



MINUTES

EWIB Board of Directors Hybrid Meeting

Tuesday, September 24, 2024

8:00 a.m.

Members Present: Nereida Braasch; Ray Coombs, Jr.; Jessica Corneau; Thayne Hutchins, Jr.; David Jarvis; Chris Jewell; Mary Ellen Jukoski; Susan Kocaba; Linda Ladas; Courtney Murphy; Liz Li; Michael O'Connor; Michael Phelps; Eric Protulis; & Paul Whitescarver.

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

Others Present: Dave Bechtel; Tony Benoit; Kevin Cunningham; John Glover; Ayanti Grant; Rep. Irene Haines; Kristin Hempel; Sen. Martha Marx; Sen. Cathy Osten; Yamarie Perez; Rep. Kevin Ryan; Denise Spellman; Ardemar Torres; Kelli-Marie Vallieres; Cyndi Wells; & Leslie White.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chris Jewell called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. A moment of silence was held for former Eastern Connecticut Workforce Investment Board (EWIB) President/CEO Mark Hill, who passed away September 13, 2024 at the age of 60.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ACCEPTANCE OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

A **MOTION** was made to accept the minutes of the May 21, 2024 EWIB Board of Directors meeting (*WHITESCARVER/PROTULIS*). **Action:** Unanimously approved.

CORRESPONDENCE

EWIB President/CEO Michael Nogelo covered the following items:

- **EWIB Brand** – The new EWIB website (www.ewib.org) launched in August. The EWIB conference room walls now display EWIB's mission and vision statements, core values, and pictures of EWIB customers with a focus on modern manufacturing and healthcare.
- **119K Commission** – Mr. Nogelo was invited to represent EWIB as a panelist at a regional meeting of the 119K Commission on At-Risk and Disconnected Youth in New London. He focused on three strategies that EWIB has proven to help connect at-risk and disconnected youth to the labor force: 1) short-term, demand-driven training to address skills gaps and help youth qualify for entry-level employment on a career pathway; 2) high school career pathway programs like the Youth Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (YMPI) and Youth Healthcare Pipeline Initiative (YHPI); and 3) the CT Youth Employment Program.

Our Core Values: Partnership - Innovation - Accountability - Efficiency - Continuous Improvement

- **Early Childhood Education (ECE) Job Quality Grant Application** – EWIB helped facilitate an application for a U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) Critical Sector Job Quality planning grant by EASTCONN in partnership with TVCCA and EWIB. The application sought to strengthen the regional ECE workforce by focusing on three federal Good Jobs Principles: recruitment and hiring, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEIA), and skills and career advancement.
 - Eric Protulis, Board Member and Executive Director of EASTCONN, commented on the value of partnership with TVCCA and the need for childcare across Eastern CT.
- **Norwich Free Academy (NFA) Student News Video** – A video by an NFA student reporter was shown that highlights the NFA YMPI and YHPI programs.

GOVERNOR’S WORKFORCE COUNCIL (GWC) REPORT

Kelli-Marie Vallieres, Office of Workforce Strategy (OWS), shared the following recent OWS highlights: a) successful turnout in September for the first in-person GWC meeting since the pandemic; b) recommendations are emerging from a planning grant to explore opportunities to better integrate cross agency performance data; c) public feedback is welcome on the State strategic workforce plan draft that focuses on the foundational pillars of DEIA and data and accountability and the strategic pillars of industry leadership, education and career pathways, and sector training. The plan is available for review at <https://portal.ct.gov/gwc/strategy>.

