

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, September 25, 2024
MEETING MINUTES

Board Members Present

Dr. Kamran Tasharofi, Union County Healthcare Associates (Chair)
Stan Robinson Jr., SHR Marketing, LLC (Vice Chair)
Debbie Ann Anderson, Union County Department of Human Services
James R. Brady, The Savor Group
Curry Bucu, Trinitas Regional Medical Center
Gloria Dunham, Qunnection Management
Erich Peter, Union County Economic Development Corp
Alan Rutan, Rutan Mechanical LLC
Juanito Chiluisa, NJ Department of Labor
Craig Coughlin, Kean University
Melynda Disla, Gateway Family YMCA
Bernadette Griswold, Community Access Unlimited (Sandra Lynch)
Gwen Ryan, Union County Vocational Technical School
Morgan Thompson, Prevention Links (Dominique Garrett)
Roshan White, UA Local 24 Plumbers (Chadrick Garris)
Timothy McConway, Steamfitters Local 475
Hilary McCarron, Port Authority (Secretary)
Dr. Margaret McMenamin, Union College of Union County, NJ (Dr. Lisa Hiscano)
Valerie Kerrigan, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Richard Capac, Crowne Property Management

Board Members Absent:

Courtney Villani, Villani Bus
Paul Belardo, KML Carpenters
Daryl Palmieri, Union County Schools K-12
Teresa Soto-Vega, PROCEED

General 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
Nasrene Mondol, Union County American Job Center
Carolina Marin, Union County American Job Center
Latoya Bennet, Union County Division of Youth and Children Services
Melissa Lespinasse, Union County Department of Human Services
Jeffrey Jackson, Union County Department of Human Services

Guests:

Ana Marie McNamara, Union County Vocational Technical School
Isabel Jimenez, New Jersey Department of Labor
Oswaldo Arango, New Jersey Department of Labor

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, September 25, 2024
MEETING MINUTES

Raul Ludizaca, New Jersey Department of Labor
Anthea Williams, New Jersey Department of Labor
Ingrid Mejias, New Jersey Department of Labor
Juanita Vargas, United Way of Greater Union County
Almetra (Marie) Alston, United Way of Greater Union County
Julio Sabater, Workforce Advantage

I. Call to Order & Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Dr. Kamran Tasharofi, Chairman Workforce Development Board, at 9:02AM.

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 2024 ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE TO THE NEWSPAPERS CIRCULATING WITHIN THE COUNTY OF UNION AND DESIGNATED TO RECEIVE SUCH NOTICE, AND BY POSTING THE YEAR 2024 ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE IN THE COUNTY COURT HOUSE, THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD WEBSITE, AND BY FILING THE YEAR 2024 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 and guests were acknowledged on the record, as reflected on page one of these minutes.

V. Approval of the Minutes

The minutes of the June 12, 2024 meeting were presented for a vote.

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, September 25, 2024
MEETING MINUTES

**BOARD
ACTION**

Stan Robinson Jr. made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for June 12, 2024. **Dr. Lisa Hiscano** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

VI. **UCWDB Report**

Director Rivera opened the meeting by welcoming attendees and moved into a discussion on the budget expense report. He provided an update on the program year 2023 funding, explaining that after accounting for transfers from the prior program year, there is a current balance of \$1.796 million, which must be spent by June 30, 2025. Moving to the program year 2024 funding, he explained that due to delays in receiving the notice of award from the New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOL), they have been operating under a temporary budget. While there have been no disbursements assigned to the program year 2024 funding, expenditures occurred using the temporary budget. Once the program year 2024 budget is approved, expenses and disbursements will be reassigned accordingly, particularly for the first quarter from July 1 to September 30.

Director Rivera then addressed budget reductions for this year, mentioning that NJDOL attempted to significantly reduce their funding. Initially, they faced a proposed reduction of \$1.9 million. However, through negotiations led by Director Rivera's office, the county manager, and deputy county manager they managed to mitigate the reduction to \$839,000. Director Rivera explained that the New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOL) is holding low-performing counties accountable, emphasizing that Union County is not being singled out. Funds must be spent appropriately, or they will be returned. The NJDOL used performance data from the second quarter through December 2023 to determine budget reductions, and this process will be repeated this December. Due to low spending rates and a lack of investment in training, Director Rivera expects future budget challenges. The youth program was cut \$300,000 because performance measures were not met, and both program years 2022 and 2023 had low spending rates, with program year 2023 showing zero dollars spent on training participants.

