



New Jersey State Employment and Training Commission

Dennis M. Bone, *Chairman*

Philip D. Murphy, *Governor*

State Employment and Training Commission Meeting Minutes

September 17, 2020 ~ 10 am – 11:30 am
Online (GoTo Meeting Platform)

I. Welcome & Introductions

Chairman Dennis Bone called the meeting to order at 10:00am and welcomed members and guests. He announced that, in accordance with the Open Public Meetings Act of 1978, notice of this meeting was submitted to the Trenton Times and Star Ledger and was posted on the SETC website, njsetc.net. Mr. Bone stated that with more than 80 attendees now joined in the meeting, no roundtable introductions will take place; members were asked to place their names in the Chat box instead.

The draft minutes of the June 25, 2020 meeting were presented. Tapas Sen made a motion to approve the minutes; the motion was seconded by Carolyn Wade. The minutes were approved by voice vote.

II. Chairman's Update

Chairman Bone reviewed the meeting agenda; anyone wishing to use public comment time at the end of the meeting was asked to alert the Chairman to reserve time towards the end of the meeting. There were no requests.

Chairman Bone asked SETC Acting Executive Director Gary Altman to share details about engagement efforts within the workforce systems since the pandemic hit. Mr. Altman reported that since March 26, the SETC and NJDOL have hosted weekly online meetings with local workforce development board (WDB) directors and Employment Services managers; more than 30 meetings were held. These were a great opportunity to coordinate changes to local service delivery due to COVID, and to share challenges and best practices. The group is now going to phase back to a monthly meeting schedule starting in October. Virtual meetings have been easy to schedule and additional meetings can be quickly added as needed. Mr. Altman gave a special thanks to SETC Deputy Executive Director Sheryl Hutchison for her support in transitioning this group to the online/virtual meeting platform. Mr. Altman also thanked Assistant Commissioner Hugh Bailey and Director Yolanda Allen for sharing their insights on re-engaging the public from the employer prospective, and to Assistant Commissioner Lesley Hirsch and her staff for providing valuable national and state activities happening in the labor market.

Chairman Bone reported that he and Mr. Altman and Ms. Hutchison attended the virtual meeting of the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices summer symposium in July. Mr. Altman

shared details of this meeting; a primary focus was the challenge being felt nationwide to re-envision workforce for the future. State workforce board chairs and directors from a number of states noted that new platforms are being used to re-engage the public; at the same time, they are working to understand the perspectives of employers in each state, as they meet the challenges of the pandemic. Many states are now providing online training and putting together virtual recruitment programs. In addition, workplace safety measures were addressed and attendees were educated in ways of providing sanitary environments.

Chairman Bone announced that the US Department of Education (USED) has provided a new grant opportunity for state workforce boards under the CARES Act funding. Chairman Bone noted the valuable work done by the SETC and its partners to apply for this grant, and asked SETC Deputy Executive Director Sheryl Hutchison to give a brief overview. Ms. Hutchison reported that NJ submitted its application for the Education Stabilization Fund – Reimagine Workforce Preparation grant on August 21; we are now waiting to hear back from the US Department of Education about the grant award.

The proposal – NJ Strengthening Training and Education Pathways (STEP) to Careers – is a whole-of-government approach, involving multiple state partners, that will support pathways and credential attainment in the workforce development and education ecosystems in NJ. Ms. Hutchison acknowledged and thanked the many partners who worked tirelessly throughout the summer and participated in more-than-weekly team meetings and conference calls for this statewide effort. These partners included multiple staff from the following agencies:

- NJ Department of Labor and Workforce Development, especially the Office of Research and Information, the Workforce Division, and the Office of Apprenticeship;
- NJ Department of Education, especially the Office of Career Readiness;
- NJ Office of the Secretary of Higher Education;
- NJ Business & Industry Association;
- NJ Council of Community Colleges;
- NJ Economic Development Authority;
- And most importantly, the support and guidance of the Governor’s Office.

Ms. Hutchison added that the NJ proposal featured letters of support from many distinguished agencies, including state and regional Chambers of Commerce, the Choose NJ group, and Tech United NJ. Chairman Bone acknowledged the exceptional leadership provided by Acting Executive Director Gary Altman and Assistant Commissioner Lesley Hirsch with the grant application.

Chairman Bone announced the National Manufacturing Day event being held on Tuesday, October 2, 2020 and acknowledged the great work done John Kennedy and his team for this event; all members and attendees are encouraged to visit the NJMEP website, <https://www.njmep.org/> for more information.

Chairman Bone then introduced New Jersey Department of Labor and Workforce Development (NJDOLE) Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo, and thanked him for carving out time from his very busy schedule to provide an update on departmental activity in response to the pandemic.

