

**Public Meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board**  
**The Hill Tavern, 3 Golf Dr, Kenilworth, NJ 07033**  
**9:00AM Wednesday, April 22, 2026**  
**MEETING MINUTES**

**Board Members Present**

Caroline Aubrey, The Aubrey Group  
Debbie Ann Anderson, Union County Department of Human Services (Melissa Lespinasse)  
Stan Robinson Jr., SHR Marketing, LLC (**Chair**)  
James R. Brady, The Savor Group  
Juanito Chiluisa, NJ Department of Labor-Employment Services (Miguel Reyes)  
Melynda Disla, Gateway Family YMCA  
Gloria Dunham, Qunnection Management  
Valerie Kerrigan, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services  
Antonietta LaVecchia, UPS Store  
Hillary McCarron, Port Authority of New York and New Jersey  
Dr. Margaret McMEnamin, UCNJ, Union College of Union County, NJ (Dr. Lisa Hiscano)  
Erich Peter, Union County Economic Development Corp (**Vice President**)  
Alan Rutan, Rutan Mechanical LLC  
Gwen Ryan, Union County Vocational Technical School  
Teresa Soto-Vega, PROCEED (Srabanti Sarkar)  
Morgan Thompson, Prevention Links (Kelley Ryan)  
Joseph Venezia, Colliers Engineering & Design  
Roshan White, UA Local 24 Plumbers (Chadrick Garris)

**Board Members Absent:**

Paul Belardo, KML Carpenters  
Craig Coughlin, Kean University  
Bernadette Griswold, Community Access Unlimited  
Timothy McConway, Steamfitters Local 475  
Dr. Kamran Tasharofi, Union County Healthcare Associates  
Richard Capac, Crowne Property Management (**Secretary**)  
Courtney Villani, Villani Bus  
Danielle Johnson, JCT Solutions  
Curry Bucu, Trinitas Regional Medical Center  
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  
Lourdes Leon, Union County Commissioner  
Antonio Rivera, Workforce Development Board  
Meredith Barracato, Workforce Development Board  
Gina Tuesta, Workforce Development Board

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Lisa Bonanno, Workforce Development Board  
Lillian Roman, Union County American Job Center  
Robert, Union County American Job Center  
Jeffrey Jackson, UC Department of Human Services  
Rhonda McClain, Union County Division of Social Services

**Guests:**

Christina Lorenzo, NJ Department of Labor  
Anthea Williams, NJ Department of Labor  
Dr. Anne Marie McNamara, Union County Vocational Technical School  
Douglas Gee, Union County Vocational Technical School Interns  
Andy Caligaris, Union County Vocational Technical School Interns  
Patty Banks, Plainfield Public Library  
Scott Kuchinsky, Plainfield Public Library  
Marie Thelusma-Chase, Boxwood Learning Center

**I. Call to Order & Welcome**

The public meeting of the Union County Workforce Development Board was called to order at 9:05 a.m. by Stan Robinson Jr., Chairman. Chairman Robinson welcomed board members, county staff, partners, and guests.

**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 2026 ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE TO THE NEWSPAPERS CIRCULATING WITHIN THE COUNTY OF UNION AND DESIGNATED TO RECEIVE SUCH NOTICE, AND BY POSTING THE YEAR 2026 ANNUAL MEETING SCHEDULE IN THE COUNTY COURT HOUSE, THE UNION COUNTY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD WEBSITE, AND BY FILING THE YEAR 2026 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.

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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 and two of these minutes.

**V. Approval of the Minutes**

The minutes of the **January 28, 2026** meeting were presented for a vote.

**BOARD  
ACTION**

**James Brady** made a motion to approve the meeting minutes for **January 28, 2026**. **Valerie Kerrigan** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**VI. UCWDB Report**

Antonio Rivera provided an overview of the proposed Stronger Workforce for America Act and discussed the potential impact on local workforce systems. Director Rivera explained that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act had originally been authorized in 2014 and that a new federal proposal, House Resolution 8210, had recently been introduced. He stated that the proposed legislation would significantly restructure workforce funding and service delivery nationwide.

Director Rivera explained that one of the largest proposed changes was the implementation of a mandatory 50 percent training expenditure requirement for local workforce boards. He noted that New Jersey currently strongly recommended a 40 percent training expenditure level, but the federal proposal would require a substantially higher threshold. He further explained that the proposal would increase the Governor's reserve funding authority from 15 percent to 25 percent, which could reduce the amount of funding distributed to local workforce areas.