Director Rivera also presented updated performance data, noting that the youth program continues to underperform, as indicated by red markers on the chart, which could result in further funding reductions.

Tim McConway asked if is there any way the Workforce Development Board could supplement the schools throughout the county which are dealing with the youth who can use that money? We have one of the most successful youth programs in the state through our partnership with the Simon Youth Academy, a

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, September 25, 2024
MEETING MINUTES

unique initiative with a mini high school inside a mall. However, the data is not accurately reflecting the success of the program in our system, which seems to be an administrative issue within the American Job Center. This discrepancy in data could impact budget cuts, as the system shows underperformance despite the program's proven success. When it comes to negotiating, the mismatch between the data and actual outcomes could pose a challenge. Tim McConway asked if there was a way to negotiate with the state regarding the cuts.

Director Rivera responded by stating that when the state approached us to negotiate, they only mentioned cuts to WorkFirst New Jersey, so we were surprised by the cuts to Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) funding for both youth and dislocated workers. These cuts were not part of the negotiation. This situation underscores the need for the American Job Center to follow up with participants and ensure data is properly recorded. Despite these challenges, we've seen success, with at least 75 youth graduates, many of whom received high school diplomas, not GEDs. These successful outcomes provide opportunities for participants to enroll in adult training programs, such as those offered by community colleges.

Gloria Durham asked whether the issue was that data is not being entered into the system or if the performance metrics aren't supporting the success they have in place, and questioned how they could mitigate that. Director Rivera deferred the matter to the Department of Human Services. Debbie Ann Anderson mentioned that she could have addressed the questions more effectively if she had received the report ahead of time and presented it to all board members to develop a strategy. Director Rivera noted that the data is accessible, but Debbie Ann Anderson expressed concern about being embarrassed in front of the board, emphasizing its role as the funder. Chairman Tasharofi asked if it would be feasible to have corrective action by the next board meeting, to which Debbie Ann Anderson agreed, expressing her appreciation. Director Rivera clarified that the intent was not to embarrass anyone but simply to present the facts.

Resolutions of the UCWDB

Director Rivera transitioned the conversation to the review the resolutions. Meredith Barracato reviewed the following resolutions.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-45:

**RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
ADOPTING THE PROGRAM YEAR 2024 UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE
DEVELOPMENT AREA BUDGET.**

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, September 25, 2024
MEETING MINUTES

BOARD
ACTION

Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-45**. **Stan Robinson Jr.** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-45**. **James Brady** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-46:

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD AUTHORIZING THE USE OF BUDGET ACCOUNT NUMBERS BY THE UNION COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES AS THE UNION COUNTY AMERICAN JOB CENTER OPERATOR AND AS THE PROVIDER OF COMPREHENSIVE CAREER SERVICES.

Debbie Ann Anderson abstained from Resolution No. 2024-46.

BOARD
ACTION

Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-46**. **Stan Robinson Jr.** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-46**. **Richard Capac** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-47:

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD AWARDING A CONTRACT FOR THE PROVISION OF AN AFFILIATE AMERICAN JOB CENTER PROVIDER FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SERVICES PURSUANT TO THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.

Meredith Barracato reported that the Union County Workforce Development Board issued an RFP for an out-of-school youth service provider on August 7th and received one proposal from Union County Vocational Technical School by August 28th. The evaluation committee found the proposal comprehensive, meeting all RFP requirements. The school, with a 100% graduation rate and increasing enrollment, offers a high school diploma, work experience, supportive services, and a flexible learning model. They plan to serve 20 participants, recruiting from schools with the highest dropout rates, and have strong partnerships with local businesses

Gwen Ryan abstained from Resolution No. 2024-47.

BOARD
ACTION

Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-47**. **Richard Capac** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-47**. **Stan Robinson** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-48:

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD AMENDING THE NOT TO EXCEED AMOUNT FOR THE GENERAL COUNSEL CONTRACT WITH WEBER DOWD LAW, LLC.

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, September 25, 2024

MEETING MINUTES

BOARD
ACTION

Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-48**. **James Brady** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-48**. **Stan Robinson Jr.** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-49:

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD AUTHORIZING PAYMENT FOR THE ANNUAL FUTUREWORKS BI SUBSCRIPTION.

