

Meeting Minutes

DECEMBER 9, 2020 3:30 P.M. – 5:30 P.M.

TELE-CONFERENCE CALL (DUE TO CORONAVIRUS)

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MEMBERS PRESENT

Louis Dubin (Chair)

Chris Sachse (Vice Chair)

Sam Abed

Mick Arnold

John D. Barber, Jr.

Carol Beatty

Joanne C. Benson

Gary Bockrath

Jennifer Bodensiek

Gavin Buckley

Andrea Chapdelaine

Veronica A. Cool

Michelle Day

Scott Dennis

Katarina Ennerfelt

James D. Fielder

Terry R. Gilleland, Jr.

Wanda Smith Gispert

Robert L. Green

Steve Groenke

Kevin D. Heffner

Stacey Herman

Sandra Kurtinitis

Andrew B. Larson

Larry Letow

Amie Long

Gary Murdock

Chad Nagel

Stephen K. Neal

Lourdes R. Padilla

Charles Ramos

Tiffany P. Robinson

Edward C. Rothstein, Col. Ret.

Lisa Rusyniak

Karen Salmon

Marty Schwartz

James A. Sears

Leslie R. Simmons

William E. Simons

Michelle B. Smith

Charles T. Wetherington

Michelle J. Wright

Charnetia V. Young

MEMBERS ABSENT

Vanessa Atterbeary

Alice Blayne-Allard

Rona E. Kramer

Carl Livesay

Roya Mohadjer

Alexander Núñez

George W. Owings, III

Kelly M. Schulz

Gerald "Jerry" Shapiro

GWDB STAFF

Mike DiGiacomo

Darla Henson

Ken Lemberg

GUESTS *

AFC Company 3

Roneta Bacon

Tiara Booker-Dwyer

Barry Boseman

Todd Cagwin

Brian Cahalan

JC Chang

Gary Cohen

Kim Cohen

Eric Colchamiro

Lloyd Day

EBP-SE

Mark Drury

John Feaster

Grace Fielhauer

Ellen Flowers-Fields

Deborah Gilbert

Lauren Gilwee

Rishan Habte

Kimberly Hahr

Eun Young Hong

Portia Hurtt

Kenneth Jessup

J.K.

Heather Lageman

Brian Lynch

Meka McNeal

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|---------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Ana Mejia | Ed Roberts | Steve Spector |
| Kirk Murray | Christine Ross | Jennifer Sproul |
| Dwayne Myers | James Rzepkowski | Jen Staiger |
| Marsha Netus | Jeff Samuels | Lili Taylor |
| Denise Nooe | Sarah Sheppard | Adrea Turner |
| Joane Oport | Loren Shimanek | Jacqueline Turner |
| John Papagni | Becky Slogeris | Unknown |
| Amy Petkovsek | Jim Smith, III | Rose Volynskiy |
| David Powell | Bill Soreenson | Rebecca "Becca" Webster |
| Matthew Pyne | Bruce Spector | Justin Zawatski |

**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, December 9, 2020, 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. He provided a few housekeeping reminders regarding attending another virtual board meeting. Chairman Dubin noted that there was a follow-up meeting for local board chairs and vice chairs on January 20, 2021 to discuss the soon to be released Career Preparation and Expansion Act (CPEA) Report by the Maryland Longitudinal Data Systems (MLDS) with GWDB staff. He asked for updates from Secretaries and/or Vice Chair that were present, by first turning the meeting over to Labor Secretary Tiffany Robinson.

Secretary Robinson remarked that 2020 has been a difficult year, and she thanked GWDB members for their support and engagement in adapting to circumstances. The Maryland Department of Labor has been serving a million Marylanders in need. She thanked the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning (DWDAL) for their work in implementing the COVID-19 Layoff Aversion Fund, through 2 rounds of funds, with nearly \$25 million awarded to small businesses throughout the state's 24 jurisdictions. There was a saving of nearly 20,000 jobs. She thanked the Safety and Health team (Division of Labor and Industry, MOSH team) for enhancing the safety and health of work environments. Secretary Robinson thanked the Occupational Licensing team for the awarding of thousands of new licenses (such as in real estate and home improvement) during this time and also thanked the Commissioner of Financial Regulation for consumer protection and other efforts.