III. NJDOL Update:

NJ Department of Labor Commissioner Robert Asaro-Angelo began by thanking the SETC and all partners, especially local WDBs, for their hard work. At a recent NJ legislative budget hearing, Commissioner Asaro-Angelo received much bipartisan praise for the work done by the New Jersey Department of Labor (NJDOL) and its staff, in the handling of this unemployment crisis. In April 2020, NJDOL received 215,000 unemployment claims, a 2700% increase since one year ago. Last week, NJDOL received an additional 19,000 initial unemployment claims; this is a nearly 14 percent decline over the prior week and the fewest new applications since the week ending August 8.

NJDOL has paid out \$310 million to eligible claimants for the week ending Sept. 12. A total of \$15.4 billion in federal and state unemployment benefits has been distributed to unemployed New Jersey workers since mid-March. Commissioner Asaro-Angelo reported that New Jersey has now regained a total of 409,000 jobs in the four months since April, or about 49 percent of the jobs lost due to the coronavirus pandemic and measures taken in response to this emergency. The state's unemployment rate fell by 3.3 percentage points over the month to 10.9 percent. Commissioner Asaro-Angelo expressed his deep appreciation to all the workforce and education partners, and their teams, for their inspiring service and leadership to deliver services in a virtual environment. He emphasized the incredible value of these efforts to the workers of New Jersey. The future of New Jersey remains bright; NJDOL is focused on strengthening the resolve of workforce development and protection, especially to ensure that workers are properly classified, have career paths with credentials, and that employees have the wages and benefits that they deserve. Chairman Bone thanked Commissioner Asaro-Angelo for these updates, and for the tireless work of the Department during these challenging times.

IV. Local Re-Engagement: Virtual Services Models

Chairman Bone introduced staff from the Newark, Middlesex County and Atlantic County Workforce Development Boards, to provide insights on local re-engagement processes for workforce customers.

Newark Workforce Development Board (WDB)

Karen Gaylord, Director of Programs, presented information on the emerging programming being implemented by the Newark WDB. She explained that Newark WDB Director Sakinah Hoyte has been given a temporary assignment by Mayor Ras Baraka, to create the city's new department to address homelessness; Ms. Gaylord is taking on her WDB duties for the time being. She thanked the SETC staff and the NJDOL Assistant Commissioner Hugh Bailey for their guidance and support during this difficult time for workforce partners. She also thanked all of her fellow WDB directors for their mentoring and support. Ms. Gaylord shared a link to the Brookings Institute article discussing opportunity gaps and skills gaps: <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/the-avenue/2020/09/09/the-labor-market-doesnt-have-a-skills-gap-it-has-an-opportunity-gap/>

Ms. Gaylord described the challenges of the digital divide and the need to meet these citizens where they are to be able to provide vital services. Newark is leveraging its available resources by utilizing 10 satellite locations that the city operates for professional services and many vocational training programs; laptops and Chromebooks will be loaned out to customers and technology assistance will be provided. Outreach will be done via posters and fliers shared in community locations, such as food distribution sites. Newark is focusing on high school equivalency; GED programs are expected to be in great demand for a long time. The Newark WDB has also started a pilot program for green infrastructure certification. Ms. Gaylord stressed the importance of being customer facing, understanding the systemic inequities

that exist, and working to remove these obstacles with accessible resources. She thanked Chairman Bone and the SETC for the opportunity to share these efforts with the group. Chairman Bone acknowledged Ms. Gaylord's insights and dedication to serve those most in need, and thanked her for her presentation.

Middlesex County WDB & Office of Career Opportunity

Executive Director Kevin Kurdziel, began by thanking the group for allowing him to share their experiences in providing services virtually. Prior to the COVID pandemic, Middlesex WDB began working with the Heldrich Center to perform a workforce and economic competitive study and had completed the first phase. One of the recommendations received was to better engage the community; Middlesex County WDB looked to provide more services virtually, and open more satellite locations for the One-Stop Career Centers. Although faced with many challenges due to the pandemic, this was an opportunity to provide services in a new way and potentially serve more people. New efforts include conducting meetings virtually; using the WDB website to provide information and respond more quickly to the public; expanding the use of DocuSign for customer forms and signatures; improving the procurement process for Workforce New Jersey and WIOA youth programs; and establishing a COVID-19 response team with community and employer membership, to identify workforce needs as a result of the pandemic.

Middlesex County WDB Deputy Director and Chief Operations Officer Diane Seavers explained that in early April, all in-person services were transitioned to virtual activities, including One-Stop orientation, career assessment, eligibility determination, and youth high school equivalency programs. The Workforce Learning Link (WLL) has transitioned its customers to various digital platforms for CASAS testing, remote Adult Basic Education, remote computer literacy training, and many more programs. The WDB has also been creating podcasts for business customers and jobseekers. Middlesex also uses the Skillup online learning platform, which offers over 5,500 programs. The Business Solution Team (BST) conducts virtual job fairs and customized hiring events, mock interviewing, resume assistance and job matching via Zoom. The WDB also uses a mobile-based app that provides text notifications to job seekers about career opportunities. Next steps include working with community partners to reach more people where they are and providing virtual services at partner locations; a survey also will be conducted to identify customer challenges with the use of virtual services.

