



GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE COUNCIL

April 15th, 2021, 2:30-5:00pm

Virtual Meeting on Zoom

DRAFT MINUTES

Council Members Present:

Mark Argosh, Cindi Bigelow, Kevin Myatt (for Marna Borgstrom), DJ Castro (for Brian Doubles), Dr. Monette Ferguson, Sue Figueredo, Jeff Flaks, Sen. Tony Hwang, Ravi Kumar, Marty Guay (for Jim Loree), Nora LaFreniere (for Judy Marks), Dave O'Neill, Judy Olian, Peter Salovey, Erika Smith, Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, Dr. Kelli Vallieres

Voting Ex-Officios Present:

Commissioner Amy Porter, Commissioner Kurt Westby, Commissioner Charlene Russel Tucker

Absentee Board Members:

Sal Luciano, Rochelle Palache, Rep. Toni Walker, Jay Williams

Absentee Ex-Officios:

None

2:30pm, Chair Argosh calls the meeting to order to deliver Welcome remarks.

The theme today is the role of workforce development, coming out of the pandemic and how that impacts economic recovery. Chair Argosh reviews the agenda and speakers.

2:35pm, Chair Argosh introduces the first panel: State Government, The role of workforce in Connecticut's economic recovery; Governor Lamont, Secretary McCaw, and Dr. Vallieres.

Governor Lamont reflects that workforce talent was diminishing and opportunity existed to work closely with the private sector to ensure that they had the workforce they needed. With as many people out of work as there are job openings, workforce development is going to be as key today as it was two years ago, if not more important. We will have the resources to put behind the programs needed, in part thanks to the American Rescue Plan. With IT, Technology, and the Trades, there is a tremendous opportunity to expand that as CT prepares for its first 5G center in Stamford. With upcoming retirements, especially in the state and in healthcare, we have to think really hard about how to replace and skill up individuals who will be taking those jobs. Manufacturing is another area to focus on with large companies in the state but also in the supply chain. Our smaller manufacturers are having just as hard a time finding people to fill their roles and keep the supply chain alive.

With over a hundred million dollars dedicated to sector-based training, we need to be informed by the employers and businesses. As people go through the programs, we will also support their childcare needs to ensure they can complete the short-term training certificate programs. Workforce Development is important, and many people are giving Connecticut a second look at coming here.

2:39pm, Secretary McCaw reflects on the importance of economic growth over the last two years and how funding will impact economic recovery.

One of Governor Lamont's key priorities was to focus on fiscal growth and that translates to individuals, families, and businesses. Substantial progress has been made. Connecticut's credit rating was upgraded for the first time in twenty years; recognizing strong fiscal and policy management, strong reserves, and good governance policy.

Since focusing on Connecticut's people so heavily over the last year during the pandemic, we are seeing positive momentum return, as indicated by growth in real estate.

We are recovering from the pandemic and we have an opportunity to focus on recovery. Jobs and Employment are at the heart of that. There is significant support from the Federal Government, and we expect \$6 Billion for state and local fiscal relief, funding for education, childcare, mental and substance abuse, and housing and we will use this for *transformative* investments. Workforce will be a key area with over \$100M will go to sector-training supports.

We are looking for workforce development to fuel the economic recovery and we look forward to the work ahead.

2:45 pm Chair Argosh thanks Secretary McCaw and introduces Vice Chair Vallieres to discuss how we plan to deploy workforce development efforts.

Vice Chair Vallieres explains that partnerships are the most important lever in deploying successful workforce development programming.

We look to Business Leaders to inform *when* employees will be needed and *what* skills are required for training as well as what incumbent workers need reskilling or upskilling for growth within the business. Central to this work is also the Regional Workforce Development Boards, the Department of Labor, the State Department of Education, all the Connecticut Colleges and private providers to ensure that there is a mechanism to contact individuals in our communities. None of this would be possible without the partnerships.

High quality sector-based training programs will be a focus. We will leverage best practice programs and bring them to scale where needed to help bring the community into the funnel and provide them with the necessary training.