Secretary Robinson next focused her remarks on the unemployment compensation situation in Maryland. The Unemployment Insurance (UI) Division has faced numerous challenges (in Lower Board and Appeals). The UI Division has received over one million new claims this season, along with facing two Beacon system launches and three new federal programs to incorporate. There has been \$8.2 billion in UI awards disseminated since March 2020. The UI Division has processed nearly 95% of the new claims, while there is also 5% pending in claims in dispute to be further adjudicated. The UI Division continues to receive thousands of claims each week. New claim examiners and adjudicators are being hired with a vendor to handle the volume of work, with at least 25 new staff being brought on each

week. The system will not stop until every valid claimant has been served. Information Technology (IT) folks are servicing Beacon 2.0.

The Labor Secretary next remarked on the Work Sharing program. This represents a flexible alternative to layoffs and preserves jobs. Over 300 employers have been enrolled in Work Sharing in 442 plans, and over 2,000 individuals have been spared layoffs. A marketing vendor has been retained to promote the program.

Chairman Dubin shared holiday greetings to everyone on the call (now up to 95 people).

Next GWDB Vice Chair Chris Sachse made a few comments. He said that there had been great discussion around Diversity and that it was a pleasure to be part of that discussion. He remarked that the current economy represented a “tale of two worlds”: with some industries doing well (such as Cybersecurity, Manufacturing, and Logistics), and other industries really struggling (such as Hospitality). He also commented that we are all vulnerable to cyber attacks at this time, as illustrated recently with Baltimore County. We need to be as vigilant as possible regarding potential cyber attacks during these holiday times.

Chairman Dubin asked if there were any other Secretary remarks or observations to communicate to the board. Secretary Robert Green communicated happy holidays and that it was good to see everyone in this format. School Superintendent Karen Salmon thanked Secretary Green for availability of hand sanitizer and related safety products made by his team network. Chairman Dubin thanked Superintendent Salmon for her care and diligence for Maryland schoolchildren and her effort in trying to get kids back to school, with some school systems incorporating small group hybrid situations. Higher Education Secretary James Fielder wanted to thank Maryland Labor and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) for their joint efforts with volunteer boards, which were critical and with incredible innovation in the last year. Secretary Lourdes Padilla communicated her holiday wishes and thanked Labor Secretary Robinson for her leadership with a tough year, as well as commented that the Secretaries work well together. Secretary Padilla has been trying to make sure there is not a food security crisis. Secretary Carol Beatty also communicated happy holidays, thanked Secretary Robinson on behalf of the Department of Disabilities, and welcomed new GWDB board member Scott Dennis, in charge of Rehabilitation Services with MSDE.

Chairman Dubin asked for a motion for the September 16 meeting minutes to be approved (made and seconded), and they were so approved.

Three new GWDB members were introduced to the group: State Senator Joanne Benson from Prince George’s County; MSDE’s Scott Dennis (Division of Rehabilitative Services); and Maryland Labor’s Terry Gilliland, Director of Adult Education and Literacy Services.

PRESENTATIONS:

The meeting was turned over to GWDB Executive Director Michael DiGiacomo. Mr. DiGiacomo pointed out that board members should have received the 2021 board meeting schedule in their email and could also find this on the GWDB website.

Next, Mr. DiGiacomo introduced Mr. Kirk Murray, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Anne Arundel Workforce Development Corporation, for perspective at the local workforce development area level. Mr. Murray remarked that the local system has been working virtually, reaching out to businesses and to job seekers. There have been over 16,000 wellness calls placed to old and new customers, with connections made for supportive services, such as for food security, mental health, etc. The Maryland UI partnership has helped with providing responses to clients and local elected officials. There have been effective partnerships with economic development, chambers of commerce, Work Sharing, and Personally Protective Equipment (PPE). As mentioned before, services have become virtual, with over 8,500 career coaching sessions for individuals. There has even been global involvement. There has been virtual summer youth employment over a six week period in high-priority industries, where 101 youth started and about 95 completed. Many hiring events started with outdoor hiring events. The sectors of Health Care, Transportation, and Information Technology (IT) are still hiring for individuals. Hospitality has been hard hit, with individuals transitioning into IT. There has been work with CVS, as people are trained to deliver vaccines. A little over \$3 million in CARES funding has been going out. Due to the virus, Anne Arundel county residents' applications are being processed, along with giving out of gift cards (\$500), encompassing over \$800,000 already. In short, services have gone virtual, the work has never stopped, and this is going on across the state in the local areas.