CHAIR/PRESIDENT’S REPORT

- **Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP) Recap** – Carol LaBelle reported on the 2024 SYEP, noting that there were ~1,600 initial applicants and ~650 youth who enrolled and worked at ~135 worksites with a ~94% completion rate. Funding from State, municipal, corporate, philanthropic, and nonprofit funders totaled \$1.77 million. Youth will continue to enroll throughout the year.
 - Chris Jewell recommended employers participate as worksites and noted the sign-up process is easy.
 - Sen. Cathy Osten requested participant data and asked if there were enough summer jobs available should the program expand with additional funding. Mr. Nogelo said the infrastructure is in place to scale up with more funding and sufficient lead time.
 - Sen. Osten asked if the State General Fund MPI line item currently supports the adult MPI or the YMPI. Mr. Nogelo responded that the State funding currently supports primarily the adult MPI and the OWS Good Jobs Challenge grant is the primary funding source for the YMPI, but this can shift as the mix of funding streams changes.
- **Revenue & Budget Update** – Guy Saporito reported that the revenue outlook for the current fiscal year (FY25) is in line with what was presented at the May Board meeting except for a reduction to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) budget. FY24 has concluded and EWIB’s operating budgeted expenditures came in under May’s forecast, and the independent audit will commence in the fall.
- **Legislative & Funding Updates** – Mr. Nogelo reported that EWIB’s WIOA allocation decreased by 16.8% from FY24 to FY25 based on several economic and employment factors. EWIB is working with OWS and CT DOL to determine if a portion of EWIB’s WIOA Governor’s Reserve funding can offset some of the reduction to EWIB’s WIOA Adult program.

EWIB’s Congressionally Directed Spending (CDS) application for the MPI was not awarded by the Senate Appropriations Committee. EWIB plans to submit a CDS application in 2025 to support the Healthcare Pipeline Initiative (HPI). EWIB will submit an application on September 27 for a federal grant for MPI sustainability funding to offset the expiration of other federal funding and to supplement MPI General Fund funding.

Congress is working towards reauthorizing WIOA. The House passed the A Stronger Workforce for America Act in April. In July, the Senate HELP Committee released a discussion draft bill. EWIB shared concerns with the Senate HELP Committee about the bill’s process for redefining local workforce areas. It is uncertain if the House and Senate will bring up a final compromise bill before the end of the current congress.

- **Labor Market Information** – Mr. Nogelo presented national, state, and local labor market information relating to current and projected changes in the labor force, unemployment and underemployment, youth disconnection, and EWIB programs that address labor market challenges and opportunities.
 - Sen. Osten requested an update on the MPI’s future funding needs for the purposes of planning the next State biennial budget.

- Rep. Irene Haynes inquired about EWIB efforts to engage middle schoolers. Mr. Nogelo responded that the YMPI middle school pilot program, the upcoming Manufacturing Expo, and the EASTCONN Mobile Manufacturing Lab all reach middle schoolers.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance Regional Sector Partnership (EAMA RSP)** – EAMA RSP Director Tony Benoit reported that the full RSP met on June 20. An employer instant poll revealed that most members are optimistic about their business outlook over the next year. On August 16, employers met to provide feedback on the YMPI and there was a universal desire to be involved with the YMPI partner schools. A networking event will be held in October featuring a tour of SPIROL and the CT State-Quinebaug Valley Advanced Manufacturing Center. On October 22, EAMA RSP will host a Cybersecurity Necessities for Manufacturers workshop taught by seCTer’s CT APEX program at the Montville American Job Center.
- **Eastern CT Healthcare Partnership (ECHP)** – David Bechtel reported the full partnership will meet on October 25. The Healthcare Education, Attraction, and Training Action Team (HEAT) continues to plan and assess Healthcare Career Expos, provide input on the YHPI, and support implementation of the new St. Joseph’s Master of Social Work (MSW) program in Eastern CT, and will start developing a CDS application to support healthcare workforce development. Childcare Action Team members continue learning about opportunities to expand childcare in Eastern CT and will share resources at the next full partnership meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

None.

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 November 26, 2024.

A **MOTION** was made to adjourn the meeting (*JARVIS/COOMBS*). **ACTION:** Unanimously approved.

The meeting adjourned at 9:29 a.m.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted for EWIB Secretary Caleb Roseme by Strategic Executive Assistant Stephanie Wisniewski.