

The WorkPlace
Southwestern Connecticut's Regional Workforce Development Board
Board of Directors Meeting
June 20, 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT

Agosta Yecenia, DSS
Bailey Leon, Comm. Fndtn Gtr New Haven
Bentley Larry, Consultant
Bolden Anthony, New Haven Job Corps
Burgard Mary, BESB
Coley Thomas, CSCU
DeMarco Julie, Bigelow Ctr For Sr Activities
Falcon Clodomiro, Falcon, Vargas Group
Feldman Gary, US Computer Connection
Gill Fred, Gateway Community College
Gold Lindy-Lee, DECD
Grabinski Joe, Sikorsky

Hudson Celina, Citi Bank
LaBella Michael, TD Bank
Loeser John, IBM
Lohr Jim, Carpenter Labor Management
Lopez-Cordone Eileen, Avangrid
McSpedon Matthew, JPMorgan Chase Bank
Oddo Jim, Exec. Search Professionals
Rafael Cindy, BRS
Richards Loni, Service After Service
Sheahan Margaret, Mitchell & Sheahan
Watson Deb, People's Bank

OTHERS PRESENT:

Aird Enola, Community Healing Network
Acevedo Liz, The WorkPlace
Ahern Dennis, The WorkPlace
Amaechi Nneanata, The WorkPlace
Ameri Rachelle, The WorkPlace
Arboleda Samantha, The WorkPlace
Barclay Joyce, The WorkPlace
Bartolomey Luis, The WorkPlace
Bartoli Maria, The WorkPlace
Battle Stewart, The WorkPlace
Becker Allison, The WorkPlace
Benzant Constanza, The WorkPlace
Bissell Ben, The WorkPlace
Blanco Melanie, The WorkPlace
Brady Janet, The WorkPlace
Breedon Paula, The WorkPlace
Brewster Nicole, The WorkPlace
Brighindi Millie, The WorkPlace
Brown Marcus, The WorkPlace
Brum Patricia, State of MA
Bryant Rhaeshetta, The WorkPlace
Butler Andrea, The WorkPlace
Carbone Joseph, The WorkPlace
Carmen Joe
Charpentier Mark, The WorkPlace
Corey Adrene, The WorkPlace
Crawford Dianna, The WorkPlace
Cruz Michelle, The WorkPlace
Curci Ann, The WorkPlace
Daniels James, The WorkPlace

Deamico Bernadette, The WorkPlace
DeLeone Krystal, The WorkPlace
DeMarco Tim, The WorkPlace
DiBacco Joe, Ansonia Public Schools
DiLeo Carmine, Career Resources Inc.
Douglas Maurice, The WorkPlace
Downes Vernon, The WorkPlace
Edelstein Jane, The WorkPlace
Falkowski Gloria, The WorkPlace
Ferreira Jane, Mercy Learning Center
Florea Elena, The WorkPlace
Freer Fran, CRI
Foster Ruby, The WorkPlace
Frost Robert, The WorkPlace
Furness Dean, The WorkPlace
Garcia Yvette, The WorkPlace
Gerena Hailey, The WorkPlace
Gibbs Michelle, The WorkPlace
Giegengack Theresa
Grixalaz Gigi, The WorkPlace
Hailey Gloria, The WorkPlace
Harris Elra, The WorkPlace
Harris Gwen, Career Resources, Inc.
Hebert Cindy, The WorkPlace
Hodge Ray, The WorkPlace
Hopkins Karen, The WorkPlace
Hopkins Tanesha, The WorkPlace
Hughes Nelson, The WorkPlace
Jackson Angela, The WorkPlace
Jenkins Contessa, The WorkPlace

Johnson Arnold, The WorkPlace
Johnson Ebony, The WorkPlace
Jones Desiree, The WorkPlace
Kelman Lauren, The WorkPlace
King Corey, The WorkPlace
Laryea Kenneth, The WorkPlace
Leon Nestor, The WorkPlace
Leone Carlo, The WorkPlace
LeBrom Amanda, The WorkPlace
Lewis Sarah, The WorkPlace
Lisher Jim, Career Resources, Inc.
Little Cheryl, Career Resources, Inc.
Llanos Angie, The WorkPlace
Lopez Lily, Citi Bank
Long Tom, The WorkPlace
Lugo Henry
Lyn Lawrence, Career Resources, Inc.
Makela-Johnson, Libby, The WorkPlace
Malony Lisa, The WorkPlace
Matorelli Christina, The WorkPlace
McCarthy Mike, The WorkPlace
McCrae Pam
McGinnis Monica, The WorkPlace
McNeil Desiree, The WorkPlace
Mendez Tykeisha, The WorkPlace
Medina Victoria, The WorkPlace
Miller Lewis
Miniman Jennifer, The WorkPlace
Montes Grixaliz, The WorkPlace
Morales Jose, The WorkPlace
Morgan Mike, The WorkPlace
Mountain John, The WorkPlace
Napier Diana, The WorkPlace
Nieves Carmen, The WorkPlace
O'Brien Patricia, The WorkPlace
Officer Gary, Sr. Services of America
Pacowta Mike, The WorkPlace
Painter Ron, NAWB
Paleologos Celeste, The WorkPlace
Parkmond Adrienne, The WorkPlace
Peeler Donna, Career Resources, Inc.
Perez Gloria, The WorkPlace
Perry Megan, The WorkPlace
Pizzaro Jose, The WorkPlace
Porter Angela, The WorkPlace
Proto Dennis, Ansonia Public School
Pujols Jailyn, The WorkPlace

