



MINUTES

EWIB Board of Directors Hybrid Meeting

Tuesday, March 25, 2025

8:00 a.m.

Members Present: Susan Adams, Ray Coombs, Jr.; Jessica Corneau; Ginger Frasca; Chris Jewell; Mary Ellen Jukoski; Linda Ladas; Daniel Mello; Courtney Murphy; Michael Phelps; Eric Protulis; Dina Sears-Graves; Jessica van der Swaagh & Paul Whitescarver.

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

Others Present: Tony Benoit; Kevin Cunningham; John Glover; Ayanti Grant; Kristin Hempel; Lyn Lawrence; Erin McBride; Sen. Cathy Osten; Denise Spellman; Kelli Vallieres; & Cyndi Wells.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Chris Jewell called the meeting to order at 8:00 a.m. and welcomed new Board members Daniel Mello from Ella T. Grasso Technical High School and Susan Adams from Dominion Energy.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ACCEPTANCE OF PREVIOUS MINUTES

A **MOTION** was made to accept the minutes of the January 28, 2025 EWIB Board of Directors meeting (**SEARS-GRAVES/PROTULIS**). **Action:** Unanimously approved with one abstention (Adams).

CORRESPONDENCE

EWIB President/CEO Michael Nogelo highlighted the following item:

- **Article on Regional Manufacturing Ecosystem** – A February 26 *Norwich Bulletin* article discussed the impact of tariffs and the labor market and discussed the industry-driven regional manufacturing ecosystem, including references to EWIB programming and the Eastern Advanced Manufacturing Alliance Regional Sector Partnership (EAMA RSP). Four individual EAMA RSP members and Quinebaug Valley CC were also quoted.

CHAIR'S/PRESIDENT'S REPORT

- **M&T Bank Charitable Foundation Award** – Mr. Nogelo reported that the M&T Bank Charitable Foundation awarded EWIB a two-year, \$100,000 grant for barrier-removal support services for EWIB customers enrolled in training. The project will help boost training completion and placement rates and mitigate funding reductions.
- **Federal Reserve Bank of Boston MPI Visit** – On February 19, Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative (MPI) partner organizations hosted Boston Fed President Susan Collins and First Vice President Karen Pennel at the Manufacturing Apprenticeship Center (MAC) at Grasso Tech. The session included employers, colleges, high schools, and legislators in a roundtable discussion about the keys to the success of the MPI and the Youth MPI. Roundtable participants Chris Jewell, Daniel Mello, Tony Benoit, and Senator Cathy Osten shared their impressions of the visit.

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- **Biennium Governor's Budget** – Mr. Nogelo said the Governor's FY 26/FY 27 biennium budget proposal included level funding for the MPI at \$4.6 million per year, which will help ensure the MPI's continued ability to meet employer demand. However, the budget proposal reduces funding for the CT Youth Employment Program (CYEP) from \$10.3 million to \$5.3 million per year. Workforce Boards, CYEP youth services providers, and youth participants held a rally and testified at an Appropriations Committee hearing in Hartford on February 26 to advocate for additional CYEP funding. The correspondence sheet for today's Board meeting includes several articles about advocacy for CYEP funding.

Senator Osten said the Appropriations Committee plans to release its proposed spending plan on April 22 and stated that the Committee is looking to increase funding for the CYEP.

- **Federal Updates** – Mr. Nogelo said EWIB has been following federal funding and legislative updates closely to ensure compliance with ever-evolving federal guidance. Mr. Nogelo updated the Board on three developments: 1) The CT Department of Labor (CT DOL) ended a pause on DEIA-related federal funds they administer, and the U.S. Department of Labor (US DOL) cancelled a previous notice about implementation of executive orders; 2) On January 29, the U.S. Office of Management and Budget rescinded its January 27 memo ordering a "pause" of certain Federal financial assistance, and 3) U.S. House Education & Workforce Committee leaders have expressed support for reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) via the "A Stronger Workforce for America" bill that gained bipartisan support in the House and Senate in 2024. Committee leaders also support the JOBS Act, which would allow students to use federal Pell Grants to pay for shorter-term job training programs.
- **Customer Testimonial** – A testimonial video of a graduate of the WIOA Jobs, Employment, & Training (JET) program, which provides employment and training services to out-of-school youth ages 17 to 24, was viewed.
- **Procurement Update** – Carol LaBelle reported that EWIB released the American Job Centers (AJC) Youth Services Request for Proposals (RFP) in early March but delayed releasing RFPs for: a) Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Jobs First Employment Services (JFES); b) Business Services, and c) One Stop Operator for at least 90 days due to uncertainty about federal funding. EWIB intends to extend existing contracts with existing vendors for 90 days to ensure continuity of services. Should funding uncertainty persist beyond this initial extension, EWIB will further defer procurement activities and extend existing contracts for an additional 90 days. EWIB typically contracts with vendors for four years with an annual renewal, so will need to determine the timeline for contracts that start after July 1, 2025.

GOVERNOR'S WORKFORCE COUNCIL (GWC)/OFFICE OF WORKFORCE STRATEGY (OWS) REPORT

Chief Workforce Officer Kelli Vallieres shared the following OWS highlights: a) OWS attended the National Governors' Association workforce meeting; b) A new Workforce Strategic Plan will be unveiled at the annual Workforce Summit on April 22; c) OWS is coordinating a legislator field trip to Eastern CT's MAC on April 25 to learn about the MPI as an employer-driven workforce pipeline program; d) OWS helped coordinate a recent meeting with CT's Workforce Boards, Electric Boat, SENEDIA, Blue Forge Alliance, and the Office of Manufacturing to discuss how the workforce system can support the maritime supply chain workforce.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

- **Eastern CT Healthcare Partnership (ECHP)** – David Allard reported that: a) The ECHP Policy Team identified common areas of policy emphasis and met with Connecticut's other healthcare RSPs to discuss shared policy priorities; b) The Healthcare Education, Attraction, and Training (HEAT) Team is engaged with the 100+ regional Youth Healthcare Pipeline Initiative students and will help coordinate an April 25 Healthcare Careers Expo in Norwich; and c) The ECHP Co-Chairs have been assessing the opportunity to engage with Futuro Health, which is launching a grant project to train 1,000 Connecticut residents for healthcare careers over the next three years.
- **EAMA RSP** – EAMA RSP Director Tony Benoit reported that: a) An instant poll during the March 19 EAMA RSP meeting revealed that threatened and actual tariffs are hurting some employers, benefitting others, and requiring all employers to adapt; b) He highlighted the Youth MPI as a model high school career pathway program in testimony to the Manufacturing Caucus; c) The EAMA RSP/Youth MPI "adopt-a-school" model has gained traction

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as a way to more strongly connect employers with Youth MPI high schools; d) EAMA RSP members identify healthcare costs as an area of concern; and e) The EAMA RSP Workforce & Outreach Action Team has focused on promoting workplace safety and several members have expressed interest in peer-to-peer safety reviews.

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 June 10, 2025.

A **MOTION** was made to adjourn the meeting (*SEARS-GRAVES/PHELPS*). **ACTION:** Unanimously approved.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 a.m.

Meeting minutes respectfully submitted for EWIB Secretary Caleb Roseme by David Allard.

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