

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, April 9, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

Board Members Present

Stan Robinson Jr., SHR Marketing, LLC (**Chair**)
Debbie Ann Anderson, Union County Department of Human Services (Karen Dinsmore and Melissa Lespinasse)
James R. Brady, The Savor Group
Melynda Disla, Gateway Family YMCA (Collen Clayton)
Erich Peter, Union County Economic Development Corp (**Vice President**)
Gwen Ryan, Union County Vocational Technical School (Syreeta McClain)
Roshan White, UA Local 24 Plumbers (Chadrick Garris)
Dr. Margaret McMenamin, Union College of Union County, NJ (Marlene Loff)
Valerie Kerrigan, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
Courtney Villani, Villani Bus
Hilary McCarron, Port Authority
Danielle Johnson, JCT Solutions
Bernadette Griswold, Community Access Unlimited (Sandra Lynch)
Gloria Dunham, Qunnection Management
Juanito Chiluisa, NJ Department of Labor
Paul Belardo, KML Carpenters
Craig Coughlin, Kean University
Teresa Soto-Vega, PROCEED

Board Members Absent:

Alan Rutan, Rutan Mechanical LLC
Richard Capac, Crowne Property Management (**Secretary**)
Timothy McConway, Steamfitters Local 475
Curry Bucu, Trinitas Regional Medical Center
Daryl Palmieri, Union County Schools K-12
Dr. Kamran Tasharofi, Union County Healthcare Associates
Morgan Thompson, Prevention Links

General Counsel:

Kraig Dowd, Weber Dowd Law

County of Union:

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
Carolina Marin, Union County American Job Center
Lillian Roman, Union County American Job Center
Nasrene Mondol, Union County American Job Center
Jeffrey Jackson, Union County Department of Human Services

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Guests:

Christina Lorenzo, NJ Department of Labor
Abigail Pangilinan, NJ Department of Labor
Julienne Cherry, United Way of Greater Union County
Marie Alston, United Way of Greater Union County
Bethany Freeland, United Way of Greater Union County
Patricia Banks, Plainfield Public Library
Scott Kuchinsky, Plainfield Public Library
Isaias Rivera, UCNJ, Union College of Union County, NJ
Cyndy Walsh Rintzler, InRoads to Opportunities

I. Call to Order & Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Stan Robinson, Chairman of the Workforce Development Board, at 9:05AM.

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 2025 ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE TO THE NEWSPAPERS CIRCULATING WITHIN THE COUNTY OF UNION AND DESIGNATED TO RECEIVE SUCH NOTICE, AND BY POSTING THE YEAR 2025 ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE IN THE COUNTY COURT HOUSE, THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD WEBSITE, AND BY FILING THE YEAR 2025 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 February 5, 2025 meeting were presented for a vote.

**BOARD
ACTION**

Hilary McCarron made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for February 5, 2025. **James R. Brady** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

VI. **UCWDB Report**

Director Rivera, presented the UCWDB report, beginning with a review of unemployment rates. He shared data comparing Union County, New Jersey, and national rates from January 2023 to January 2025, noting Union County's increase from 4.8% to 5.9%. He suggested the rise may be influenced by federal employee reductions. Karen Dinsmore asked about eligibility for federal dislocated worker funds for laid-off federal employees, Director Rivera confirmed such use is allowable under program regulations.

Director Rivera then reviewed the budget and expenses, reporting \$1.087 million in unspent PY23 funds that must be used by June 30, 2025, with several resolutions presented to prevent recapturing. He noted an additional \$2.7 million in PY24 funding awarded over the past six months, including Adult Literacy Innovation and Summer Youth Work Experience Program grants. He emphasized the growing state and federal focus on directing funds toward services and training—particularly Individual Training Accounts (ITAs), which may soon require up to 50% allocation—rather than staffing. ITA expenditures totaled \$42,864 in February 2025, with cumulative disbursements of \$168,067.87 since July 2023. Discussion included the possibility of raising ITA caps to \$5,000 and the need to expand training access; Robert Croom reported 102 individuals currently in training and 24 pending, with a positive enrollment trend.

Finally, Director Rivera addressed Union County's WorkFirst NJ participation rate, reporting an increase to 8.7% as of February 2025, up from 4.6% in December 2024, and noted state-level discussions about shifting focus from participation metrics to employment outcomes for TANF recipients. He presented the FutureWorks performance report showing 61 adults and dislocated workers enrolled in training for PY23, while PY24 youth program data indicated areas needing improvement. A key concern was raised about underreporting of adult and dislocated worker activities in AOSOS, despite services being provided. Director Rivera stressed the need for a coordinated

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effort to resolve data capture and reporting issues to ensure accurate performance representation.

VII. WIOA Youth Services Provider

Julienne Cherry, President & CEO of United Way of Greater Union County (UWGUC), opened the report by highlighting key achievements, including expanded partnerships, the launch of a new Plainfield satellite office, surpassing enrollment goals with 168 youth enrolled (exceeding the target of 100), and successful staff training on the AOSOS system.

