

Central Western Maine Workforce Development Board  
**Workforce Board Quarterly Meeting Minutes**  
October 27, 2022  
Via Zoom Video Technology

**Board Members Present:** Grant Provost, Vice Chair; Razell Ward, Secretary; Sue LeClair; Kendra Wheeler; Cathy Witherspoon; Diane Frigon; Jim Trundy; Chris Winstead; Peter Wright; Josh Henry.

**Board Members Absent:**; Nick Paquet; Steve Jorgensen; Trampas Hutches; Bruce Tisdale; Laurie Glidden; Bruce Noddin, Andrea Patstone.

**Staff Present:** Erin Benson, Executive Director

**Others Present:** Sara McLaughlin, Contractor; Tom Fernands, EMDC

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**1. Call to Order & Welcome**

Vice Chair Grant Provost opened the meeting at 9:30 am.

**2. Introductions & Updates**

Grant said he would fill in for the chair to run the meeting until the Board elected a new chair. He is the Business Agent for Ironworkers Local 7, a construction trade union in Maine. They do steel frame buildings, glass and curtain walls, and foundations. Continually working toward bringing in new employees with some success due to high rate of pay and benefits. 2021 and 2022 have been difficult. Currently on projects at Maine Medical Center, and celebrating the construction of the tallest residential tower in Maine—18 stories. Ironworkers Local 7 was awarded a \$300,000 grant for workforce training, to work with Maine Maritime Academy and Northern Maine Community College to receive Global Wind Organization training, for the upcoming offshore wind projects in Maine. Kendra Wheeler is currently branch manager for Lewiston and Auburn Bangor Savings Banks. Moving into a new role soon as a program financial wellness manager. It speaks to workforce because our employees are complex human beings who have various needs, one being financial wellness. As far as recruitment, BSB is doing okay. Applications are coming in more quickly, and the focus is now on retention, keeping the people they have and avoid poaching! Chris Winstead reminded the group that the Maine Community College System received a \$35 million dollar grant from the Maine Jobs and Recovery Act. In the first 10 months we have spent or committed \$11.4 million. Have opened up over 3100 training seats in critical programs. Two campuses serve the CWM region, KVCC and CMCC. If you hear of training needs or specific programs from businesses, have them reach out to Dwayne Conway at CMCC, Elizabeth Fortin at KVCC or Chris at the . Cathy Witherspoon, Chief Human Resource Officer for Boyne Resorts, said her company has three resorts in Maine: Sunday River, Sugarloaf, and Pleasant Mountain (formerly Shawnee Peak). Huge hiring time for Boyne to staff up for the winter season. Good news is they are getting more applications than in previous years. The same holds true for other Boyne resorts across the country. While they have previously hired international students through J1 visas, Boyne is now hiring through H2B visas, though within the US. Workers are coming from the coast. Saves on paperwork trying to bring workers in from out of country. Always looking for more staff, more training, trying to get the trades in—mechanics especially. Perhaps start an apprenticeship for mechanics and re-energize the culinary apprenticeship. Peter Wright,