The first ever Central Jersey Drive Thru Job Fair will be held on October 15, 2020. Drive-thru job fairs will be held at multiple locations in Middlesex, Monmouth and Ocean Counties. The Middlesex WDB will continue to find innovative ways, with the help of the community and partners, to improve their outreach and identify the challenges that their customers are facing. Chairman Bone thanked her for her great presentation and the valuable work being done in Middlesex.

Atlantic County Workforce Development

Mr. Francis Kuhn, Acting Executive Director, explained that the Atlantic County workforce area is operating with staff on a staggered schedule, with safety concerns being paramount. In a small county with a population of only 265,000, relationships are critical to everything they do. He emphasized that communication, coordination and cooperation are the keys to success in serving job seeker customers, working with partners, and supporting employees. Atlantic County workforce offices are operating normally, but by appointment only. The Atlantic workforce team continues to work closely with state

partners including the Unemployment Insurance team and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services staff. Key efforts include working with adult education and literacy partners to ensure High School Equivalency (HSE) testing continues with proper health and safety guidelines in place. Mr. Kuhn referenced some virtual services being offered via telephone, e-mail, and video conferencing. Video phones are also available in communication kiosks at service locations. Some planned updates to the Atlantic workforce website include informational videos, re-employment orientation, HSE information sessions, Workforce NJ orientations and implementation of an intake/eligibility app. Service delivery expansions will include providing On- the-Job Training (OJT) and apprenticeship opportunities, utilization of cross-system training and job development/job placement activities to be conducted by employment specialists. Mr. Kuhn thanked all of the WDB directors for the knowledge and input that they have shared; the Atlantic WDB has benefited from the group's expertise and insights, and is proud to have implemented these new services. Chairman Bone thanked Mr. Kuhn for his presentation.

Due to time constraints, Chairman Bone asked members to forward any questions to Gary Altman and Sheryl Hutchison, Sheryl or directly to the WDB staff who presented today.

V. Public Comment

No public comments were offered. Chairman Bone thanked all the presenters, and the members and attendees for their outstanding efforts. The next meeting date was announced; the online Commission meeting will be held on November 17, 2020, with a GoTo meeting link to be shared.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:32 am.

Next SETC Meeting:

Tuesday, November 17, 2020

10am -12pm

GoTo Meeting Webinar (link to be provided)

ATTENDEES: September 17, 2020

PRESENT MEMBERS and ALTERNATES

Asaro-Angelo, Robert	Lee, Edwin (for Brown)
Bone, Dennis	Milone, Catherine
Butler, Kate (for Oliver)	Moody, Melissa (for Johnson)
Colton, Tara (for Sullivan)	Nadler, Sally
Drakeford, Shamira (for Duda)	Safrin, Michele (for Blake)
Ferrera Anthony	Sen, Tapas
Franklin, John	Wade, Carolyn Carter
Glover, Erskine (for Dehmer)	Wilson, McKenzie A.
Hilliard, Tom (for Smith Ellis)	Wise, Robert

ABSENT MEMBERS

Carey, Michael	Reisser, Clifford
Donnadio, John	Rice, Ronald
Gacos, Nicholas	Wimberly, Benjie
Hornik, Stephen	Wowkanech, Charles

OTHER ATTENDEES

Allen, Yolanda	Gaylord, Karen	Murphy, Lauren
Apple, Emily	Gerson, Amanda	O'Neill-McGuire, Kelly
Bhavna, Tailor	Grzella, Paul	Ochse, Maureen
Blanco, Francis	Hala, Joanne	Payanzo-Cotton, Anna
Bogert, Duwan	Hartman, Sharon	Pierre, Eric
Brenner, Bill	Hiller, Nanci	Polak, Carol
Brown, Melissa	Hirsch, Lesley	Ramsay, David
Cacace, Mark	Howard, Donald	Scalia, Donna
Carmona-Bell, Linda	Jubanyik, Danielle	Schuster, Manuela
Carroll, Karen	Kuhn, Francis	Seavers, Diane
Caravajel, Allyson	Kurdziel, Kevin	Secret, Keith
Crawford, Jim	Korn, Dennis	Seith, David
Custard, Donna	Kvarantan, Alexandra	Spinelli, Allison
Davidene, Alpart	Levitt, Jill	Sternbach, Larry
Davis, Patricia	Liu, Helen	Taguwa, Denise
Diaz, Julie	Lopez, Adalberto	Thompson, Cheri
Dombrowski, Joseph	Levandowski, Andrea	Thurman, DaVetta
Enright, Patrick	Meyer, Cheryl	Weil, Robert
Francis, Alexis	Molinelli, Tammy	West, Kelly
Gatling, Kerri	Morrison, Angelique	

SETC STAFF

Gary Altman	Sheryl Hutchison	Courtney Santarsiero
JoAnn Brooks	Maureen O'Brien Murphy	