BOARD
ACTION

Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-49**. **Gloria Durham** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-49**. **Stan Robinson Jr.** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-50:

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD ADOPTING THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT PERFORMANCE GOALS FOR PROGRAM YEAR 2024 AND PROGRAM YEAR 2025.

Director Rivera discussed the new performance measures recommended by the Department of Labor for Program Years 2024 and 2025. He highlighted the significant increase in targets, such as the employment rate in the second quarter after exit, which jumps from 60.9% to 68% in 2024 and 70% in 2025. Director Rivera emphasized that all contracts moving forward must meet these standards, and confirmed that failure to meet these goals could result in budget cuts. This information had just been received by the board and shared with partners.

BOARD
ACTION

Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-50**. **Richard Capac** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-50**. **Stan Robinson Jr.** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-51:

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 IN-SCHOOL YOUTH SERVICES UNDER THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.

BOARD
ACTION

Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-51**. **Richard Capac** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-51**. **Stan Robinson** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-52:

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD AUTHORIZING THE USE OF COMPETITIVE CONTRACTING PROCEDURES FOR THE

**Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, September 25, 2024**

MEETING MINUTES

PROCUREMENT OF AN AFFILIATE AMERICAN JOB CENTER PROVIDER FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL YOUTH SERVICES UNDER THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.

**BOARD
ACTION**

Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-52**. **Stan Robinson Jr.** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-52**. **Richard Capac** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-53:

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD APPROVING THE PROGRAM YEAR 2022 EVALUATION OF THE OUT OF SCHOOL YOUTH PROGRAM.

Meredith Barracato reported that the Workforce Development Board reviewed services provided by the Union County Vocational Technical School's Simon Youth Academy for Program Year 2022. While the academy successfully delivered all 14 WIOA elements and received high student satisfaction, issues were noted with data entry, particularly for element 8 (follow-up services) and element 13 (transition to post-secondary education and training). Although these services are provided by the Simon Youth Academy staff, they are not properly captured in the state database, impacting performance measures. To address this, it was recommended that the American Job Center (AJC) and Simon Youth Academy collaborate before students graduate to ensure proper data entry into AOSOS, and the AJC is currently developing a follow-up procedure and plan.

Gwen Ryan expressed gratitude for the positive aspects mentioned in the evaluation of the 14 program elements. She clarified that the evaluation covered Program Year 2022, meaning it doesn't reflect any improvements made in 2023 or 2024. Ryan also acknowledged the feedback provided and said she looks forward to a meeting to discuss the results further.

Director Rivera explained that the failure to meet certain performance measures was due to a lack of follow-up with participants. He emphasized that New Jersey law requires an annual evaluation of different elements of the system, and this report focuses on Program Year 2022, with a subsequent evaluation for Program Year 2023. The goal of these evaluations is to identify system shortfalls and improve both qualitative and quantitative aspects. Director Rivera noted that while the youth program is operationally successful, the data doesn't reflect that success, which is why the evaluation process is essential. The strategy is to ensure continuous improvement year by year.

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, September 25, 2024
MEETING MINUTES

Hillary McCarron expressed concern about existing silos and a lack of communication, which is affecting the sharing of performance indicators. Timothy McConway agreed, acknowledging a breakdown that has negatively impacted their programs and the constituents they serve. He emphasized the need for accountability and immediate action to address these issues, as they are affecting millions of dollars and the overall effectiveness of their efforts.

Amy Wagner assured the group that she would take responsibility for improving communication between all parties involved, stating that the issue lies in properly recording services rather than providing them. As Deputy County Manager, she promised to resolve the communication breakdown. Chairman Tasharofi then emphasized the need to see improvements in the data once communication is addressed, which Director Rivera agreed to.

Gwen Ryan abstained from Resolution No. 2024-53.



Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-53**. **Stan Robinson Jr.** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-53**. **Gloria Dunham** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2024-54:

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD APPROVING THE PROGRAM YEAR 2023 EVALUATION OF THE WORK FIRST NEW JERSEY PROGRAM.