CEO of Bridgton & Rumford Hospitals, stated the critical need for healthcare workers, especially in nurses, continues. For last several years, hospitals have been approaching this cliff with nursing. Upwards of 25% of the nurses in Maine are over 60. The pandemic exhausted this higher age group. The most senior, most experienced nurses left the workforce. The vaccine mandate, which was politicized, caused another group to leave. 159 nurses left the system, so the system became reliant on the traveling workforce. Average hourly wage for nurses is \$25 an hour; at its peak it was \$200 an hour for traveling nurses. This helps explain the economics of healthcare. Were up to as many as 800 hours of traveling time down to 100+, the result of the waning of the pandemic, economic factors and a focus on creating a better culture. Hospitals across the country are underwater due mostly to traveling labor. Losing workers to competition, mostly in lower wage jobs. Pushed their minimum hourly wage to \$16 to \$17 an hour and improved benefits package. Susan LeClair, CareerCenter Manager, states they are focused on connecting job seekers to employers, make them aware of all the opportunities, and make sure they are prepared for the available positions. They work with businesses, training providers, and have extended their outreach. People don't need to come to the CareerCenter, the staff is going to them. Diane Frigon, with the Bureau of Rehab Services, had a busy summer with life camps, where 14 -18 year-olds get their feet wet on a college campus. She works with people who are visually impaired or have other disabilities. The camp helps them get acclimated to a college campus, how to navigate. Whether it is an educational track or career track, they focus on basic skills to navigate life. Also had bus tours to different colleges. BRS hired Amanda Mueller in September 2022 as an apprenticeship navigator. She will be working closely with clients to connect them to employers doing apprenticeships. Jim Trundy is ED of Western Maine Community Action, which provides services to Androscoggin, Oxford and Franklin Counties. LIHEAP, a Maine Housing energy assistance program, is seeing an uptick in applications. Payouts will happen earlier than in past years. Emergency Rental Assistance is on hold, until the people in the pipeline have been helped to know what remains for funding. Working on an affordable housing project in Franklin County, which should provide 40 units. Also working with the hospital in Franklin County to create an on-site childcare center. Tom Fernands, the IT & Data Manager for EMDC, stated EMDC continues with the WIOA programs but is struggling to find Dislocated Workers. The Adult program has many participants, but they don't qualify under Dislocated Workers. Josh Henry is President of Timber HP, a new manufacturer in Madison, setting up shop in the old paper mill. The company will start its first three lines of wood fiber-based insulation for the construction market (a first in North America) in April 2023. Cianbro is on site working with about an 80% crew on a \$150 million dollar project to renovate the Madison Paper Mill and install equipment. The company will employ about 140 people once at full operations, probably 80 by the end of 2023. There are 30 employees right now. Done very well in almost all areas of hiring with the exception of electrical and automation. May have to hire a search company to bring in a senior person in that area. Looking at starting an apprenticeship program for that area. Doing well in the mechanics area. Other companies have stated that electrical help is an issue. They have reached out to KVCC. Big hiring ramp in January, about 30-35 people. It is a high end operation with an average salary of around \$81,000, which is not including benefits. Have realized the lack of childcare personally, and are working with a daycare center in Norridgewock to help expand her operation to Madison to renovate the Old Point School to create a 4,000 square foot childcare facility and open up 45 spots for children. Razell Ward, the assistant director of Lewiston Adult Ed,

stated that they are working with over 500 students in Lewiston, mostly foreign born, some with foreign credentials. We work on trying to translate those credentials, which is costly and there is not enough money for that. We get them upskilled appropriately so local employers will consider them for positions. Industrial Roofing Company (IRC) has a new apprenticeship program. Jointly looking at utilizing the workforce that is available and how to support them while they learn. Lewiston Adult Ed has its own apprenticeship program focusing on healthcare, construction, and manufacturing. Looking at people who aren't ready to step into a training program yet or go to college, what do we do to get them ready. Businesses need workers, there are people eager to work—they just need time to get the basics down in a second, third, or fourth language. Augusta Adult Ed is tackling the childcare problem by developing a support system with the Augusta Department of Recreation so people can go to work. She will be talking with them to see what might be done in the Lewiston/Auburn area. Sara McLaughlin provides financial consulting in the areas of accounting and finance. She is a shop of one, so she does not have much to add to the workforce discussion, other than her own son recently graduated from college and took a job out of state. He didn't even look in Maine. She hopes he comes back to the state at some point.

**3. Review and Approve Last Meeting's Minutes**

**VOTED:** *To approve the April 28, 2022 meeting minutes as written.*

Motion: Peter Wright      Second: Christopher Winstead      Vote: All in Favor

**4. Board Membership Update:  
Approve Treasurer Position**

**VOTED:** *To approve Peter Wright as Treasurer.*

Motion: Christopher Winstead      Second: Razell Ward      Vote: All in Favor with Peter recusing himself

Erin shared a document, which she had emailed to everyone that morning, from the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) stating the required make up of workforce boards. She received a resignation from Kelly Zolad, a business representative. Current by laws state that the board has no more than 25 and no less than 20. CFR requires 51% be from business, 20% from workforce, and 5 required partners in Adult Education, Wagner Peyser Act, Rehabilitation Act, Higher Education, and Economic & Community Development. Some board members were misidentified in their classification. Currently, there are 8 people who represent business, 3 represent workforce and you need a fourth, and 4 of the required partners and you need Economic Development. We are counting Chris Winstead twice, under workforce and Higher Education—this is allowed. There are also three under the "Other" category. A board of 20 would dictate 11 business reps, 4 in workforce and the 5 required partners, no room for "others." With each addition, the business and workforce potentially need to change to meet dictated percentages. Working with the Operations Committee to seek candidates to be approved by the Commissioners. Kennebec Commissioner Patsy Crockett gave some suggestions, as there is no representation from Kennebec County. January is the annual meeting when you vote on a new slate of officers and new members. We need a Chair and a Vice Chair—Grant cannot serve in these positions because they must be filled by a business representative. Grant said members of the Operations Committee have made some solid connections for additional members.