Chairman Dubin thanked Kirk Murray for being a workforce services leader in the state. Mr. DiGiacomo reiterated that we can look to get struggling folks to the local workforce development board directors and staff (and can look up their contacts on our GWDB website). There is "heavy lifting" at the local level.

Next, Mr. DiGiacomo turned discussion over to Jim Rzepkowski, Assistant Secretary of Labor, DWDAL, for an update at the state level. Mr. Rzepkowski stressed the importance of the Layoff Aversion Fund, which helps small businesses keep from laying off employees, helps them stay open, and helps them to keep folks from becoming unemployed. There have been 20 diverse industry sectors involved, with \$20 million available in the second round in October. There were 727 businesses approved in the second round (\$18.4 million). We saw high responsiveness from the Comptroller's Office in issuing checks, etc.

With respect to virtual operations, state partners in the American Job Centers were not physically open. Businesses were still hiring, with some outdoor job fairs. The RESEA Remployment program increased its "show rate" by going virtual from 2019 to 2020: 9,000 in person customers in 2019 to an additional 30,000 customers virtually served in 2020. With phone calls, text messages, etc., no show rates have decreased. With virtual servicing, one could say goodbye to the "snow day" as preempting customers from receiving services.

Assistant Secretary Rzepkowski made reference to servicing of different populations and programs. For example, veterans teams have implemented online job fairs. The Registered Apprenticeship program has continued to grow (\$6 million from the US. Department of Labor [DOL] State Apprenticeship Expansion Grant and \$13 million secured in the past few years). We have broken the 11,000 registered apprentices record, with growth in nontraditional sectors. The Youth Apprenticeship program has been growing exponentially. The State of Maryland has won 5 federal competitive grants recently (out of 12 applied for), with \$14.5 million in grant funding – 3 more grants are pending. EARN grants have brought

in \$8.5 million, including effort around the Clean Energy Jobs Act (\$450,000). There have been 70 EARN grantees running successful programs.

In other noteworthy items, Maryland has exceeded 17 of 18 performances measures of the U.S. DOL (1 of those measures was met, the youth credential rate). There has been navigation of the on camera interview, the “Big Interview,” an opportunity for virtual customers to practice interviews. Remote electronic signature functionality has been added for documentation. In Correctional Education, teachers were coming back to the institutions, and then went back out (they have since been working remotely). Work packets have gone out to students with the Department of Public Safety. The tablet procurement went out, with an 80 tablet pilot project in existence. Adult Education has been adjusting virtually, with smaller classes. Terry Gilliland from Adult Education, who represents adult education providers, is now on the GWDB. There has been professional development for virtually delivering adult educators. DWDAL has made “lemonade out of lemons.” 2020 has been a “year of Workforce,” and “Workforce owns 2021.”

Mr. DiGiacomo indicated that folks could look at the GWDB website for further information and contacts related to Assistant Secretary Rzepkowski’s discussion. He next introduced Mr. Loren Shimanek, Senior Policy Analyst from the National Governors Association (NGA) Center for Best Practices, for more of a national, multi-state outlook. Mr. Shimanek thanked the board chair, vice chair, and the GWDB staff team for having him there to present. He posed the question of what we are hearing from states and provided a special shout out to Maryland. The DWDAL and UI were busy at work. Mr. Shimanek noted that Maryland Business Services Manager Anne Gunning had presented to an NGA audience, along with the New York Department of Labor, about the Work Sharing program.