2:55pm Chair Argosh introduces the next panel: IT, Business, and Finance: Building a talent pipeline for a post-COVID economy and will include Ravi Kumar (President, Infosys), Sue Figueredo (Global Head of Operations, Traveler's), and Dave O'Neill (COO, Indeed).

Ravi Kumar states that he and his company remain positive around the state of IT and Technology jobs in the state of Connecticut. This crisis has, ironically, created a unique opportunity for jobs in the tech-sector and many companies are hiring. Even traditional jobs and traditional enterprises need tech professionals with technology related literacy skills. Many jobs that are available across the country are available in Connecticut due to the hybrid nature of the job and estimate that many jobs will remain hybrid after the pandemic ends. This essentially means that we could draw these jobs into Connecticut without worry of the individuals' geographic location and technology jobs can be achieved by individuals with varying degree backgrounds.

Infosys plans to partner with the GWC and AdvanceCT to create 250 jobs for individuals without degrees or those looking for a mid-career switch. We invite others to join this campaign and offer jobs to individuals who have non-traditional backgrounds.

Sue Figueredo continues and explains that she and her company are committed to workforce development. A focus on technology, data analytics, and service roles in a technology-enabled environment aligns to the mission of Traveler's and how they envision providing services to their customers and constituents.

Traveler's is also exploring alternative educational opportunities to help individuals alter their career paths and seek gainful employment in a new field. We have been actively testing technology bootcamps for individuals from non-technology occupations. With a strong focused curriculum, we have proven that we can take an individual without a technology background and reskill them in a technology occupation.

Traveler's is also researching what "Work 2.0" looks like in a hybrid environment and developing strategies to adapt to real-time changes in demands. It is important to capitalize on the opportunities this pandemic has caused us with respect to the challenges and we want to be better coming out of it. Cross-training, altered hiring and on-boarding practices, internships, and providing alternative cohorts are all ways that we have responded to the crisis. This has caused us to consider the impact on our most vulnerable cohorts; women, people of color, and early career parents. Our focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion has never been stronger.

Dave O'Neill commented on the number of common themes and that technology fields are large hiring pools. There is a shift into virtual learning, virtual care, and hybrid opportunities.

We are seeing that companies across the board are rethinking their digital strategy. Indeed also has shifted and introduced virtual hiring platforms and is gathering traction. Although envisioned before COVID, the needs of the crisis have pushed this initiative forward. We are looking to address the concerns of employers to meet the needs of the new employment landscape.

3:10pm Chair Argosh introduces the next panel: Healthcare & BioTech Life Sciences by Jeff Flaks (CEO Hartford Healthcare), Kevin Myatt (CHRO, Yale New Haven Health), and Erika Smith (CEO, ReNetx Bio)

Jeff Flaks reflects that people "want to go back to normal" and in healthcare, we have to be "better than normal." We must build on the momentum and agility and transformation over the last year. Healthcare must have greater transparency around quality, excellence, and consistency. The "new normal" is going to change the face of healthcare. As this is an important contributor to the global and local economy, it is essential to transform.

Mobile health is a new way to distribute healthcare. This will not go away. This is enabled by new technology, regulations, compliance and we see an opportunity for micro-healthcare centers as opposed to the mega healthcare centers we currently have. Virtual health will also be here to stay. The Hartford Health system went from providing approximately 400 virtual health visits per month to nearly 80,000. This is a great way to bring more health opportunities to underserved areas, individuals with transportation issues, and provide access to specialists.

The pandemic has also impacted our supply chain. Hartford Healthcare is working with our local delegation to create a national stockpile for personal protective equipment in addition to the state-wide stockpile that

Connecticut has created. The use rates indicate that we need to keep a much larger stock on hand. We look forward to having more control over the local supply chain and keeping the inventory substantially higher.

Kevin Myatt explains that new emerging technologies will create an opportunity for individuals to participate in healthcare occupations in a virtual capacity. This will leverage an opportunity to partner with the community colleges and other college institutions in Connecticut to provide learning opportunities in these new technology fields. Individuals who previously declined healthcare roles due to the bed-side nature of the job are encouraged to seek new career paths where technology can be leveraged to complete the work.

