsidized employment. Director Rivera noted that the mathematical concepts of a numerator and denominator determine performance outcomes. The denominator represented the total number of participants exiting the

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program, while the numerator represented the participants who were verified to achieve employment.

Chairman Tasharofi noted that the numbers appeared quite low and would like to discuss it further with the other board members. The Chairman added that although the percentages stood at 70%, the figures were 41 and 58, which seemed comparatively low.

James Brady asked Director Rivera why did the board had to wait a year for the data set. Antonio Rivera stated that the data is on a lag. However, data for Union County has been published and made available as part of the strategic plan. Director Rivera noted that the statewide comparison needed a deeper dive and is what took longer to gather.

Stan Robinson asked if the New Jersey Department of Labor came up with the targets. Director Rivera mentioned that the New Jersey Department of Labor uses a formula and gives local areas 30 days to issue a counteroffer. Director Rivera noted that the New Jersey Department of Labor and the US Department of Labor have been focusing more on the raw data, the amount of funding invested, and the cost per participant.

Meredith Barracato reviewed two recent policies issued by the New Jersey Department of Labor. The first, "Functional alignment in the American Job Centers," aims to streamline services at these centers through formal supervision, functional teams, and partner alignment for seamless integration. The second policy, "Workforce Service Integration and Co-enrollment," focuses on Co-enrollment and systems integration, highlighting the Workforce Development Board's role in governance, the Operator's standards and accountability, and the importance of funding, data sharing, and service coordination.

Director Rivera mentioned that the US Department of Labor has been monitoring the New Jersey Department of Labor and will be monitoring two local counties in February 2024, monitoring the programmatic and fiscal side of the county. As a result of the monitoring done by the US Department of Labor, the New Jersey Department of Labor has been issuing policy guidance to local areas to be complying. Director Rivera mentioned that the Workforce Development Board is well-positioned regarding policies and procedures.

Director Rivera transitioned the conversation to the following resolutions that need approval.

Resolution No. 2023-28:

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Resolution of the Union County Workforce Development Board Authorizing Program Year 2022 Workforce Development Area Budget Indirect Expenses.

BOARD ACTION

Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2023-28**. **James Brady** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2023-28**. **Stan Robinson Jr.** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Resolution No. 2023-29:

Resolution of the Union County Workforce Development Board Amending the Not-to-Exceed Amount for the Conflict Counsel Contract with Weber Dowd Law, LLC.

James Brady asked about the need to amend a do not exceed resolution. Director Rivera mentioned the need to increase the amount from \$10,000 to \$15,000.

BOARD ACTION

Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2023-29**. **Gwen Ryan** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2023-29**. **James Brady** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Resolution No. 2023-30:

Resolution of the Union County Workforce Development Board Authorizing the Use of Competitive Contracting Procedures for the Procurement of Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act Supportive Services.

BOARD ACTION

Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2023-30**. **James Brady** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2023-30**. **Courtney Villani** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Resolution No. 2023-31:

Resolution of the Union County Workforce Development Board Authorizing the Use of Competitive Contracting Procedures for the Procurement of an Affiliate American Job Center Provider for Out-of-School Youth Services Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

Director Rivera noted that the Workforce Development Board had previously authorized to issue this request for proposal, but due to the monitoring from the New Jersey Department of Labor, it was requested that the language be changed so it is not associated with the academy itself. As a result, this delayed the Workforce Development Board to issue the request for proposal. Although

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county counsel had been advising the Workforce Development Board through the process, it was flagged by the New Jersey Department of Labor as a concern.

Amy Wagner asked if this impacts the operation of Simon Youth Academy in any way. Director Rivera mentioned he could not say how this would impact the operations. Amy Wagner mentioned she was concerned about the operating programs and wanted to know if the Workforce Development Board will need to go back and bid for services already provided by Simon Youth Academy. Director Rivera explained that the resolution is to authorize the issuance of the request for proposal, which is done every year. The difference is that the request for proposal cannot say Simon Youth Academy and should state provider for out-of-school services.

Gwen Ryan asked what happens to the current operator and if the contract is still valid. Director Rivera mentioned that the resolution does not affect the current contract or operations. Chairman Tasharofi noted this is a language change for the upcoming request for proposal.

Gloria Dunham asked if other programs offering the same services to youth can apply. Director Rivera said yes other programs can apply and mentioned that it was a technical language issue.

James Brady suggested to invite the New Jersey Department of Labor to visit the Simon Youth Academy. Director Rivera said it could be offered.

**BOARD
ACTION**

Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2023-31**. **James Brady** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2023-31**. **Lisa Hiscano** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Resolution No. 2023-32:

Resolution of the Union County Workforce Development Board Authorizing the Use of Competitive Contracting Procedures for the Procurement of an Affiliate American Job Center Provider for Workforce Learning Link Services.

**BOARD
ACTION**

Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2023-32**. **Courtney Villani** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2023-32**. **Gloria Durham** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Resolution No. 2023-33:

Resolution of the Union County Workforce Development Board Authorizing the Regular Meeting Dates of the Union County Workforce Development Board for the 2024 Calendar Year.

