



MINUTES

EWIB Board of Directors Hybrid Meeting Tuesday, January 28, 2025 8:00 a.m.

Members Present: Ray Coombs, Jr.; Jessica Corneau; Ginger Frasca; Nicole Galo; Thayne Hutchins, Jr.; David Jarvis; Chris Jewell; Mary Ellen Jukoski; Susan Kocaba; Linda Ladas; Courtney Murphy; Michael Phelps; Eric Protulis; Caleb Roseme; Dina Sears-Graves; Jessica van der Swaagh & Paul Whitescarver.

Staff Present: Michael Nogelo, Guy Saporito, Carol LaBelle & David Allard.

Others Present: Dave Bechtel; Tony Benoit; Kevin Cunningham; Ayanti Grant; Kristin Hempel; Mary Ellen McCarron; Denise Spellman; Kelli Vallieres; & Cyndi Wells.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chris Jewell called the meeting to order at 8:02 a.m. and welcomed new Board member Ginger Frasca from Generations Family Health Center, a Community Health Center serving people at locations in Danielson, Norwich, Putnam, and Willimantic.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ACCEPTANCE OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

A **MOTION** was made to accept the minutes of the November 26, 2024 EWIB Board of Directors meeting (*JARVIS/SEARS-GRAVES*). **Action:** Unanimously approved.

CORRESPONDENCE

EWIB President/CEO Michael Nogelo shared the following correspondence highlights:

- **FY24 Good Jobs Challenge (GJC) Application** – The U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration notified EWIB that its application for a FY24 GJC grant was not awarded. EWIB applied for funding for the Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) and the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance Regional Sector Partnership (EAMA RSP) to supplement the foundational State funding. Only eight of the more than 100 applications submitted received an award.
- **Federal Reserve Bank of Boston MPI Visit** – The Boston Fed asked EWIB to help coordinate a February 19 visit to the MPI Manufacturing Apprenticeship Center at Grasso Technical High School to inform Boston Fed President Susan Collins about EWIB workforce training activities and partnerships and economic conditions in Eastern Connecticut. The visit will include a roundtable with MPI employer partners, the EAMA RSP Director, Senator Cathy Osten, and MPI and Youth MPI (YMPI) community college and high school partners.
- **CT Department of Labor (CT DOL) Executive Orders Advisory** – On January 23, EWIB received an email from CT DOL announcing an immediate pause on all action related to the CT DOL Equitable Transition Models (ETM) Demonstration Project grant from the U.S. Office of Disability Employment Policy. The CT DOL advisory came as a result of a notice from U.S. DOL related to immediate implementation of recent executive orders. CT DOL sub-

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contracts with EWIB to help implement the ETM project, which aims to build an evidence base of strategies that help youth and young adults with disabilities and other barriers to employment to successfully transition into the workforce. The CT DOL email also advised EWIB to cease any other federally funded activities that may violate the executive orders, pending further guidance from U.S. DOL.

David Jarvis noted that the Office of Management and Budget had issued a memo on January 27 ordering a temporary pause of federal agency grant, loan, and other financial assistance programs.

GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE COUNCIL (GWC)/OFFICE OF WORKFORCE STRATEGY (OWS) REPORT

Chief Workforce Officer Kelli Vallieres from OWS shared the following recent OWS highlights: a) OWS will review its Good Jobs Challenge (GJC) and Career ConneCT projects for compliance with recent executive orders; b) On January 10, OWS hosted the 3rd Annual RSP convening, which covered topics including re-entry and quality jobs toolkits for employers and RSP sustainability, at Central Connecticut State University; c) OWS participated with CT DOL in the U.S. DOL comprehensive review of Connecticut's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs and will support an evaluation of the WIOA system; and d) OWS will collaborate with CT DOL and Connecticut's longitudinal data system (P20 WIN) to conduct a more thorough career pathway evaluation. The next GWC meeting will take place on February 6 at 3:00 p.m.