Marie Alston and Bethany Freeland provided youth program updates, noting the Plainfield office will soon open at 200 W. Second Street with six staff, computers, and workshop space. Implementation remains ahead of schedule, with Phase 1 (system development, staff training, audits, expanded partnerships, and co-enrollment) complete, and Phase 2 (career pathways) progressing early. New partnerships with Valley Bank and The Bloc Foundation are enhancing opportunities for youth.

Enrollment includes 168 youth across in-school sites in Elizabeth, Hillside, and Plainfield, and out-of-school sites at Simon Youth Academy and NJ Youth Corps. Staffing now includes four Youth Counselors, two Data Management Specialists, and one Employment Specialist. UWGUC is partnering with the City of Elizabeth to run the Summer Youth Employment Program, aiming to serve 480 youth countywide, supported by \$1.95 million in stipends and eliminating income qualifications to broaden participation.

In the first quarter of 2025, 89 in-school youth participated in tutoring, leadership, entrepreneurship, and paid work experience, while 79 out-of-school youth engaged in tutoring, dropout recovery, unpaid work experience, counseling, financial literacy, and post-secondary preparation. The program hosted construction and healthcare career events, co-enrolled 34 NJYC members, and facilitated certifications and conferences for youth. New data systems were implemented to track outcomes in real time, with strong validation checks in place. Exit plans focus on credential attainment, placement, and audit-ready files, supported by aggressive outreach, 70% student referrals, accessible services like the food pantry, and renewed trust in the United Way brand.

Director Rivera commended United Way's proactive internal data tracking and highlighted the success in securing the \$2.2M competitive state grant for the Summer Youth Work Experience Program, emphasizing the collaborative effort and focus on pushing funds directly to youth stipends.

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VIII. **Resolutions of the UCWDB**

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

**RESOLUTION NO. 2025-10
RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
RATIFYING THE ACTIONS OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.**

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-10**. **Gloria Dunham** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-10**. **James Brady** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**BOARD
ACTION**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2025-11
RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
AUTHORIZING THE ALLOCATION OF INDIRECT COSTS FOR PROGRAM YEAR 2023
EXPENDITURES PURSUANT TO THE CERTIFIED INDIRECT COST RATES FOR CALENDAR
YEARS 2024 AND 2025.**

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-11**. **James Brady** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-11**. **Teresa Soto Vega** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**BOARD
ACTION**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2025-12
RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
AUTHORIZING THE ALLOCATION OF INDIRECT COSTS FOR PROGRAM YEAR 2024
EXPENDITURES PURSUANT TO THE CERTIFIED INDIRECT COST RATES FOR CALENDAR
YEARS 2024 AND 2025.**

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-12**. **James Brady** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-12**. **Erich Peter** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**BOARD
ACTION**

**RESOLUTION NO. 2025-13
RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
AUTHORIZING THE TRANSFER OF WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY
ACT (WIOA) EXPENSES FROM PROGRAM YEAR 2024 TO PROGRAM YEAR 2023.**

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-13**. **Courtney Villani** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-13**. **James Brady** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

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Director Rivera clarified these transfers ~\$450k in expenses to utilize unspent PY23 funds, preventing their return to the state; an acceptable and encouraged practice.

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-14

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD AMENDING THE AGREEMENT WITH THE UNITED WAY OF GREATER UNION COUNTY TO REVISE WIOA ADULT ACCOUNTS NUMBERS FROM PY23 TO PY24.

BOARD ACTION

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-14**. **Teresa Soto Vega** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-14**. **Courtney Villani** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-15

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD AMENDING THE CONTRACT WITH UCNJ, UNION COLLEGE OF UNION COUNTY, NJ TO INCREASE FUNDING AND TO EXTEND THE CONTRACT PERIOD FOR THE PROVISION CAREER SERVICES TO ADULTS AND DISLOCATED WORKERS UNDER THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.

Marlene Loff abstained from Resolution No.2025-15.

BOARD ACTION

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-15**. **Courtney Villani** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-15**. **Gloria Dunham** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-16

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD AMENDING ITS AGREEMENT WITH WORKFORCE ADVANTAGE TO AWARD ADDITIONAL TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE TO NEEDY FAMILIES (TANF) FUNDING.

BOARD ACTION

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-16**. **Teresa Soto Vega** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-16**. **Erich Peter** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-17

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD AUTHORIZING THE ACCEPTANCE OF THE STATE FISCAL YEAR 2025 SUMMER YOUTH WORK EXPERIENCE PROGRAM GRANT, EXECUTION OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING WITH PARTNERS, AND ISSUANCE OF PURCHASE ORDERS.

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ACTION

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-17. James Brady**. made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-17. Teresa Soto Vega** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-18

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD AUTHORIZING THE USE OF COMPETITIVE CONTRACTING PROCEDURES FOR THE PROCUREMENT OF THE ONE STOP OPERATOR (AMERICAN JOB CENTER OPERATOR) UNDER THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.

Melissa Lespinasse abstained from Resolution No.2025-18.