Mobile health also opens up roles for healthcare to embed in the communities and adjust for health equity. Connecticut should not be a state of “haves and have nots” and we continue to work to ensure that all of our communities have access to high quality healthcare. Yale New Haven Health is very excited to enhance all sectors of industry in Connecticut, in particular healthcare, and to be a model for workforce development for the country.

As a result of the pandemic, **Erika Smith** reflects how the conversations around immunization development and herd immunity have sparked the interest of individuals to discuss the bio science industry. The awareness in the community and the value that is being generated in that area is exciting. Connecticut is the 2nd in the country in bio R&D and this will only grow post-COVID.

The theme that we continue to hear and discuss is cross-discipline and it is important to capitalize on that theme. Upon polling Bio CT, Connecticut’s Bio Science industry partnership, no Bio company suffered disruptions in the workforce and instead will continue to hire for new positions. Companies in metro-Boston are interested in moving locations to Connecticut and with opportunities for remote work. There is an opportunity to welcome them and bring people here.

This isn’t a cookie cutter industry and there are opportunities beyond the traditional bio-science roles and we need a strong talent pipeline. Jobs in quality and project management are also available. Diversity will also play a role in the bio science industry and, in partnership with BioCT, ReNetx will continue to improve practices pursuant to diversity, equity, and inclusion. We are also excited to announce that Women in Bio has also launched a Connecticut chapter.

3:30pm Chair Argosh introduces the final industry panel on Manufacturing: Marty Guay (VP of Business Development, Stanley Black & Decker) Andrew Bond (CHRO, Electric Boat), Cindi Bigelow (CEO, Bigelow Tea), Colin Cooper (Chief Manufacturing Officer, DECD)

Marty Guay recalls the supply chain disruption and demand compression in the beginning of 2020. Stanley Black and Decker committed themselves to keeping their workforce going and as priority.

Stanley Black and Decker is preparing its workforce to return to on-site work. We have to help our employees navigate the new paradigm and be as inclusive and empower all sides of the talent pool. We have to continue to tap into the different populations and urban communities and upskill. These 19 initiatives in the Governor’s Workforce Council’s strategic plan will help impact and inform how to develop a robust workforce system.

Andrew Bond reiterates the profound impact COVID had and the inability to move Electric Boat’s workforce to work remote is less feasible but still needed to respond by providing hybrid work options. Individuals in trades

and in supportive operations were unable to work from home so Electric Boat had to respond by providing at-home testing, additional PPE, and leverage on-site medical facilities. We had to learn how to be flexible, agile, and innovative in an industry that wasn't set up for that. This has been a challenge that we have overcome – and that is rewarding.

However, Electric Boat is still in a period of rapid growth and expansion in technical and manufacturing occupations. This puts a huge demand on Connecticut's need to respond to workforce development. Over the next 7 years, Electric Boat plans to hire an additional 17,000 people to match the 17,000 people hired over the *last* 7 years. This is only possible through the work of the GWC and the pipeline partners. For example, the welding partnerships and programs have responded to the needs to double the capacity of welders at Electric Boat. The hiring needs also impact how early workforce development starts. To meet the hiring goals of 2029 Electric Boat, the individuals in question are only in third grade and we must spark their exposure and education now to fill the pipeline in the future.

Cindi Bigelow's company, Bigelow Tea, also overcame COVID challenges in the small business sector with approximately 400 employees. Individuals on the manufacturing floor in operations needed a safe avenue to complete their work while employees in the office setting were able to complete their work remote for a short period.

The same issues we were facing before COVID were exacerbated once COVID hit. Workforce Development still needed to continue. Apprenticeship is a great way that we have been able to train our employees in soft and technical skills. COVID has expanded the view on what it takes to make an employee successful. It is now beyond providing a fair wage and that there are more barriers to successful employment by taking a holistic approach to success. This includes transportation and childcare, two areas negatively impacted by COVID and felt by many employees.