Robinson Don, The WorkPlace
Robinson-Patton Cathy, The WorkPlace
Rodriquez Karen, The WorkPlace
Rojas Alejandro, The WorkPlace
Fran Romano, The WorkPlace
Rossitter Gail, The WorkPlace
Roux Paula, State of Mass.
Rule Shannon, The WorkPlace
Russo Nicole, Microboard Processing
Sampson Tracy, The WorkPlace
San Roman Teresa, The WorkPlace
Santiago Priscilla, The WorkPlace
Santilli Vince, Homes for the Brave
Sarro Mario, The WorkPlace
Savage Nordia, The WorkPlace
Sewell-Fairman, Workforce Professionals Tng
Shuster Ben, The WorkPlace
Stokes Mike, The WorkPlace
Szymanski John, The WorkPlace
Taylor Christina, The WorkPlace
Taylor Therman, The WorkPlace
Thompson Jade, The WorkPlace
Thornberg Dan, Aced My Interview
Toti Cynthia, The WorkPlace
Turner Danielle, CRI
Turner Diane Young, Community Healing
Network
Vandiver Ashley, The WorkPlace
Vazcones Jonathan, M&T Bank
Venditti Debbie, The WorkPlace
Venditti Gino, The WorkPlace
Vermont Carolyn, Mayor Ganim's Office
Vitale Angelo, The WorkPlace
Vizcarrondo
Celia, The WorkPlace
Wade Douglas, Wade Dairy
Watson Shirel, The WorkPlace
White Maurice, The WorkPlace
Williams Janet, The WorkPlace
Williams Pandora, The WorkPlace
Williams Terri, The WorkPlace
Wynter Nigel, The WorkPlace
Zaremy Joel, The WorkPlace

The quarterly meeting of The WorkPlace Board of Directors was held via a Zoom Meeting. Leon Bailey, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:21 a.m. Mr. Bailey introduced Joseph Carbone.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT:

TRIBUTES:

Mr. Carbone has the distinct pleasure at every meeting to pay tribute and recognize individuals or businesses who have done extraordinary things in our community.

HERB GRANT:

Herb Grant was a member of The WorkPlace Board of Directors for 12 years. He passed away on June 5, 2020 in Norwalk. He was an MBA graduate from Fairfield University and went on to become Vice President of Human Resources for a local healthcare system. He created and became the President and CEO of the entertainment company, DMG & Associates LLC. Mr. Grant was also on the Board of many community organizations. We will miss him.

COMMUNITY HEALING NETWORK

Mr. Carbone welcomed to our meeting Enola Aird, Founder and President of the Community Healing Network and Diane Young Turner, Board President of the Community Healing Network. We admire their work in the community and look forward to partnering with them in the future.

ECONOMIC TRENDS – 4/20 -2/20-1/10:

Mr. Carbone indicated that the May Labor Situation Report was released today from the CTDOL. The Office of Research estimates the unemployment rate to be in the range of 19% for the mid-May period. The Southwestern Connecticut Labor Force and Employed numbers are down. The state numbers are worse.

Unemployment Claims have increased significantly. Connecticut processed over 605,000 initial claims as of June 15th, 2020. Mr. Carbone had high praise for CTDOL Commissioner Kurt Westby and the staff of CTDOL for their hard work during this time.

Some information about those filing:

- Unemployment is striking younger workers significantly harder than the rest of the population.
 - 48.3% of initial claims are from workers under the age of 40, while 34.9% of claims from between 40-60 years old.
- Unemployment claims dominate lower wage industries with opportunities for entry level positions.
 - 15.0% Accommodations and Food Services
 - 12.7% Health Care and Social Assistance
 - 12.4% Retail Trade
- The economic downturn has impacted small businesses: 11.6% of claims have been filed by people who are self-employed.

Low wage workers have been hit hardest since March.

Mr. Carbone has often stated that wages increase when education increases.