Director Rivera also discussed the proposed transfer of Title II Adult Literacy funding oversight from the United States Department of Education to the United States Department of Labor. He noted that this change would likely have minimal impact in New Jersey because the state already administered literacy funding through the New Jersey Department of Labor.

Director Rivera informed the Board that the proposal would also increase the youth work experience requirement and would potentially lower the age threshold for Individual Training Accounts from 18 years old to 16 years old. He

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stated that the proposal appeared to focus on increasing direct workforce investment and reducing administrative bureaucracy.

Hillary McCarron asked whether there was currently a Senate version of the legislation. Antonio Rivera responded that, as of the meeting date, there was not yet a Senate companion bill and the legislation had only recently been introduced in the House of Representatives.

He further explained that local workforce boards and national workforce organizations had concerns regarding the proposal because it could significantly alter the operation and funding structure of local workforce systems. He stated that staff would continue monitoring the legislation and would provide projected budget models and impact scenarios at a future meeting.

Director Rivera next reviewed the Workforce Development Board budget expense report. He explained that the Board managed two-year program budgets and reviewed expenditure rates for Program Year 2024 and Program Year 2025 funding streams. Director Rivera noted that approximately \$900,000 in Program Year 2024 funding remained to be expended by June 30, 2026.

Andy Caligaris, a student intern from Union County Magnet High School, presented on his internship work related to budget management and quantitative analysis. Andy Caligaris explained that he had been working under Thomas McCabe to improve efficiencies within the fiscal reporting process. He described how the current process required manual conversion of financial PDF reports into Excel spreadsheets, which was time-consuming and labor intensive. Chairman Stan Robinson Jr. asked Andy Caligaris whether he had been able to determine how much staff time the process would save. Andy Caligaris responded that the process had not yet been fully implemented and, therefore, he did not yet have measurable time-saving data available.

Douglas Gee, a student intern from Union County Magnet High School, presented demographic research and workforce data visualizations related to veterans, transportation, and English proficiency within Union County. Douglas Gee highlighted that veterans remain a priority population under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and noted disparities related to poverty rates and wages despite lower unemployment rates among veterans. He also discussed transportation trends, including average commute times and opportunities to improve access through remote work and expanded public transportation options. Additionally, Douglas Gee reviewed English proficiency data, emphasizing the importance of English as a Second Language programs in supporting Spanish-speaking residents and individuals with limited English proficiency.

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VII. **Resolutions of the UCWDB**

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

**Resolution No. 2026-03**

**Adopting the Revised Memorandum of Understanding Between the Union County Workforce Development Board and the Union County Board of County Commissioners.**

Director Rivera explained that the memorandum of understanding outlined the respective responsibilities of the Workforce Development Board and the County of Union and established governance and firewall protections between departments. He noted that the agreement was required to be updated every two years.

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2026-03**. **James Brady** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2026-03**. **Erich Peter** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**BOARD  
ACTION**

**Resolution No. 2026-04**

**Adopting the 2026 Cost Allocation Plan.**

Antonio Rivera explained that the resolution adopted the methodology used to allocate staff time and shared costs across federal workforce funding streams. He noted that the allocation process was based on a rolling twelve-month analysis and ensured compliance with federal cost allocation requirements.

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2026-04**. **James Brady** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2026-04**. **Gloria Durham** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**BOARD  
ACTION**

**Resolution No. 2026-05**

**Rejecting All Proposals Received in Response to the Work First New Jersey Request for Proposals and Authorizing the Issuance of a New Request for Proposals for Transitional Jobs Services.**

Meredith Barracato explained that changes to the scope of work and funding allocations required the rejection and reissuance of the Request for Proposals. Meredith Barracato further explained that the revised Request for Proposals would focus on transitional jobs and priority populations, including low-income and justice-involved individuals. Antonio Rivera clarified that despite the

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procurement delay, supportive workforce services and training opportunities remained available through the American Job Center network.