CHAIR'S/PRESIDENT'S REPORT

- **WIOA Non-Reauthorization** – Mr. Nogelo reported that the bipartisan WIOA reauthorization bill was not attached to the continuing resolution passed by Congress on December 20, 2024, so WIOA remains an expired program. EWIB supported passage of the bill despite concerns about the impact of its requirement for workforce boards to spend at least 50% of their WIOA Adult and Dislocated Worker funding on training, with up to 8% of that able to go towards support services. This mandate would have impacted EWIB's ability to maintain all three Eastern Connecticut American Job Centers (AJC) and sustain AJC staff capacity. Congressman Joe Courtney and Senator Chris Murphy helped tweak the bill to increase the support services percentage to 10% and to include individualized career services as a support service. WIOA remains in effect until the new Congress takes up WIOA reauthorization again, and the annual appropriations process will determine funding levels. Despite this uncertainty, the workforce system's goal of preparing people for jobs has always had bipartisan support.
- **Mid-Year Performance Overview** – December 31, 2024 marked the halfway point of EWIB's fiscal year. Mr. Nogelo provided a mid-year overview of performance on several EWIB objectives, including: a) Maintain brand awareness; b) Pursue additional funding; c) Achieve CT Youth Employment Program performance measures; d) MPI and Healthcare Pipeline Initiative (HPI) enrollment and job placement; e) Engage employers in manufacturing and healthcare RSPs; and f) Increase enrollment in the YMPI and Youth HPI (YHPI).
- **Succession Planning Update** – Mr. Nogelo announced that David Allard was promoted effective January 6. The EWIB senior management team, led by Sr. Director of Programs and Special Projects Carol LaBelle, will help Mr. Allard prepare to become EWIB Director of Operations on July 1. The senior management team is developing plans to redistribute many of David's duties to other team members while considering other hiring needs.
- **Customer Testimonial** – Participants watched video featuring a WIOA Adult program customer testimonial.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Eastern CT Healthcare Partnership (ECHP)** – ECHP Coordinator Dave Bechtel reported that the ECHP Policy Action Team met in December in advance of the legislative session. The Quality of Life Action Team will focus next on employees' physical and psychological safety. The ECHP Co-Chairs plan to focus the next full ECHP meeting on a planned Congressionally Directed Spending application and a potential training partnership with Futuro Health. The ECHP will help coordinate an April 25 Healthcare Careers Expo in Norwich.

Mr. Jarvis said Killingly High School and Westview Health Care Center are excited to partner on a YHPI Certified Nursing Assistant program starting in February. Mr. Allard thanked Mr. Jarvis for helping facilitate that relationship.

- **EAMA RSP** – EAMA RSP Director Tony Benoit reported that an instant poll conducted during the December 18, 2024 RSP meeting indicated that the challenge of hiring and retaining workers has lessened for regional

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manufacturers over the past two years. More EAMA RSP members have “adopted” YMPI schools, which may involve providing work-based learning opportunities and other resources, as well as hiring qualified graduates. EAMA RSP leaders will consider how the RSP may address the common challenge of rising healthcare costs. Mr. Benoit testified on behalf of EAMA RSP about the need for stronger career-connected high schools at a legislative hearing of the Connecticut Manufacturing Caucus.

- **Ad Hoc Procurement** – Ms. LaBelle reported that the Ad Hoc Procurement Committee met on January 7 and approved the process to procure the following programs: Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Jobs First Employment Services (JFES), Business Services Team, and One Stop Operator services. EWIB plans to release the relevant requests for proposals (RFP) and requests for quotations (RFQ) on February 4.

A **MOTION** was made to approve the January 9, 2025 Ad Hoc Procurement Committee report, as presented (*JARVIS/SEARS-GRAVES*). **ACTION:** Unanimously approved.

- **Executive** – EWIB CFAO Guy Saporito reviewed EWIB’s FY24 Independent Auditor’s Report by Doherty, Beals, & Banks, P.C., and informed the group that the audit contained no findings or concerns as evident in their opinion. For the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024, EWIB recorded revenue of over \$17M, revenue per FTE of over \$1.5M, and general and administrative (G&A) costs equaling 4.33% of agency-wide expenditures. Mr. Saporito stated that federal stimulus funding is short-term and irreplaceable, so EWIB focuses on long-term revenue growth outside of stimulus funding. EWIB achieved this “core” revenue growth before, during, and after the Great Recession stimulus, and is well-positioned to achieve a similar core revenue growth rate as the COVID stimulus comes to an end.

A **MOTION** was made to approve the January 7, 2025 Executive Committee report, as presented (*JUKOSKI/PHELPS*). **ACTION:** Unanimously approved.

OLD BUSINESS

Dina Sears-Graves reported that the Southeastern Connecticut Childcare Collective will roll out its goals and strategies at its January 31 meeting. The Collective’s goal is to add 500 regional childcare slots.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

MEETING SURVEY & ADJOURNMENT

Chair Jewell asked participants to complete a brief online meeting satisfaction survey. The next Board meeting will be held March 25, 2025.

A **MOTION** was made to adjourn the meeting (*WHITESCARVER/SEARS-GRAVES*). **ACTION:** Unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:23 a.m.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted for EWIB Secretary Caleb Roseme by David Allard.

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