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ACTION**

Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2023-33. Stan Robinson Jr.** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2023-33. James Brady** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

VII. American Job Center Report

Robert Croom began to review the American Job Center slides, which showed information on customer services delivered, the business summit, training enrollments, youth services, Workforce Innovation Business Center, Title II program, and business development team updates. As of the current moment, 63 customers registered for UC Works were assessed, and 42 were found eligible to proceed to career counseling. Robert Croom noted that 33 customers seek job placements with the business development teams.

Robert Croom requested Lillian Roman to review performance data, and she provided additional information about the report, covering data from as far back as January 2020, including pre-pandemic figures. She noted that in program year 2022, there was a positive trend as the pandemic's impact diminished, with an increase in services provided.

Lisa Hiscano sought clarification on the participant exit timeline, which Lillian Roman explained as participants exited between January 2021 and June 2022 for the program year 2022 performance data. She also detailed the data points, exit procedures, and the need for follow-up efforts. Robert Croom mentioned a future improvement in the credential performance outcomes should be noted and this is due to discovered issues with credential procedures.

Courtney Villani inquired about tracking training completion and support provided during employment, to which Robert Croom stated it varies based on the customer's needs. He noted their ongoing efforts to collaborate with training providers, address credential issues with their contract department, and ensure schools are held accountable. Additionally, Robert highlighted their initiatives to engage with participants and supply necessary employment information to the American Job Center Network Partners. Lisa Hiscano concurred with the challenges obtaining credential and performance outcomes.

Robert Croom and Hilary McCarron discussed the successful Business Summit, which led to several employers seeking more services from the American Job Center and participating in an upcoming job fair. Amy Wagner mentioned the positive outcomes and inquired about follow-up with employers to assess their post-job fair needs for better-prepared candidates. Robert Croom noted that they've ceased working with some vendors due to a lack of employer feedback or data. Debbie

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Ann Anderson highlighted the center's model involving business agreements akin to hiring firms. Lisa Hiscano emphasized the importance of obtaining client releases in procedural setups.

Courtney Villani inquired about the potential for collaboration with smaller local businesses, noting that working with larger contractors was more straightforward due to their greater resources. She pointed out the unequal competition, where smaller businesses couldn't match the offerings or manpower of larger ones, and community involvement levels varied. She suggested the idea of organizing a job fair to promote collaboration with smaller businesses. Amy Wagner proposed the concept of a small business job fair and a partnership with Union County Means Business, which connects over 2000 businesses.

Gwen Ryan expressed interest in partnering with the American Job Center for an upcoming job fair for her students and suggested the possibility of bussing students in. She also highlighted a need for certified teachers in the Career Technical Education program and proposed a job fair for this purpose. Robert Croom agreed to collaborate on both fronts and mentioned plans for customized job fairs. He also noted that the American Job Center has been approached by other regions seeking advice on organizing job fairs and on-the-job training programs.

Robert Croom asked Hawa Bonds to discuss the youth program. Hawa Bonds mentioned that starting in January 2024, they are launching programs focused on young adults transitioning into adulthood, specifically those emerging from the foster care system. These initiatives will provide intervention services to address educational and employment barriers that these youth face. Additionally, in 2024, they will establish a youth board to discuss their challenges and concerns.

Robert Croom asked Juanito Chiluisa to review the New Jersey Department of Labor Employment Service program data.

James Brady asked Robert Croom how they work with veterans and individuals interested in joining the military. Robert Croom mentioned he could not speak to it but could get some information.

Chairman Tasharofi had asked Robert Croom to explain the referral process to Union College of Union County, NJ, focusing on whether there was ongoing communication with the providers the American Job Center worked with for warm referrals. Robert Croom mentioned that the American Job Center and Union College have developed a sound system and use UC Works as a meeting point. Robert Croom explained that Isaias Rivera had access to upload customer

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information for the eligibility process, which could be accessed by American Job Center staff. Isaias Rivera had been responsible for updating UC Works with details on any engagement the Union College staff had with the customer. Subsequently, the American Job Center staff then transfer this information into the state software system. Debbie Ann Anderson had discussed the warm referral process with all partners, including those under the Department of Human Services.

Chairman Tasharofi expressed concerns about the high cost per participant in the American Job Center and Union College expenses, which yielded little results given the number of people they served. Robert Croom pointed out the importance of considering the population being served and the effort required to help them become employed and self-sufficient. He provided two examples of program participants facing significant barriers and the extensive support needed.

Debbie Ann Anderson explained that the Workforce Development Board's policy determined the cost per participant training and emphasized the need to factor in the expenses of credentialed staff working with the population. She also anticipated increased numbers at the American Job Center as state work waivers were to be lifted.

Chairman Tasharofi inquired about potential data changes in the next three months based on Debbie Ann Anderson's analysis. Debbie Ann Anderson indicated that a change would likely be seen in 2024. She mentioned that the primary goal was to get most participants employed, but various barriers, such as homelessness, hindered their success. Courtney Villani highlighted the generational challenges arising from a lack of support or confidence that prevented individuals from progressing.

VIII. **Old Business**
No Comments

IX. **New Business**
No Comments

X. **Public Comments**
No Comments

XI. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Dr. Kamran Tasharofi at 10:20 am.

Meeting Schedule:

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9:00 AM, Wednesday, February 7, 2024

Location:

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