**BOARD  
ACTION**

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2026-05. James Brady** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2026-05. Hillary McCarron** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Resolution No. 2026-06**

**Annual Certification of the Union County American Job Center for Program Year 2025 Pursuant to WIOA Section 121 and 20 CFR 678.800.**

Meredith Barracato reviewed the annual certification process required by the State Employment and Training Commission. Meredith Barracato highlighted positive improvements, including increased partner integration, front-line cross training, and co-location between the American Job Center and the Division of Social Services. Meredith Barracato also identified opportunities for improvement related to customer feedback systems and strengthened case management practices. Meredith Barracato noted continued work with the AJC Operator to ensure successful submission of the 2026 AJC Certification.

**BOARD  
ACTION**

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2026-06. James Brady** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2026-06. Dr. Lisa Hiscano** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Resolution No. 2026-07**

**Authorizing Submission of the 2026 – 2028 Local Workforce Development Board Certification Application and Confirmation of Interest in Maintaining Status to the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission.**

Antonio Rivera explained that the certification application required submission of monitoring reports, evaluations, meeting minutes, and American Job Center certification materials to the New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission.

**BOARD  
ACTION**

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2026-07. James Brady** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2026-07. Erich Peter** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

**Resolution No. 2026-08**

**Acknowledging Receipt of Proposed Policies and Procedures Manual, Authorizing Interim Implementation, and Scheduling Formal Adoption**

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Director Rivera introduced the proposed policies and procedures manual, which included approximately 45 policies related to federal workforce grant administration and internal controls. Antonio Rivera explained that the policies would serve as guidance not only for the Workforce Development Board but also for subrecipients and nonprofit vendors managing federal funds. He encouraged board members to review the policies and provide feedback prior to formal adoption which would take place at the July meeting.

**BOARD  
ACTION**

Chairman Robinson requested a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2026-08**. **James Brady** made a motion to approve **Resolution No. 2026-08**. **Gwen Ryan** seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

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

Melissa Lespinasse reviewed progress related to the American Job Center transition plan and certification process. Melissa Lespinasse explained that workgroups had focused on creating standardized customer surveys, implementing universal intake procedures, and improving customer service consistency across partners. She emphasized efforts to reduce fragmentation and improve data integration across systems.

Melissa Lespinasse also reviewed Adult Literacy performance updates and noted that UCNJ had exceeded enrollment and employment goals. Valerie Kerrigan discussed Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services performance and explained that staffing and facility limitations had impacted service delivery. Valerie Kerrigan thanked the County of Union for providing additional office space to assist bilingual counselors and improve operations.

IX. **American Job Center Report**

Robert Croom provided workforce performance updates related to Title I Adult, Dislocated Worker, and WorkFirst New Jersey services. Robert Croom reviewed participant enrollment, assessments, Individual Employment Plans, training completions, and employment outcomes. He noted increases in training participation and reported that WorkFirst New Jersey participants were obtaining employment at average wages exceeding \$23 per hour.

Erich Peter asked whether the American Job Center had established projected goals for participant employment outcomes. Robert Croom responded that the goal was to sustain employment for at least 200 WorkFirst New Jersey participants throughout the program period. Robert Croom explained that the American Job Center was collaborating with workforce partners and business representatives to improve employer engagement and reduce duplication of outreach efforts.

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James Brady asked whether veterans were represented within the reported data. Robert Croom responded that while no participants had formally identified as veterans in the data reviewed, the American Job Center continued to coordinate closely with veterans' service representatives and the County Division of Veterans Services.

X. **WIOA Youth Services Provider**

United Way of Greater Union County report was submitted for review.

XI. **Old Business**

No Comment

XII. **New Business**

Gwen Ryan thanked the Workforce Development Board for continuing to provide internship opportunities for high school students. Gwen Ryan emphasized the importance of exposing students to real-world professional experiences and stated that the internships provided invaluable learning opportunities.

Amy Wagner thanked the student interns for their contributions and praised both students for their professionalism, accomplishments, and impact on Workforce Development Board operations.

Hilary McCarron invited board members and partners to attend an upcoming workforce summit hosted by the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey. Hilary McCarron explained that the event would include panel discussions on workforce issues, higher education partnerships, and industry trends.

XIII. **Public Comments**

No Comment

XIV. **Adjournment**

Chairman Robinson noted there were no further business to be addressed, a motion to adjourn was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at approximately 10:08 a.m.

**Meeting Schedule:**

**9:00 AM, Wednesday, July 29, 2026**

**Location:**

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