Meredith Barracato reported that the Workforce Development Board conducted a review of the WorkFirst New Jersey program to understand the low participation rate. Key issues identified included problems with tracking and reporting, service delivery gaps, inconsistent referral processes among partners, and a high staff turnover, which created knowledge gaps. The pandemic further contributed to low engagement, as many clients were not required to participate. Additionally, there was a lack of community work experience opportunities. In response, the American Job Center has implemented a corrective action plan with specific benchmarks to improve participation, and the Workforce Development Board is monitoring progress.

Debbie Ann Anderson abstained from Resolution No. 2024-54.



Chairman Tasharofi requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-54**. **Stan Robinson Jr.** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2024-54**. **James Brady** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, September 25, 2024
MEETING MINUTES

VII. American Job Center Report

Debbie Ann Anderson emphasized the large partnership between the Department of Human Services and the American Job Center, noting that their services impact a significant portion of Union County residents. She highlighted the interconnected nature of the services, explaining how unemployment, social services, and other community needs create a ripple effect. Debbie Ann Anderson called for improved collaboration and communication across departments to ensure economic mobility and self-sufficiency for clients. She mentioned the need for a unified approach to referrals and service delivery, creating a more seamless system for clients, avoiding duplication, and improving case management. The department is working on aligning workforce support strategies and improving the use of the UC Work System across all partners to ensure better resource utilization and service coordination. Debbie Ann Anderson concluded by noting upcoming meetings and efforts to formalize the network of partners providing services.

Gloria asked whether partner meetings had been held in the past. Debbie Ann Anderson explained that these meetings were previously led by the Workforce Development Board but are now part of their contractual obligations. She noted that there are two types of meetings: strategic ones led by the Workforce Development Board and operational, program-focused ones run by Human Services. Gloria then inquired about the computerized systems used for capturing information, asking if there was a disconnect. Debbie Ann Anderson clarified that there are two systems in use: Union County Works, funded by the board, and AOSOS, funded by the state. The systems require double data entry, and it took time for the data to populate and align properly across both systems.

Nasrene Mondol, the program administrator for the American Job Center, provided an overview of their services for adults and dislocated workers under the WIOA network. She explained that services are divided between self-service options, like the virtual one-stop system, and case management for customers seeking funded services, including training. In PY23, they assessed about 200 participants, with 104 determined eligible for services. They created 129 career pathways and had 89 participants complete training in fields like healthcare, transportation, and technology.

Juanita Vargas and Gwen Ryan both provided updates on the youth services. Juanita Vargas provided an update on 14 Plainfield youth enrolled in the program. Out of the 14, 9 seniors graduated, and the remaining 5 were promoted to the next grade. Over the summer, 9 youth participated in a paid work experience at Plainfield High School. Juanita Vargas noted the strong relationship with Plainfield High School principal which has led to a successful pipeline of youth to receive services. Additionally, 14 youth are interested in

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, September 25, 2024
MEETING MINUTES

pursuing certifications, while 13 are seeking full-time employment, with 2 already securing jobs. Seven youth are interested in higher education, with 3 currently enrolled in college. She shared the success story of David, a student who was struggling with poor attendance and failing grades due to his need to work full-time. With the support of the WIOA team, David improved his attendance, made up missed time, and received tutoring, ultimately graduating with his class. He is now pursuing a career in psychology. Nasrene Mondol also highlighted upcoming job fairs, including one on September 26th and several others scheduled through October.

Gwen Ryan reported that Simon Youth Academy currently has 2 students enrolled for the new school year, with 3 more pending enrollment. Additional students are expected to enroll due to the academy's rolling admission process. Former graduates of Simon Youth Academy are dual-enrolling in the American Job Center Adult Program, and Youth Forward is working on dual-enrolling youth aged 18-24 into the same program. Nasrene Mondol noted that Youth Forward is also hosting a workshop on October 17, 2024, at Imagine in Mountainside for superintendents, school principals, and guidance counselors. Additionally, youth workshops are being scheduled for both in-school and out-of-school youth, focusing on mental health and substance abuse.

Jeffrey Jackson provided an update on the WorkFirst New Jersey program, detailing the corrective action plan implemented to address a low participation rate of 1.4%. After a thorough assessment, they identified issues consistent with the Workforce Development Board evaluation, including data reporting disconnects, unclear referral processes, limited work readiness activities, and staff shortages. The team has taken steps to address these, such as standardizing procedures, training staff, and collaborating with service providers to improve the flow of services.

