

Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board  
**Operations Committee Minutes**  
January 10, 2024

Approved by Operations  
Committee

February 14, 2024

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**Board Members Present:** Cathy Witherspoon, Chair; Razell Ward, Secretary; Laurie Glidden, At-Large Member; Grant Provost, Chair of Recruitment

**Not Present:** Chris Winstead, Treasurer & Chair of Resources; Sara McLaughlin, Financial Manager; Patti Saarinen, EMDC Director of Workforce Services

**Others Present:** Erin Benson, Executive Director; Carrie Parker, Administrative Assistant

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### **Call to Order**

Chair Cathy Witherspoon called the meeting to order at 8:38am.

### **Review and Approve Last Meeting Minutes**

**VOTED:** To approve October 11, 2023, meeting minutes. There were no meetings in November and December.

**Motion:** Razell Ward    **Second:** Grant Provost    **Vote:** All present in favor

### **Board Update**

Erin stated that there is a new board member, Charlie Woodworth, who joined in December. Charlie fills the required economic development need that we have had, this completes the five required members needed, and he is from the Franklin County area as well. We are still in need of four members to fill open business seats, but Erin is meeting with Sam Hight later in the week to discuss his possible enrollment on the board. She was given Sam's name by Josh Henry and has had multiple conversations with him regarding joining the board.

### **Open Discussion/New Business**

**ED Review:** Cathy has worked on a form for performing Erin's ED evaluation that is due. She is finalizing the formatting of the form and will send it out to everyone by the end of the week for review and approval. Once the form is finished it will go out to the board for completion on the evaluation. Erin will also provide a self-evaluation for the process as well.

Erin mentioned that the lack of this process and ED reporting to no one was brought up as part of the reason for the high-risk status and is vital to ensure it's completed now and then regularly moving forward for both Erin and Carrie on an annual basis.

Cathy and Razell discussed having the board share areas where they can improve and do this annually also. She will make sure that this piece is added to the forms she is creating and discussed with the board at the upcoming meeting.

**CBO Awards:** Erin stated that all CBO contracts were completed, sent, and signed in December and that the initial meeting with both CWMWDB staff and Patti took place to review the referral process at the end of December. The first report from the contracts is due January 25<sup>th</sup>, which will be the end of the

first quarter. Erin mentioned that the representative from MEIRS mentioned it seemed too soon for reporting and nothing has truly been done at this time. She explained that he can put that into the report that the contracts just began, and the initial meeting took place.

**USDOL Monitoring:** Erin gave an overview of the week of USDOL monitoring that happened in December and included board members within various sections of the monitoring. Overall, the consensus from both Erin and Sara was that the monitoring sessions went well and there are no real concerns that were mentioned during the observations.

The next steps will be for the USDOL team to review their observations to management and the management team will decide what, if any, concerns will be formally written in the report. Once the report is written the USDOL team has 30 days to get the report to MDOL. The report will be sent to MDOL sometime in January and then there is a 90-day timeline for getting everything noted and corrections to be made.

Erin stated that there was some concern from the USDOL team around the CBO contracts and their feeling that the wording stated that there would be payment made for referrals. USDOL felt it was inappropriate. However, the contracts were reviewed by MDOL, and we followed their lead throughout the process. Kim Moore, Ginny, and Erin have already discussed this concern and we have been told that if anything does go into the report on this concern, we will be given additional funding to cover any funding needs so that we are not dealing with the disallocation of funds on our end.

The other concern was to bid on the Youth contract as there is no expiration listed in the contract. The WIOA law does not say that we must send this out to bid again as it was done in 2020 and the laws do not say that we need to include an end date.

The last concern brought up was around financials and the checks and balances of the organization. Sara discussed with them how financials work given the size of our organization and the lack of funding versus larger organizations. The funding that we receive plays a role in how many staff are on the payroll versus the need for contracting services like Sara's.

Laurie wanted to know once the report is released who will respond to the findings? Erin explained that the review was done on MDOL, we were simply a part of that review and therefore Ginny will report on it, but Erin will work with her on anything regarding CWMWDB findings.