Erin met with board members Trampas Hutches and Josh Henry and connected them with people that might help in their areas of need. She would like to meet with all board members to go over their role and answer any questions they may have.

## 5. High Risk Status:

Erin shared a document from the April minutes, outlining the steps to remove the board from high-risk status. Forty-five pages had been boiled down to nine items to remove the board from high-risk status. This information is below, text in red denotes Blaine's responses:

High risk letter response tracker:

- Copies of corrected versions of subrecipient award agreements sent to the state—  
Blaine stated she did do most of this.
- Update financial policy manual—task for the financial focus group
- Create local area youth work experience policy—task for youth focus group.
- Update personnel policy—certain requirements outlined in the response letter—task for the personnel focus group.
- Review and approve grievance policy—approved at the last board meeting.
- Document board staff training—already done this. Just needs to be signed off on.  
We need to create a document.
- Develop an onboarding manual—very close to getting this finalized. I need operations committee input at this point.
- Review board website—more information in the letter and needs to be completed by the operations committee. contract

None of these related to finance issues stated in the original high-risk letter, a good thing.

- Monitoring report for PY 18 & 19

Two more things that need to be finalized. Local Board document (web?) does not contain EEO statement. It does now but we need to create an internal review process prior to them going on the website. The operations committee will work on this.

Youth barrier as defined by local board:

A low-income individual who requires additional assistance to enter or complete an educational program or to secure or hold employment per local area definition.

Peter asked by the next board meeting to identify what items are done, which items are left, who owns them, and the timeline for completion. Need an action plan with owners and dates. Erin spoke with Ginny Carroll from MDOL and she said that the 3 tasks highlighted in yellow, alone, could get us off the high risk status. These tasks had been assigned to focus groups and there was discussion at the April meeting about who would be on these committees, with no definitive list. There was no quarterly board meeting in July. Erin suggested that the move to create focus groups to do this work is going to slow down the process. She will work on these to get them done. Erin proposes to hire Joanna Russell, former ED for the northeast board and a previous consultant for CWMWDB, to help with the Personnel Policy and Financial Manual. It doesn't mean that focus groups or committee could be formed in the future to take a deeper dive into any of the policies for updates and revisions. I met with Joanna and she is willing. Erin will work on the Youth Work Experience policy and the Personnel policy. All policies approved at the April 2022 board meeting were never passed by MDOL. I sent Ginny the following policies: Individual Training Account,

Support Services, On the Job Training, Customized Training, and Youth Incentive. I sent them to Ginny for review in mid-October.

**6. Committee & Focus Group Appointments:**

Erin asked to table this and the focus needs to be on new board members, who can then serve on committees and focus groups. Grant agreed to table the discussion. Once there is a full board, committees and focus groups can be decided.

