



EAMA RSP Hybrid Meeting Notes June 20, 2024

Welcome – Vice Chair **Hannah Belmont of Westminster Tool** started the meeting at 9:04 a.m. She opened the floor for employers to share their recent accomplishments.

- Hannah congratulated **John Murphy** on his upcoming retirement. The group thanked John for his work as the former Executive Director of EAMA Inc., the predecessor group to EAMA RSP, and for his work on the Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) and the Youth MPI (YMPI).
- Tony Benoit announced that **Westminster Tool** was honored by the *Hartford Business Journal* as the Family Business of the Year.
- **Brian Grossguth of Myoshi America** shared that they will be breaking ground in July on a \$6 million expansion, expected to be completed in April 2025.

Hannah introduced new EAMA RSP members **Neil Gilman – Gilman Gear**, and **Justin Soja - Alpha Q**.

Employer Instant Poll – Two questions were posed to the members to gain insights about their business outlook now and next year. One key takeaway is that overall members are optimistic about the next 12 months.

Compared to June 2023, how is your business doing overall in June 2024?

- 40% - Business was better
- 40% - Business was slower
- 20% - Business was about the same

Thinking ahead 12 months, how do you think business will be in June 2025 compared to June 2024?

- 73% - Business will be better in June 2025
- 13% - Business will be about the same
- 13% - It will be a mixed bag

Comments about the survey included:

- “Covid correction seems to be behind us. Bookings and shipments are rebounding nicely. All metrics are positive other than holding a little more inventory than we would like. That will work off soon.”
- “Our growth is dependent on finding qualified employees.”
- “It will be a year of adapting to changes within the industry.”

Updates from Working Groups

Business 2 Business – Dan Chaplin, Forge 41 – Dan encouraged members to participate in the 2024 CT Supplier Connection Direct Supplier Summit & MatchMaker on June 26 & 27 which provides an opportunity to meet with large buyers including Electric Boat, Sikorsky and Pratt & Whitney.

He also announced that the Lunch & Learn webinar about maximizing the usefulness of CONNEX will be held on Wednesday, July 24.

Lastly, the B2B group would like to provide more networking opportunities for the manufacturing members and encouraged anyone interested in hosting an event to contact him.

Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance – A Connecticut Regional Sector Partnership

Next Steps: If you are interested in hosting a small networking event/tour at your company please contact Dan Chaplin at forge41@outlook.com.

Plastics – Hannah Belmont, Westminster Tool – Hannah shared that the Plastics Working Group and EWIB are working with CT State – Quinebaug Valley to move the Plastics training program in a new direction with a new course potentially beginning this fall. The Plastics training program, which piloted in a format for incumbent workers, is being adapted to also serve as a pipeline for new workers to fill openings. The redesigned course will follow the MPI model, combining basic manufacturing and employability skills with fundamental technical skills to fast track individuals into careers in plastics manufacturing.

Next Steps: Hannah will set up a meeting with interested companies. For more information, contact Hannah at hbelmont@westminstertool.com.

Youth Pipeline – Jessica van der Swaagh of SPIROL reported on the outcomes of the June 4 meeting. The group is finalizing a landscape analysis with the goal of establishing an online catalog of services and programs to connect employers and schools. We estimate completion and implementation by the end of the summer.

We are working to expand and enhance the YMPI, and the working group discussed engaging students at the middle school level as well as providing pathways to students starting their freshman year of high school (rather than waiting until senior year). We are also working with ReadyCT to engage with local high schools who do not have defined pathways in place.

The Youth Pipeline Working Group plans to host a meeting in August to provide advice and feedback on the YMPI. All employer members of EAMA RSP will be welcome.

We chatted about the Manufacturing Expo scheduled for 9/26 and started to brainstorm on activities and partnership with other employers.

Workforce & Outreach – In Jeff Dickey’s absence, **Tony Benoit** reported that at their June 12 meeting Sarah Adams, HR Manager at Foster Corp, gave a presentation about Foster’s efforts to build a culture of employee success. Sarah spoke about Foster’s strong process of orientation, goal setting and evaluation for new hires. As part of their Lean Manufacturing processes, they have an Ideas Program to increase innovation, which includes bonuses. Tony shared that Foster has shifted to a work schedule that has employees working three 12-hour shifts per week. This is preferred by employees and has allowed Foster to maintain a 24/6 production schedule. A copy of Sarah’s presentation was sent to the group in the Post Meeting Re-Cap email sent on June 21.

