

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, July 23, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

Board Members Present

Stan Robinson Jr., SHR Marketing, LLC (**Chair**)
Debbie Ann Anderson, Union County Department of Human Services (Karen Dinsmore)
Melynda Disla, Gateway Family YMCA
Erich Peter, Union County Economic Development Corp (**Vice President**)
Gwen Ryan, Union County Vocational Technical School (Janet Berman)
Roshan White, UA Local 24 Plumbers (Chadrick Garris)
Dr. Margaret McMenamin, Union College of Union County, NJ
Valerie Kerrigan, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (Carol Serrano)
Hilary McCarron, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey
Danielle Johnson, JCT Solutions
Bernadette Griswold, Community Access Unlimited (Sandra Lynch)
Juanito Chiluisa, NJ Department of Labor-Employment Services
Teresa Soto-Vega, PROCEED (Srabanti Sarkar)
Timothy McConway, Steamfitters Local 475
Dr. Kamran Tasharofi, Union County Healthcare Associates (Kathy Colon)
Morgan Thompson, Prevention Links
Paul Belardo, KML Carpenters
Gloria Dunham, Qunnection Management
James R. Brady, The Savor Group
Curry Bucu, Trinitas Regional Medical Center (Monica Morales)

Board Members Absent:

Alan Rutan, Rutan Mechanical LLC
Craig Coughlin, Kean University
Richard Capac, Crowne Property Management (**Secretary**)
Courtney Villani, Villani Bus
Daryl Palmieri, Union County Schools K-12

General Counsel:

Kraig Dowd, Weber Dowd Law

County of Union:

Ed Oatman, County Manager
Amy Wagner, Deputy County Manager
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
Melissa Lespinasse, Union County Department of Human Services
Lillian Roman, Union County American Job Center
Jeffrey Jackson, Union County Department of Human Services

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, July 23, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

Rhonda McClain, Union County Division of Social Services

Guests:

Christina Lorenzo, NJ Department of Labor
Marie Alston, United Way of Greater Union County
Isaias Rivera, UCNJ, Union College of Union County, NJ
Julio Sabater, Workforce Advantage
Sabrina Sabater, Workforce Advantage
Ingrid Macias, NJ Department of Labor Veteran Services
Anthea Williams, NJ Department of Labor Business Services
Samuel Wear, NJ Department of Labor Business Services
Joan Desmarais, NJ State Employment and Training Commission
Scott Kuchinsky, Plainfield Public Library
Patty Banks, Plainfield Public Library

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.

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, July 23, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

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 and two of these minutes.

V. **Approval of the Minutes**

The minutes of the June 11, 2025 meeting were presented for a vote.

**BOARD
ACTION**

Timothy McConway made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for June 11, 2025. **Melynda Disla** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

VI. **UCWDB Report**

Director Rivera provided a brief presentation focusing on housekeeping and budget updates. He noted that the Union County Workforce Development Board had built a temporary budget alongside the Union County Department of Human Services as the provider of career services. The board was set to vote on several resolutions to revise the allocation of funding. While there had been no significant changes in employment rates since the last meeting, Director Rivera highlighted the receipt of additional funding for digital equity efforts. The Union County Workforce Development Board, in partnership with various nonprofit organizations and the Department of Human Services, was awarded a million-dollar grant to provide digital education and training for the TANF population. The program aimed to bridge the digital divide and offer certifications and credentials to help individuals secure employment.

Director Rivera also discussed the \$2 million funding received for the Summer Youth Program, though details on the program year 2025 budget would be presented later. He emphasized that while the temporary budget for program year 2025 was necessary due to the lack of TANF funding, it was still essential to allocate funds for training. Director Rivera explained that at any given point, the board was managing three budget years, with program year 2024 in progress. He also mentioned that, under new guidelines, the state allowed the local boards to use their program year allocation into the new fiscal year, which would help prevent the need to transfer funds in the future.

Director Rivera noted that the board had previously voted on a quarter one budget to allocate funding for salaries, which allowed for the continued use of program resources. Director Rivera pointed out that although WorkFirst New Jersey funding had not yet been allocated, an extended agreement with vendors was in place to ensure services continued. He expressed hope that by the September meeting, a Notice of Award would be received, and a fully

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, July 23, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

complete budget could be presented. Director Rivera concluded by noting that the detailed budget for program year 2025, which was required by the state, would be available for board review in September. He also ensured that the meeting would proceed on schedule, adhering to the chairman's mandate to keep meetings within an hour.

VII. **Resolutions of the UCWDB**

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

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-25

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD AMENDING RESOLUTION NO. 2025-20 AND ADOPTING THE REVISED PROGRAM YEAR 2025 QUARTER ONE BUDGET OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AREA.

Director Rivera briefly explained the importance of proper allocation of federal funding. He noted that while it is acceptable to operate with funding for a single quarter, it is essential to follow a cost allocation method if funding trends shift. This process involves charging the correct accounts, ensuring that funds are directed to where they are intended.

