

Meeting Minutes

MARCH 10, 2021 3:30 P.M. – 5:30 P.M.

TELE-CONFERENCE CALL (DUE TO CORONAVIRUS)

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JOIN BY PHONE: 1-352-612-0488 PIN: 581 293 502#



MEMBERS PRESENT

Louis Dubin (Chair)

Chris Sachse (Vice Chair)

John D. Barber, Jr.

Carol Beatty

Gary Bockrath

Jennifer Bodensiek

Gavin Buckley

Andrea Chapdelaine

Veronica A. Cool

Michelle Day

Scott Dennis

Katarina Ennerfelt

Terry R. Gilleland, Jr.

Wanda Smith Gispert

Robert L. Green

Steve Groenke

Kevin D. Heffner

Stacey Herman

Rona E. Kramer

Sandra Kurtinitis

Andrew B. Larson

Larry Letow

Roya Mohadjer

Gary Murdock

Stephen K. Neal

Alexander Núñez

Lourdes R. Padilla

Charles Ramos

Tiffany P. Robinson

Edward C. Rothstein, Col. Ret.

Kelly M. Schulz

Marty Schwartz

James A. Sears

William E. Simons

Michelle B. Smith

Michelle J. Wright

Charnetia V. Young

MEMBERS ABSENT

Sam Abed

Mick Arnold

Vanessa Atterbear

Joanne C. Benson

Alice Blayne-Allard

James D. Fielder

Carl Livesay

Amie Long

Chad Nagel

George W. Owings, III

Lisa Rusyniak

Karen Salmon

Gerald "Jerry" Shapiro

Leslie R. Simmons

Charles T. Wetherington

GWDB STAFF

Mike DiGiacomo

Darla Henson

Ken Lemberg

Molly Mesnard

GUESTS *

Charlotte Ahearn

Gary Bonner

Tiara Booker-Dwyer

Ellen Bredt

Philip Brown

Build Your Path

Brian Cahalan

Denise Carey

Dwight Carr

Nora Carroll

Natalie Clements

Gary Cohen

Kim Cohen

Noell Damron

Derek Davis

Lloyd Day

Mark Drury

John Feaster

Anthony Featherstone

Lauren Gilwee

Jamie Gunnell

Rishan Habte

Kimberly Hahr

Kelly Hodge-Williams

Portia Hurtt	Augustin Ntabaganyimana	Bruce Spector
Kenneth Jessup	Kendra Panlock	Steve Spector
Milena Kornyl	John Papagni	Jenn Sproul
Heather Lageman	Darlene Peregory	Teaera Strum
Brian Lynch	Ed Roberts	Francine Trout
Meghan McDermott	Christine Ross	Jacqueline Turner
Meka McNeal	Erin Roth	Doug Weimer
Leighton McPhaull	James Rzepkowski	Felicia Williams
Ana Mejia	Sarah Sheppard	Justin Zawatski
Denise Nooe	Walter Simmons	
Firefliesai Notetaker KE	Ryan Smith	

**Please note that these guests RSVP'd for the tele-conference call, but roll call was only taken for board members, so guest attendance could not be confirmed.*

INTRODUCTIONS AND WELCOME OPENING REMARKS:

The meeting started officially at 3:30 PM, March 10, 2021, via tele-conference call. Governor's Workforce Development Board (GWDB) Executive Director Michael DiGiacomo turned the meeting over to Chairman Louis Dubin, who provided welcome and opening remarks. Chairman Dubin noted that Maryland was opening up again for business, with brighter and better times upcoming. Vice Chair Chris Sachse observed that on the Cybersecurity side, the outlook looked good, with 22,000 jobs open.

Chairman Dubin turned the meeting over to Maryland Department of Labor Secretary Tiffany Robinson. She gave a departmental update. There was a successful processing of Unemployment Insurance (UI) claims. In 2020, it was 1.4 million claims (up from 170,000 in 2019), which was unprecedented. Secretary Robinson was proud of the metrics thus far, including \$10.1 billion in benefits paid. With record unemployment insurance activity, there continues to be bad actors and fraudsters. With an additional \$300 per week in UI funds disseminated for individuals/families, there was a significant spike in fraud. The vast majority of claims flagged fraudulent (over 87%) are indeed fraudulent, as reflected on MDUnemployment.com. The Maryland Department of Labor will never ask for personal messages through text messaging or email. The Department is busy helping Marylanders get back to work, as evidenced by the COVID-19 Layoff Aversion Fund program. Expired licenses are being renewed by June 30 via the Division of Occupational and Professional Licensing. The Governor is taking steps to reopen Maryland. In addressing a question on penalties for fraud, Secretary Robinson stressed that the magnitude of fraud was in identity theft, with some fraudsters attacking various states. Secretary Robinson thanked everyone for their efforts.

Chairman Dubin opened the floor to any other Secretaries. Department of Commerce Secretary Kelly Schulz spoke about the Governor's reopening process. She can take questions from the business community about this and respond to: secretary.commerce@maryland.gov.

Chairman Dubin called for a motion to approve the December 9, 2020, board meeting minutes. Secretary Green made the motion, and Secretary Padilla seconded. The minutes were approved.

There are two nominations pending for new board members.