- Unemployment rates in the COVID-19 downturn are lower among workers with higher levels of education.

- In our region we can see that education pays. Workers with a high school degree or less make up 37.4% of applicants for unemployment.
- Individuals with a college degree or higher represent 25.4% of claims for unemployment benefits.
- A unique factor in the COVID-19 recession is the significance of teleworking in keeping people on the job. The option to telework varies considerably across workers depending on their education level. Research reported that those with a college degree are six times likely to have the option as those without a high school diploma.

Fairfield County is very expensive and many live from week to week.

- 47.4% of claims are from people who made less than \$35,000 per year.
- People who work in certain industries such as restaurant, hospitality, retail and other service industries are particularly at risk for loss of income.
- Many of these low-wage workers have limited ability to absorb income declines or afford healthcare costs.

THE SYSTEM'S CAPACITY TO RESPOND:

Mr. Carbone stated that Americans and the nation were not prepared for these numbers. Businesses are re-programming themselves. Many might go back to work.

When the extended 30 weeks of benefits plus the \$600 is exhausted, either the long-term unemployed will continue to be long-term unemployed or some might return to work, either way we will continue to have the long-term unemployed.

Governor Lamont has commented, *"The level of unemployment hasn't been at this level since the Great Depression and is much worse than the 2008 Great Recession"*.

According to Deputy Labor Commissioner Daryle Dudzinski, *"This is unprecedented claim activity, even during the last recession, day-after-day of claims in the multiple thousands was not happening."*

JOB SEEKERS MUST TAKE ACTION TO AVOID LONG-TERM UNEMPLOYMENT:

Mr. Carbone stated that we must look at this from the standpoint of the long-term unemployed. The LTU lose their self-confidence and suffer from emotional distress. Regular unemployment benefits with an additional \$600 a week benefit may cause people to delay job. Once people have exhausted benefits and they begin to look for work they will face barriers they do not expect regardless of the health of the economy. Long-term unemployment changes a worker's perceived value causing them to become frozen out of the marketplace. We have been through this before and have seen people wait too long to get back.

P2E 2.0:

Mr. Carbone announced that our Platform to Employment has been our most successful program in connecting people back to work. P2E 2.0 was designed specifically to focus on COVID-19. P2E 2.0 offers a cohort model delivered through virtual classrooms. The kick-off will be on Monday.

Individuals experiencing unemployment move through stages of need as they cope with being out of work for an unknown period:

- Their skills begin to deteriorate, and they lose confidence.
- Professional networks become smaller.
- Financial concerns cause stress over basic needs.

Through P2E 2.0 we will offer a three-tier approach to respond to the incremental needs of the unemployed:

- Emotional Support
- New World of Work
- Career Transition

OUR RESPONSE FOR IMPROVED OPERATIONS:

Mr. Carbone indicated that our transitioning happened almost overnight.

- **Transitioning to online classes** – P2E (LTU & Re-entry), Youth, Health Career Academy, YouthBuild, Dress for Success, AJCs, all have delivered programming virtually. I am proud of our 200 employees.
- **Virtual Job Fairs & Employer Services** – Have helped more than 60 people land jobs in CT, NY and MA.
- **Over 70 Staff Development Seminars:**
 - Professional Development
 - Wellness Wednesdays
 - Gratitude/Feel Good Friday

DRIVEN TO SERVE: - THE AGGRESSIVE PURSUIT OF FUNDING TO SERVE MORE PEOPLE:

Mr. Carbone noted that at every Board of Directors meeting he show results of our entrepreneurial approach to our business. This approach to our work has brought in \$223,273,000. Our growth since June 2019 was \$12,596,000. Mr. Carbone thanked the Board, Partners, Funders, Elected Officials and staff for their support. Mr. Carbone spoke about the WorkPlace commitment to “Black Lives Matter”.

BUSINESS:

MINUTES: On a motion made and seconded the Board of Directors approved the Minutes of the December 20, 2019 Board of Directors meeting.

CONSENT AGENDA: The Consent Agenda consisted of 1) The WorkPlace Salary & Compensation Policies and 2) Resolution: Allowing Joseph Carbone to sign contracts and other documents on behalf of The WorkPlace for Program Year 2020-2021. On a motion made and seconded the Board of Directors approved the Consent Agenda.

OPERATIONS: - VIRTUAL OPERATIONS:

SPOTLIGHTING INNOVATION AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

Adrienne Parkmond commented that we have been doing virtual operations since March 18, and we have pivoted very quickly. No one has been left out and we are proud of our staff.

OUR PLAN:

TOP 3 PRIORITIES:

Staff Engagement

Customer Engagement

Innovative Solutions.