BOARD
ACTION

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-18. James Brady**. made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-18. Sandra Lynch** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-19

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD AUTHORIZING THE USE OF COMPETITIVE CONTRACTING PROCEDURES FOR THE PROCUREMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE ONE STOP CAREER CENTER SERVICE PROVIDER FOR ADULT AND DISLOCATED WORKERS UNDER THE WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT.

Melissa Lespinasse abstained from Resolution No.2025-19.

BOARD
ACTION

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-19. James Brady**. made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-19. Teresa Soto Vega** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

IX. **American Job Center Report**

Karen Dinsmore, Assistant Director for Human Services, introduced herself on behalf of Director Debbie Ann Anderson before turning the floor to Jeffrey Jackson. Jackson shared updates from the state-level training he attended for Workforce Development Boards and One-Stop Operators, which focused on the "5 Ps": Partnership, Policy/Procedures, Performance, Professional Development, and Public Branding. He plans to tailor this training for local AJC network partners, with an initial overview already delivered to AJC staff on March 17. Next steps will focus on developing key performance indicators aligned with program outcomes. Jackson also reaffirmed his commitment to working closely with the Workforce Development Board and partners to resolve data entry challenges in AOSOS. Additionally, he announced plans to expand the Community Work Experience Program (CWEP) countywide, beyond DHS

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participants, and provided current WorkFirst NJ enrollment data. He reported an increase in the Work Participation Rate (WPR) to 8.7%—ranking 9th in the state—and described a shift in focus from meeting WPR targets to promoting self-sufficiency through structured career ladders integrating CWEP, OJT, ITAs, WOTC, and CAV programs. He noted that Robert Croom will oversee the WFNJ program when the AJC team relocates to the DSS building.

Robert Croom and Lillian Roman provided an update on WIOA Title I Adult and Dislocated Worker services. The AJC team is in the process of relocating to 342 Westminster Avenue to co-locate with DSS, a move already improving case conferencing and service coordination. For the third quarter, they reported 221 orientations, 292 UC Works registrations, 86 CASAS tests, and 65 WIOA eligibility determinations. Service outcomes included 553 Individual Employment Plans, 186 soft skills completions, and 97 in-demand trainings completed across PY23 and PY24. ITA enrollments have increased significantly, with 42 DW and 27 AD from PY23 and 79 DW and 24 AD from PY24, plus additional pending enrollments. This growth was credited to an improved group assessment process. They acknowledged a backlog but assured partners that an "all hands on deck" approach is in place to engage waiting list participants. Business services reported success from PY24 job fairs, with 1,731 attendees and 285 hires, and highlighted the December Expungement Clinic, which resulted in 67 expunged records. Another clinic is being planned, potentially with the Prosecutor's office.

Lillian Roman addressed WIOA Title I performance, reporting that while Dislocated Worker measures are being met, Adult employment rates for Q2 and Q4 are lagging. Efforts are ongoing to improve data capture and meet higher negotiated performance goals. Lillian Roman shared handouts comparing Union County's outcomes to other local workforce development boards, noting that no area has met all goals after two quarters. Isaias Rivera from UCNJ shared a success story showcasing collaboration between the Workforce Development Board, AJC, and UCNJ, which resulted in placing nine individuals into full-time on-the-job training positions with an estimated \$90,000 training investment, positively impacting participating families.

Additional program updates were provided across Titles II, III, and IV. Marlene Loff reported 769 participants enrolled in adult education and literacy programs entering Q3, tracking toward a 1,000 participant goal. The majority are female, Hispanic ESL/IET students aged 25–44, with 516 currently employed. IET programs in Microsoft Office and Supply Chain Management have led to certifications and job promotions, with 64% of IET students earning credentials. Juanito Chiluisa reported Wagner-Peyser/UI services serving 260 customers weekly, with 35 tuition waivers processed and a rising demand for training. He flagged upcoming challenges linked to potential federal layoffs and an NJDOL plan for automatic

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co-enrollment of expiring UI claimants into WIOA DW, which could strain resources without technology solutions. Valerie Kerrigan shared Vocational Rehabilitation updates: 166 eligible individuals, 157 plans, 58 employed, 430 adult referrals, 60 youth referrals, and 1,121 open cases as of March 31. She noted software limitations in tracking WIOA-aligned metrics but shared that new reporting tools are being procured and emphasized staff awareness of the NJ Law Against Discrimination.

X. **Old Business**

No Comment

XI. **New Business**

No Comments

XII. **Public Comments**

Paul Bellardo, UCWDB Board Member representing the Carpenters Union, addressed the Board to highlight the Carpenters' Building Maintenance and Certification Program—a six-week training offering skills, OSHA 10 certification, and a pathway to union membership and benefits, currently operating in Newark, with potential expansion to Union County municipalities and private employers like CBRE. He also introduced the Carpenters' Direct Hire MOU program, which enables municipalities and county entities to hire union carpenters at prevailing wages for specific projects without a formal bid process, creating cost savings and prioritizing local members. Paul Bellardo offered to provide additional details and follow up at the June meeting, potentially accompanied by his colleague Rocco, and commended the Board's commitment and impact.

XIII. **Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned by Chairman Robinson at 10:36am.

Meeting Schedule:

9:00 AM, Wednesday, June 11, 2025

Location:

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