Chairman Dubin turned the meeting over to Mr. DiGiacomo, who referenced quarterly board written announcements disseminated before the meeting. Unemployment Insurance's Work Sharing program is being advertised through television. There was an announcement on Vehicles for Change, and Mr. DiGiacomo turned the floor over to board member Marty Schwartz for his additional comments. His organization awards 300 to 400 vehicles in normal years. Vehicles for Change has proposed a low cost Lyft type program, with a driver dropping off people to work and with large employer van pools. A \$50,000 awarded planning grant could lead to a \$1 million grant for a pilot program. This would be different than other funded programs that depend on public transit. Vehicles for Change is expanding its Reentry program into Prince George's County via Hyattsville (expected in June), and later into Salisbury, MD. The intent is to continue to serve impoverished communities. There was a question about operations in Montgomery County, and the answer was not yet.

Mr. DiGiacomo referenced quarterly meetings for the 13 local workforce development board chairs, vice chairs, and directors, starting last October, to increase communications and to share best practices. He also briefly discussed the Blueprint for Maryland's Future, a bill aimed to rebuild the state's public school system through expanded programs recommended by the "Kirwan" commission so that all Marylanders have access to a world-class education. The GWDB has been working closely with partners at the Maryland State Department of Education and will be reaching out to GWDB members shortly with further details.

PRESENTATIONS:

Next, Mr. DiGiacomo introduced Gary Bonner, Executive Director, and Kelly Hodge-Williams of PC's for People Maryland, to speak about their program that deals with Digital Equity and Literacy. The program (a nonprofit social enterprise that is 12 years old) started in St. Paul, MN, and is soon to be in Georgia. PC's for People addresses barriers to economic mobility emanating from lack of a computer, lack of broadband access, and lack of digital literacy. They take old computer assets from organizations such as Johns Hopkins and bring them to re-manufacturing and refurbishing facilities to get them up to use again. The program serves individuals earning less than 200% of the poverty level. They provide technical support to individuals. Digital literacy programs have been developed through the use of Digital Navigators, statewide communities of practice, and availability of internship programs across the state. PC's for People has recycled millions of pounds of equipment that would otherwise go in the landfill. This has resulted in access to retired technology, as the jobs of tomorrow require digital literacy. In Illinois, for example, state agencies have retired their technology with the assistance of PC's for People. Hard drives have been removed and wiped clean, and security concerns have been addressed. There is a technical support call center, where the organization supports devices that are deployed and there are warranties. This is all a social enterprise model, with \$30 to \$80 donations/contributions for a desktop from customers, engaging them at price points they can afford with support they need. There is hiring from the community and teaching folks to refurbish and re-manufacture personal computers. There have been eight interns from Pass It On, starting at \$15/hour, with 1200 devices produced per month.

Mr. Bonner answered a number of questions from GWDB members. He articulated that the word gets out on the organization's efforts through community of practice, via which populations are treated like consumers, with use of direct mail and social media campaigns. As a technology company, PC's for People can handle other languages, with a technical support hotline using English or Spanish. Elderly people can be served, who may talk to a computer versus using a keyboard. There is a senior housing community being served in Baltimore, with a neighbor to neighbor referral network, with communication pushed through a network of partners. There is service of the Maryland foster care program, with computers going to foster care kids. A challenge is getting the word out to big corporations and indicating that they need not throw out their technology, rather they can send it to PC's for People. Security precautions are taken with the refurbished computers, as the organization employs certified Microsoft refurbishers. Through a portal, one can determine transfer of ownership – where computers ended up and the final disposition of retired assets.

Chairman Dubin thanked Mr. Bonner, and Mr. DiGiacomo spoke about the WIOA Alignment Group and its Data and Dashboard Subcommittee (whose mission incorporates providing a consistent data framework), led by Douglas Weimer and Milena Kornyl, who introduced themselves. They compiled information for GWDB's review and will continue to provide data on a quarterly basis in order to monitor trends. They cannot yet track this data on a local level. One can ask local directors for local information. Mr. Weimer spoke about a presented one-pager of data, which represented a quarterly review of Maryland's workforce system. In looking at WIOA Titles I through IV, as well as Department of Human Services including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), this document provides information on where the workforce system is, i.e. , a snapshot. The goal is to provide this state level data quarterly. Mr. Weimer indicated that he could not speak for specific agencies and in just presenting the data, he could not make judgments or assumptions. There were questions and comments from those listening. The capacity of access to services was discussed.

Secretary Padilla of the Maryland Department of Human Services indicated that the caseload is changing. People are returning to work, although Hospitality and On-Demand work have been hard hit. A high caseload is anticipated, with continued services provided in a remote environment that has been adaptable to serving customers.

Jim Rzepkowski, Assistant Secretary of the Department of Labor, Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, spoke about the Reemployment Services and Eligibility Assessments (RESEA) program and expanded outreach. The digital platform has overrode the transportation barrier, with more people participating – there is increased accessibility in that regard. In 2019 there were 10,600 customers participating, while in 2020 that number shot up to 41,500 customers (a 290% increase).

The meeting was turned over to GWDB Executive Director Michael DiGiacomo. Mr. DiGiacomo pointed out that board members should be picked up in roll call for attendance now, if not before.

Chairman Dubin thanked all participants. The meeting adjourned at 4:30 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for June 9, 2021.

Submitted by:
Kenneth Lemberg