OUR ACTION PLAN:

- **MARCH:** Evaluate staff technology capacity – Assess customer technology access, determine vendor capabilities.
- **APRIL/MAY:** Develop online programming, contact every customer, create new outreach strategies, update systems.
- **JUNE/JULY:** Refine programming, continue staff virtual connections, expand customer accessibility.

Our IT Department made sure that everyone had the technology needed.

STAFF ENGAGEMENT: CRITICAL TO OUR SUCCESS:

Professional Development:

- Program Overviews, Finance, Human Resources, Marketing

Wellness & Nutrition:

- Exercise, Nutrition, Juicing, Mental Health

Gratitude/Feel Good Friday:

- Employee of the Week, Motivational Videos, Discussions

Peer Groups:

- Children, Mature Workers, Living Alone

Seminars are everyday at 9:00 a.m. and 1:00 p.m.

CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT:

- Contacted over 300+ customers per week
- Unemployment in Connecticut: Answered approximately 600 UI call per week
- Virtual Focus Groups – JFES & WIOA – Lessons Learned
- Updated websites, YouTube channels, social media
- Improved system to accommodate - collecting documents online, e-signatures, etc.

INNOVATION SOLUTIONS:

Transitioning to Online classes: RESULT

- P2E (LTU & Re-entry), Youth, Health Career Academy, YouthBuild, Dress for Success, AJCs
- Enhanced staff capacity
- Increased attendance

Virtual Job Fairs & Employer Services: RESULT

- Focused Employer Development

- Active Placements - many connections
- Construction, Health Care, Landscaping & Warehouse

Responding to Needs: RESULT

- P2E 2.0, Project Based Summer Youth Program
- PPE Distribution/Children/Access to Food

Ms. Parkmond noted that everyone is active and engaged, and we are getting excellent results.

UPDATED ON OUR NEW LOCATION:

Gino Venditti presented on the moving schedule timeline. He discussed some of the tasks through June 30, 2020 that include packing up of belongings, boxes being moved, furniture removal and final clean up. Staff are working remotely. By Wednesday of next week, we will vacate 350 Fairfield Avenue. We have been at this location since 1995. Tasks between June 20 and August 4 include - new construction continues, staff continue to work from home; August 1, 2, 3 and 4 furniture will be delivered. Pictures of the continuing construction were presented, and the new space is now being painted. A diagram of the design of the new cubicles was also presented. We will keep everyone posted.

MARKETING AND PLANNING UPDATE:

WIOA LOCAL PLAN:

Tom Long reported that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act requires each local workforce development board to develop a comprehensive four-year plan to the Governor. The Plan needs to align with the State Plan. The plan will be effective July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2024; however, due to the COVID-19 an extension until October 5th to submit the plan has been granted. This summer we will convene virtual meetings around topics such as: Service Coordination & Programming, Customer Access and Employer Engagement.

GOOGLE ADVERTISING:

The Google Advertising is from a grant The WorkPlace received, and there is no cost to The WorkPlace. In May, we received 2,136 clicks, a new high for our account. The click-through rate on our ads is 16.36%. Our overall conversion rate was 10.2%. Our ads are appearing above the organic search results 91.96% of the time.

AMERICAN JOB CENTERS:

Mr. Long announced that we have redesigned our AJC website with new features (WWW.AJCSWCT.COM). Mr. Long thanked Victor Fuda (CTDOL), Scott Wilderman(CRI – One Stop Operator) and their staff for their valuable input during this process.

PLATFORMTOEMPLOYMENT.COM:

Mr. Long stated that PLATFORMTOEMPLOYMENT.COM better organizes the site for all our P2E programs. It is more concise and sends a clearer message to employers. This is a great benefit.

THE WHISTLE POST:

Mr. Long asked everyone to listen to The Whistle Post. It is a podcast covering the world of workforce and community development with people who make it happen. Recently we spoke with Sarah Lewis and explored why Dress for Success is about so much more than a suit.

JUNETEENTH: JUNE 19TH:

Ms. Parkmond provided an overview and context for Juneteenth. June 19, 1865 Major General Gordon Granger and Union soldiers landed at Galveston, Texas and read General Order No. 3 announcing the end of the war and slaves were now free, 2.5 years after the signing of the Emancipation Proclamation. Slaves were not aware they had been freed years prior to Major General Granger's announcement. The acknowledgement of this day is celebrated yearly.

A video on Black Lives Matter was played with statements from The WorkPlace staff. Mr. Carbone said that he is most proud of our workforce today. This is the culture of The WorkPlace, and we all are part of the challenge.

AJOURNMENT: There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 9:38 a.m.

The next Board of Directors meeting will be held on September 18, 2020.

Respectfully submitted, Mildred Brighindi, Executive Secretary