Director’s Report

MPI Curriculum Review – **Tony Benoit** shared that Electric Boat continues to revise and thoroughly document the MPI curricula. He reminded the members that their subject matter experts are invited to review and comment on the curriculum packages for Inside Machining. The module for Lathe Machines was distributed via email on June 14. Employers may request the packages for any of the other 17 modules included within the Inside Machining curriculum. The review for Pipefitting is also underway. Attention is being given to ensure that the skills match the needs of smaller employers.

Kylene Perras from the UConn School of Engineering noted that there may be some synergy between the MPI and the Naval Maritime Consortium and suggested that EAMA RSP connect with them.

seCTer – Tony introduced Paul Whitescarver, Executive Director of seCTer who spoke briefly about their resources including their Boost Loans and non-affiliated bank loans. SeCTer RISE grants offer up to

\$25,000 which could be used for cybersecurity assessment/requirement expenses. The grants can be coupled with other loan programs.

Next Steps: Visit www.secter.org for more information.

Energy Saving Webinar – Tony shared that for those who missed the webinar presented by Charles Daniels from Connect Energy Resources, the recording is available [here](#). **Ray Coombs of Westminster Tool** indicated that they saved approximately \$40,000 on their energy costs during their first year of working with Connect Energy Resources.

Employer Engagement Survey – Tony encouraged the members to complete this important survey which will provide a baseline for EWIB, our convener, to measure the current level of satisfaction among our members and to help us set goals to do even better next year.

Updates on EAMA RSP Responsibilities & Initiatives

Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) – **Carol LaBelle** from **EWIB** reported that, for the program year ending June 30, 2024, we will have enrolled over 1,000 MPI participants and conducted 88 training cohorts. For the next quarter there are 20 classes scheduled.

Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (YMPI) – **David Allard** from **EWIB** gave an overview of the YMPI program which provides 150 hours of basic manufacturing skills training in 10 comprehensive high schools during students' senior year. The training culminates in an evaluation held at CT State – Quinebaug Valley and Three Rivers. About 100 students were enrolled in the YMPI this year. 54 registered for the evaluations. 45 attended; 27 passed which represents a 60% success rate, slightly lower than last year. Our goal for the coming year is to grow enrollment and the number of participating schools.

Employers suggested that students be surveyed about their experience with the program. David noted that ReadyCT works closely with the teachers at the participating schools and teachers receive three professional development days per year. Michael Nogelo from EWIB noted that the Youth Pipeline Working Group will gather EAMA RSP member input on the program, including what employers want from the program. The Working Group will also strive to make work-based learning opportunities easier for employers to participate in. Tony pointed out that hundreds of high school grads will enter careers in manufacturing without completing the YMPI evaluation.

Explore Manufacturing Expo – David encouraged members to register for the GNACC Explore Manufacturing Expo being planned for September 26 at Dodd Stadium in Norwich. The planning group is aiming for 1,000 students this year with a boost in the number of 6th and 7th grade students. The goal is to have 30+ manufacturers participate and provide an age-appropriate hands-on activity for students.

Other

Partner Corner – **Cowlis Andrews, CT DECD** – Cowlis spoke about the JobsCT Tax Rebate program, which is an “earn as you grow” program. To qualify, employers must create at least 25 jobs over the first two years to receive a 25% or 50% tax rebate on CT withholding taxes for each new job created. He stressed that employers must apply before they make their first hire. He cited the example that TTM Technologies created 124 jobs, resulting in up to \$860K tax rebates over 7 years.

Next Steps: Learn more about the program [here](#).

Networking Event – Hannah Belmont mentioned that a networking event is being planned for the fall, following up on the successful event hosted by The Lee Company.

Next EAMA RSP Hybrid meeting: Wednesday, August 21, 9:00-10:15 a.m.