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-25**. **James Brady** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-25**. **Paul Belardo** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**BOARD
ACTION**

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-26

RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD AMENDING RESOLUTION NO. 2025-21 AND ADOPTING THE REVISED PROGRAM YEAR 2025 FIRST QUARTER BUDGET ACCOUNT NUMBERS FOR THE UNION COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES FOR THE PROVISION OF CAREER SERVICES IN AN AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$340,488.

Hilary McCarron raised a question regarding the budget slide, specifically noting a \$20,000 difference between the budget and the unexpended column, despite no dispersals being made. She inquired whether this was the adjustment that had been previously discussed. Director Rivera clarified that the difference between the two amounts was simply an addition issue, with the budget in the first column being correct.

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-26**. **Timothy McConway** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-26**. **Erich Peter** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**BOARD
ACTION**

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, July 23, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

Karen Dinsmore abstained from **Resolution No. 2025-26.**

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-27
ADOPTING THE PROGRAM YEAR 2025 UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT
AREA TEMPORARY BUDGET.

BOARD
ACTION

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-27.** **Paul Belardo** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-27.** **Juanito Chiluisa** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Karen Dinsmore abstained from **Resolution No. 2025-27.**

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-28
RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
AUTHORIZING PAYMENT FOR THE ANNUAL FUTUREWORKS BI SUBSCRIPTION.

BOARD
ACTION

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-28.** **Morgan Thompson** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-28.** **Gloria Dunham** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Chairman Robinson asked a quick question regarding the recently renewed business intelligence subscription, specifically who was reviewing the BI data. Director Rivera responded that the data was being reviewed by both the American Job Center and his office. He also mentioned that licenses could be provided to the board if there was interest.

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-29
RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
AUTHORIZING THE EXTENSION OF THE OPERATOR AGREEMENT WITH THE UNION
COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2025, AND
AUTHORIZING THE USE OF PROGRAM YEAR 2024 CARRY-OVER FUNDS IN AN
AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$25,000.

BOARD
ACTION

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-29.** **Timothy McConway** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-29.** **Gloria Dunham** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Karen Dinsmore abstained from **Resolution No. 2025-29.**

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-30

**Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, July 23, 2025**

MEETING MINUTES

**RESOLUTION OF THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF A REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS FOR SUB-RECIPIENT
MONITORING SERVICES.**

**BOARD
ACTION**

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-30**. **Morgan Thompson** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2025-30**. **Erich Peter** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

VIII. **American Job Center Operator's Report**

Karen Dinsmore introduced a new model for the report. Karen Dinsmore highlighted that a robust operators committee meeting had been conducted on Monday, where several points for system improvement were identified. A key part of the meeting involved a simulation exercise where four scenarios were run with participants acting as customers within the system. The exercise included core partners and affiliates, and it revealed several common themes for improvement. One main issue identified was the need for the entire system to improve its knowledge of the available resources, both within the network and externally. This often resulted in referrals to services outside of the network's capacity. To address this, a resource tool is being developed, with plans to roll it out in September during the second part of the simulation exercise. Another issue was the presence of multiple entry points into the system, with many individuals needing to be referred to employment services first. This was observed despite practicing different entry points in the simulation. Additionally, Karen Dinsmore acknowledged the lack of a single automated system to streamline processes across various government services. While progress had been made, there were still frustrations with the inefficiency caused by the reliance on separate systems.

The report also covered the new TEGL implementation, which was federal guidance clarifying work authorization and eligibility requirements for individuals served by the operator, American Job Center, and partners. This was in line with recent federal legislation. According to the guidance, individuals must either be US citizens by birth or permanent work-eligible residents with proper documentation. This information was shared with all partners and participants.

Karen Dinsmore provided updates on key performance metrics. In program year 2024, 105 customers were served in adult and dislocated worker categories, with UC NJ serving 207 individuals. Work First New Jersey referrals totaled 177, and the program is on track with spending and obligations.

Regarding Title II programs, Karen shared a success story about a Brazilian immigrant overcoming language barriers to find a job. However, federal funding changes have frozen Title II funds, affecting 700 students and forcing the college to downsize its workforce.

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, July 23, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

Tim Conway asked about the impact of the funding cuts, specifically how many students were affected statewide, given that 700 students in Union County were already impacted. Karen Dinsmore asked Dr. Lisa Hiscano to offer feedback. Dr. Hiscano responded that while she didn't have the exact number for the entire state, it would likely be in the thousands if Union County alone is any indication. She added that the cuts have affected not just college consortiums but also several nonprofits and workforce development boards, leading to the shutdown of programs and layoffs of staff. This has resulted in a lack of services for many individuals. Dr. Hiscano emphasized that these cuts have affected both students and employees, many of whom are essential for the economic development of families through literacy programs that improve language skills and help participants become eligible for training or jobs. Karen Dinsmore also acknowledged the need to monitor the local impact, as the full economic and social effects of the cuts may take time to become apparent.