One major challenge has been the community work experience program, particularly with Haitian Creole-speaking participants who face language barriers. A pilot program in Plainfield is focusing on this community, with efforts to better integrate participants into job readiness activities. Jeffrey Jackson noted that while placing people into these programs is still a challenge, improvements in data management systems have led to an upward trajectory in performance. Despite challenges, the program has moved from last in the state to the middle, with optimism for further improvement.

Hillary McCarron suggested that Union County could collaborate with Essex County, which has been successfully working with the Haitian community, especially in Irvington, where there is a large Haitian Creole population. Jeffrey Jackson agreed, acknowledging the need for collaboration and noting that

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, September 25, 2024
MEETING MINUTES

while Union County is currently ranked 11th with a 4.4% participation rate, efforts are ongoing to improve. He also mentioned that the team is continuously monitoring and evaluating their procedures for data entry and service delivery.

Jeffrey Jackson highlighted various programs available to clients, including ESL, GED, and CWEP, and shared that legal reviews of agreements for new CWEP sites have been completed, with 717 TANF clients and 138 in CWEP programs since June. Additionally, small numbers in substance abuse and behavioral health initiatives exempt some clients from participation.

Lisa Hiscano provided an update on Union County's role as the lead for the Union County Consortium for Title II, with partners including Urban Workforce Advantage, the Elizabeth Board of Education, and Literacy New Jersey. The primary focus is on ESL programs, which are in high demand county-wide. Enrollment is currently underway, following a busy August of testing and assessments. The consortium received \$1.8 million in county funding, with additional state funds. They are expanding integrated education and training (IET) for English language learners, including programs offering industry credentials in Microsoft Office and IC3 certification. The Supply Chain Management program for English learners is also recruiting, with plans to start in January.

Juanito Chiluisa reported that new staff has been hired, which is a positive development after having only one counselor for 15 months. As a result, service numbers have increased from 345 to 388 per week, adding roughly 200 customers per month. He provided contact numbers for the Plainfield office, where staff is available daily, and mentioned that inquiries can be directed there.

Amy Wagner, the deputy county manager, gave an update on the reopening of the One-Stop center. The building renovations have gone out to bid, and they expect the center to reopen by early 2025. Additionally, discussions are ongoing with the Department of Labor about setting up a satellite office at Union College's Lester building in Elizabeth. The space is ready, and they are awaiting the Department of Labor's next steps.

Valerie Kerrigan, the new manager for the Union County DVRS office, introduced herself and explained that DVRS operates as a medical model for employment services, adhering to HIPAA for confidentiality. She highlighted the key role of staff and vendors in supporting clients with disabilities, providing services such as restoration, training, and evaluations. DVRS serves various populations, including the deaf, hard of hearing, and those with other disabilities, and maintains ongoing contact with clients to ensure their employment stability for two years

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, September 25, 2024
MEETING MINUTES

after their last service. Valerie Kerrigan shared that the Union County DVRS office has the highest number of rehabilitations in the state, with 153 clients rehabilitated this year. She also mentioned upcoming staffing changes due to retirement. She emphasized the importance of understanding accommodations for employees with disabilities, recommending AskJAN.org for resources. Valerie Kerrigan provided contact details for the office and encouraged collaboration with employers interested in disability etiquette training. Lastly, she explained that DVRS serves youth starting at age 14 and adults, and they continue to work with schools and provide support for both in-school and out-of-school youth.

VIII. **Old Business**

No Comments

IX. **New Business**

Hillary McCarron raised the issue of canceling July meetings in recent years and asked if a virtual meeting could be considered. However, the meeting was canceled due to a lack of quorum, as key members were unavailable, and a virtual meeting wouldn't solve this issue. Director Rivera confirmed the quorum problem and proposed setting up a December meeting to elect a new chair and vice-chair for the board. Chairman Tashorofi suggested holding the meeting on December 11, which was agreed upon, with any conflicting committee meetings to be rescheduled. The meeting's location and arrangements will be confirmed later.

X. **Public Comments**

No Comments

XI. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Dr. Kamran Tasharofi at 10:40 am.

Meeting Schedule:

9:00 AM, Wednesday, December 11, 2024

Location:

The Hill Tavern at Galloping Hill, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033