Laurie also wanted to know about the concerns with the CBO contracts and how other organizations were handling referral pieces. Erin explained that Coastal Counties has already completed their process and followed the same guidelines, therefore if we are held accountable, they would be as well. This is a large part of why MDOL did not feel the evaluation team fully understood the process for the contracts and that it would not be listed as a problem within the final report.

**MOU/IFA:** The current Memorandum of Understanding/Infrastructure Funding Agreement was signed for only one year and expired on July 1, 2023, which means we are currently out of compliance. This is

part of the law that states that all partners are to financially support the comprehensive one stop which is the Lewiston Career Center. Ginny worked with MDOL to create the payment structure for residents and non-residents of the career center, based on space, technology, and utilities. Erin has been struggling with getting a few people to pay the fees and how much they pay. Erin is working on reformatting the documents to address the concerns that have been brought to her on payments so that it is reflected moving forward.

**Youth Symposium:** Erin gave a brief discussion on the symposium that she recently attended and the takeaway from it. Maine was well represented at the event with Galan funding a few participants along with an EMDC participant CWMWDB supported. There was someone from Educate Maine there also.

During the event Erin reconnected with someone she met previously from Fit First Technologies who will be joining the Youth Committee meeting on Thursday, January 11<sup>th</sup>, to discuss the committees' vision and goals as well as her plan to use ARPA funding on a marketing campaign that is designed specifically with youth in mind.

Fit First has developed an assessment instrument that is based on behavioral characteristics. This tool helps youth by looking at aptitude to broaden areas of potential employment. Lack of exposure limits the amount of interest youth may have in career pathways. She is looking at using these technics with a local company that works with virtual reality on a VR platform to direct youth into apprenticeships, internships, training, and direct employment.

Erin also met with a woman who works heavily on IFA/MOU writing to get assistance with information, especially around IFAs. Other assistance she noted would be support with a policy template, and established policies on customized training and incumbent worker training. She has not heard back yet but will keep everyone informed when she does get something from this person.

**Transportation Pilot:** Erin met with Emily from the HOPE scholarship and David Dorr from the CTE for Somerset County to discuss a pilot around transportation needs in Somerset and Franklin counties. She also discussed it in length with Charlie Woodworth. GoMaine is a commuter program that uses an app to connect people for carpooling, public transportation options and other transportation within their area. Part of the program offers monetary refunding for anyone who carools and then needs to find alternative transportation due to emergencies or other qualifying reasons for needing immediate transport. The pilot will be built around the use of GoMaine's software, established transportation options and a pot of money to pay for a ride when none is available on GoMaine.

The pilot will focus on Franklin and Somerset as there are connections being made with Franklin Memorial and Fairview Redington Hospitals and KVCC. There could potentially be a partnership with KVCAP for the use of their vans to provide transport. We are looking at putting aside funds that can be designated for our participants to use for this pilot. Participants would need to have work and/or education in their plans. She is looking at providing \$100,000 in funding to the program. If it works, it could be a model for transportation options in other counties.

**NAWB:** Erin and Laurie will be attending the National Association of Workforce Boards meeting on March 22<sup>nd</sup>-26<sup>th</sup> in Washington DC and wanted to make sure that if any other board members would like to participate, they let her know so that she can register them. It is a great chance to network and make connections and discuss similar ideas and program concerns.

Laurie feels that this will be a great opportunity to use any information that can be used for our benefit despite whether it comes from a large organization or small one. She feels the networking and brainstorming can be manipulated in our favor or lead to ideas for future projects.

**Adjourn**

Chair Cathy Witherspoon adjourned the meeting at 9:17am.

**Motion:** Grant Provost    **Second:** Razell Ward    **Vote:** All present in favor

Next meeting: Wednesday, February 14, 2024, 8:30am-9:30am via ZOOM

Next full board meeting: Thursday, April 25, 2024, 8:30am-10:30am via ZOOM