Karen Dinsmore provided an update on the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation from the state, noting that they had served a total of 1,561 customers, both youth and adults, from October of the previous year through June of the current year. She emphasized that the critical takeaway from the meeting was the importance of working closely with Antonio to preserve funding for the system. Karen highlighted the need to remain adaptable and "pivot" when necessary in response to challenges beyond their control. She also stressed the ongoing effort to strengthen the system, as demonstrated in their simulation exercises, to ensure they can continue serving many individuals in need.

Antonio Rivera explained that the federal government is evaluating the Title II program to determine its efficacy and whether continued funding will be provided, as the U.S. Department of Education is being significantly scaled down. One possibility being discussed is transferring the funding to the U.S. Department of Labor, which would allow the Workforce Development Board to have more control over its management, though this is still a theoretical consideration. He noted that approximately 20,000 students statewide would be impacted by these funding changes. Many Title II participants, if they are U.S. citizens, could qualify under WIOA Title I as adults, but this requires closer collaboration with the Department of Human Services and Union County to manage the funding and services. Antonio emphasized that the impact of these cuts goes beyond students, affecting entire communities and local economies, as people lose jobs and services, which can lead to families struggling to make ends meet.

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, July 23, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

IX. American Job Center Report

Robert Croom provided an update on the WIOA Title I reportable individuals, training, and spending plan. He highlighted that 343 customers attended orientation, but noted that the number typically drops significantly by the time individuals transition into training due to eligibility issues or other barriers. He shared that as of the previous day, 100% of the adult population was obligated for training, and 99% of dislocated workers were similarly obligated. In terms of spending, 39% of funds for dislocated workers had been spent, while 50% of the adult population's funds had been utilized. Robert Croom expressed confidence that the program would reach 100% expenditure for both groups by the end of the year, as the final cohort moved through the last portion of their training. He emphasized that this achievement marked a significant milestone since his involvement.

Robert highlighted her work with the new Work First New Jersey team at social services, which has increased assessments and referrals by 64 clients. He praised the team's efforts, especially with clients from different countries, using translation devices for better engagement.

Robert also discussed the Workforce Innovation Business Center at Union College, which served 207 residents. Robert noted a successful CMA graduation event where WIOA-funded students secured jobs.

X. WIOA Youth Services Provider

Marie Alston from United Way of Greater Union County provided an update on both the in-school and out-of-school youth programs. She reported that 91 students were enrolled in the in-school youth program, with many finishing school and transitioning into the Summer Youth Employment Program or preparing for college. The program continued to focus on leadership development, tutoring, and providing guidance counseling, which had expanded from group mental health sessions to individual sessions. A notable success was that all Plainfield students either graduated or advanced to the next grade. The mentoring program with Alpha Prep was also highlighted, with five students being selected for a college tour to visit HBCUs.

For the out-of-school youth program, 64 students were enrolled, with many progressing in their classes, graduating, or earning high school equivalency diplomas. Leadership and vocational training were key components of the program, and CPR training was provided through partnerships with New Jersey Youth Corps and Simon Youth Academy. The Youth Corps program held its graduation ceremony with 17 high school diplomas awarded, and additional students were expected to graduate shortly.

Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board
The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033
9:00AM Wednesday, July 23, 2025
MEETING MINUTES

Marie also shared feedback from the Summer Youth Employment Program, which saw 282 students from Elizabeth and 33 from Union, with over 35 employers participating. The program faced some startup challenges but was smoothing out, with Marie personally engaging with students to troubleshoot. An assessment was conducted after the program's orientation, and the results showed that the program could benefit from more organization and separate sessions for college-level students. Mental health workshops, resume building, and interview skills received positive feedback, with 93% of students reporting feeling supported and safe. The overall program satisfaction score was 4.04.

XI. **Old Business**
No Comment

XII. **New Business**
No Comments

XIII. **Public Comments**

Scott Kuchinsky from the Plainfield Public Library announced that the Carnegie Corporation of New York had awarded them \$400,000 to expand ESL services in Plainfield and the county. He shared that the library is one of the smallest grantees among other major cities such as San Diego, Los Angeles, Seattle, Boston, and Nashville. The funding will allow them to bring in additional partners and expand adult ESL services. He also mentioned that the Plainfield library is currently under construction and will likely be closed for a while, which will impact GED testing. However, alternative testing sites are available, and community partners have been helpful in relocating other services off-site.

Sabrina Sabater from Workforce Advantage provided a quick update on the Pathways to Recovery program, noting that they have begun engaging eight participants who will soon start occupational training. She thanked Robert and Lillian at the American Job Center for their support in co-enrolling participants and quickly obtaining NJ numbers to start services.

XIV. **Adjournment**

Chairman Robinson closed the meeting at 10: 50, by thanking all presenters for streamlining their presentations and being respectful of everyone's time. He motioned to adjourn, which was seconded, and reminded everyone that the next meeting would be on September 17.

Meeting Schedule:

9:00 AM, Wednesday, September 17, 2025

Location:

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