This is a progressive state. The work of the GWC and the lessons learned from this pandemic will help all business compete and thrive.

Since the start of the pandemic, **Colin Cooper** has seen first-hand how nimble all the various manufacturing companies have been in response.

In late 2019, as Colin joined the state, he did a survey on what impacts manufacturers, expecting answers like regulation, cost of living, energy costs, or access to capital. However, all the responses were for Workforce Development. This is high priority to the needs of manufacturers.

We hear what manufacturers are saying: you can't manufacture things from home. The pandemic resulted in possible early retirement by skilled workers and has increased the demand for new workers. Nationally, 4.6M jobs in manufacturing will need to be filled. This is a Connecticut, regional, national, and international need. The initiatives in the GWC will help drive Workforce Development forward and this is one of the most important Economic initiatives in the state.

3:56pm Chair Argosh thanks all the panelists and notes their leadership and dedication to the GWC and CT communities.

3:45pm-4:30pm Breakout sessions commence

4:30pm Chair Argosh regroups the meeting participants for updates from Committee leaders.

- Business Leadership, Marty Guay: Four main themes are here. Regional Sector Partnerships are an important piece to build the right support network for businesses. The second initiative is around credential registry and a repository pilot is being worked on with CSCU. The third initiative is around a paradigm shift in thought process and this is for skills-based hiring. This is a long-term initiative with a cultural shift. CampusCT is being piloted in the Hartford area for the fourth initiative under this pillar.
- Career & Education, Ravi Kumar & Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez: Career Pathways was a highlight initiative as well as adult education. Dual enrollment options should be expanded, and we should review how to offer certificates earlier. It's very exciting to see what is happening across the state.
- Equity & Access, Cindi Bigelow: Updates provided for transportation, benefit cliffs, 211 navigator, childcare, supportive employment
- Data & Accountability, Dave O'Neill: There is an appetite for skills that are in need. Skills requirements are necessary to embed into training programs and we look forward to the data pulling all the important and relevant information onto a platform. User profiles will be key to successful platforms.
- Community Engagement Committee, Kelli Vallieres: Although equity is embedded into the plan, as we began this work it was apparent that a more structured approach towards equity should be done. This was the first time hosting a breakout and there were robust conversations around scope, mission, and vision. This will also include a component of responsibility by the businesses.

4:42pm Chair Argosh introduces Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz and Commissioner Beth Bye to announce an exciting partnership around Connecticut Early Childhood Education.

Lt. Governor Bysiewicz addresses how important creating equitable and affordable childcare access is. The Lt. Governor, along with Secretary McCaw, chair the Council on Women and Girls and have had discussions with their corporate leadership circles and they are interested in learning how they can expand access to early childhood opportunities. During the pandemic, approximately 40,000-50,000 early childhood education spots were lost. We have a lot of work to do to rebuild.

Access to affordable childcare is important to employees, employers, and the economy of the future. Our goal is to bring together members of the GWC and COWAG in a collaborative call to action. We have identified four ways employers can get involved to support more childcare.

1. Recommendations for communication and information in your organizations around childcare
2. Recommendations for investment by organizations to address long-term childcare needs
3. Recommendations for community investments to work collectively in local communities
4. Reviewing statewide system changes need to be made to enhance early childhood initiatives

Commissioner Bye reinforces the importance of early childhood initiatives. We are responding to the call to provide more childcare initiatives to support our current workforce as well as the future workforce. Brain development happens early and any disruption to good childcare education can have a profound impact on the child as they become an adult. Supporting childcare is an infrastructure need and will continue to support Connecticut's economic recovery.

4:54pm Chair Argosh calls to conduct a roll call vote. This vote will be to accept the January 28, 2021 meeting minutes as well as allow for an electronic vote in June for the WIOA Title I Funding allocations.

Amy Porter motions to vote, Kelli Vallieres seconds
Chair Argosh calls for discussion. Hearing none, voting continues.
18 yay, 0 nay, 7 n/a (no longer on the call to vote)
Vote passes

5:00pm Chair Argosh calls the meeting to close

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