Mr. Shimanek discussed an economic update, in conjunction with economists at the Keybridge organization. A more robust economic return is anticipated for 2021, quarters 3 and 4. There is a cut to public sector employment, with a 6.7% unemployment rate officially. There are more than 7 million people not in the labor force, with disparities widening. Consumer spending has picked up a bit, although it is down 3% from earlier in the year. Overall small business revenue is down. Mr. Shimanek reiterated the theme of 2021 being “all about Workforce.” NGA had a series of workshops dealing with workforce recovery agendas: 31 states participated. There are new technical assistance programs for states. Two major highlights were: 1) Digital Literacy and Resilience (and the “Future of Work”) – working more remotely and virtually, enhancing foundational digital skills; and 2) Access to essential support services, dealing with: digital access inequity, safe and affordable child care, lack of awareness of available services, persistent stigma of using government services, stigma of the individual to accessing services at the American Job Centers (unemployment writ large), poor data reporting infrastructure, and limited services to carry out, especially in rural areas. The “no wrong door” approach has been successful in New Jersey and Utah. Broadband access and connectivity has continued to be a priority.

Mr. Shimanek proposed use of two different resources (they go from imperative to opportunity). First, there is the Economic Modeling Specialist Inc. (EMSI) 2020 Talent Acquisition Scorecard, which looks at a shift from the larger to mid-size cities (more affordable housing, etc.) and worker migration. There is a new world of work. “Lifeboat” jobs can be eventually transformed into family sustaining career pathways, as we look 6 to 12 months out, post-pandemic. The second resource is the Business

Roundtable Outlook Index CEO Survey, which anticipates a gradual recovery, having already identified Quarter 4 of 2020 at an 86.2 index figure. This framework also looks 6 to 12 months out, not excluding needs in Information Technology and Healthcare. Upon receiving a question from State Senator Benson, Mr Shimanek indicated that the EMSI Scorecard has filled in gaps in Labor Market Information (LMI). It looks at inflows and outflows of worker migration and considers dislocated workers. A good reference state is Hawaii, whose economy with hospitality has been decimated. Hawaii is trying to attract and retain its workforce, in part by paying for airfare and providing volunteering hours to nonprofits.

Mr. DiGiacomo thanked Mr. Shimanek and the partnership with NGA. He finally introduced Becky Slogeris, Associate Director of Social Design of the Maryland Institute of College Art (MICA), to help connect Arts and Entertainment into the workforce discussion. Ms. Slogeris referred to her colleagues as advancing social design to enhance equity and social justice leaders. She completed work for the city of Baltimore, specifically the Mayor's Office of Employment Development (MOED). The project involved an integrated work system, human centered design, and a better job seeking experience for customers. Research involved talking with MOED staff and job seekers. Ms. Slogeris looked at the East Side workforce center and considered the stigma around job centers. She looked at sample job seekers personas: ranging from "unaware Claire" to "mandatory Mia." A project goal was to engage the whole person emotionally, centering on the job seeker experience. A premise was a "how might we" statement. There were virtual brainstorming sessions and surveys disseminated. Common themes arose. There was a need to improve messaging and reduce stigma, as well as to meet people where they are. As indicated earlier, there was an emotional support need, with new and exciting coworking type space, for example. MICA students provided prototypes, with mock-ups for different ads. There was a focus on the mobile facility. The website was redesigned for a mobile platform, with consideration of cell phone usage. Three stages of the job seeker process were identified: a) introducing; b) engaging; and c) supportive relationship. A prototype included a coffee bar for comfort and lingering of job seekers. There was discussion of wellness workshops and networking nights, as well as a welcome list for a membership network (getting a tag or a card) and access to other resources on one's job seeking journey. This is all designed to address social problems. A challenge is finding sources of funding to make for an improved job seeker experience. The MICA project was funded through a private local foundation, as part of a rebranding process working with MOED to address public stigma. Continuing to work with MOED on a rebranding process would likely continue to involve budget creativity and support from private foundations.

Chairman Dubin and Mr. DiGiacomo thanked Ms. Slogeris for her presentation and then sought to acknowledge GWDB members present not otherwise noted.

Chairman Dubin thanked all participants and wished everyone the happiest of holidays during these unique and challenging times and cheers to 2021. The meeting adjourned (after motion to adjourn and second) at 5:00 PM. The next meeting is scheduled for March 10, 2021.

Submitted by:

Kenneth Lemberg