**7. Performance & Spending Updates:**

Since the board did not meet in July, Erin gave a quick update on the close of PY21 which ended June 30, 2022. The Adult program was 132% of goal spending out PY20 money in April. Dislocated Workers, a challenging group to recruit across the state, was 73% of goal and the PY20 funds were spent out. Youth has been the biggest challenge in all regions. In this region, some of it can be explained by the lack of enrollment in in school youth. There were no carry ins and no new enrollment until the third quarter. Consistent outreach happened in the third quarter, including a presentation to a Melmac Peer Learning group which included counselors from high schools, JMG, Upward Bound and CTEs. Staff enrolled 8 in school youth during the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter. Reached 83% of goal for out of school youth. Several youth decline services because they are getting employment on their own. The labor shortage has made it much easier to secure a job. EMDC implemented an aggressive youth recruitment plan that focused on work experiences. In the first 7 months of PY21, staff enrolled 10 youth in work experiences. During the last 5 months, they enrolled 16. PY22, the new program year, began July 1, 2022. After the 1<sup>st</sup> quarter, the Adult program was 121% of goal, while dislocated workers were only 40% of goal. When someone loses their job, they can easily find another one as many employers are desperate for help. Pixelle paper mill in Jay announced a shut down and 230 people will lose their jobs in March/April of 2023. The company is worried that they will be able to keep enough employees to finish out contracted work. Other companies have already started recruiting these employees. Most will get other jobs easily so will not come to us as a dislocated worker. Have suggested to EMDC to request a movement of funds from the Dislocated Worker budget to the Adult budget as the need is greater for adults. The Youth program is 1 participant shy of being 100% of goal for the first quarter. Much of this was due to the high number of carry ins. Between in school and out of school, carry ins were 142% of first quarter goal. New enrollments are behind at only 36% of goal. Important to keep that focus on this population. To that end, EMDC hired a director of youth services, Madeline Bradfield. Talked with Tree Street Youth about serving some of their participants over a longer period of time, which would cost more. Can do this in the short term as money was left on the table. But each year, less money is being left. The difference between PY21 and PY20, EMDC left \$100,000 less on the table in PY21 than in PY20. Finally, the Opioid grant has lagged behind. It started later, and there aren't as many resources in the CWM region as there are in other regions. For instance, there are 12 sober houses in Bangor and 4 in Lewiston. The goal is to enroll 158 by December 31, 2022. At the end of September, there are 118 enrolled.

**8. Finance Update:**

Sara sent a few items to the board members this morning. There are three things she needs to address. 1. The board needs to approve its annual operating budget. Normally done in June, but that did not happen this year. 2. She wants to update the board on current

finances. 3. Finally she wants to update board on the audit. Sara shared her screen with the proposed budget put together with the help of the Operations Committee. The Operations Committee approved it so the board must vote. Erin has seen it. The budget is smaller than normal due to lack of staffing for a full year and less than full operations. The amount is \$245,414. It includes funding from 4 multi year contracts. The top shows the beginning and end date of each contract, the value, what we propose to use this year, and what we are saving for future years. There is flexibility to pull from what is reserved for the following year if necessary. The bottom of the chart represents just the administrative costs and the line item budget for those costs. To date through the first three months, the board has spent only \$18,000, which represents 7% of the budget. After a quarter, we should be at 25% We are behind and that is expected. The audit for 6/30/2021 (PY20) was completed on time. Everything the MDOL found and cited, so did the auditor, which we knew would be automatic findings. The document is 32 pages and the detail on the findings is toward the back beginning on page 17. These findings do not represent new discoveries; these had already been identified by the state. CWMWDB policy is to go out for bid with auditing every 5 years. This board in April voted to use Chester Kearney for the audit even though they had completed it for the previous 5 years because of the circumstances. We need to get the audit done for 6/30/2022 (PY21) and the board needs to do an RFP. It doesn't mean we can't choose them again if they are the best bidder. The new audit for PY21 is due March 31, 2023. Sara stated the RFP process needs to begin soon in order to give companies the appropriate time. Erin stated that Blaine in the April meeting said she had already started an RFP and Erin will look for it. Chris questioned if the board needed to vote on starting the RFP process. Sara felt it wasn't necessary, but there did need to be an audit selection committee. The committee would make a recommendation and the board would vote on that. Can't wait until the next board meeting in January to address this. Sara suggested forming a small committee and begin the work. Chris stated he has been involved in RFP processes with other boards. With federal funding, usually there is a period of time for public notice, typically 15-30 days. We could pull together a list of accountants. If an RFP could be finished in a timely matter and sent to a list of accountants and give 30 days for submission, it could be done in time for a vote in January. A subcommittee could review proposals, make a recommendation to the Operations Committee at its January meeting and the board could vote on January 26. The audit selection committee will be comprised of Chris Winstead, Peter Wright, Sara McLaughlin, and Erin Benson. Have to move quickly because accounting firms have several deadlines that will not allow for much time to do extra work. Erin will look at the procurement policy for required time to post the RFP. If it is a short window the process may be fast tracked, which Sara was in favor of because firms will want to do the lion's share of this work in January or early February due to their other tax deadlines.

#### **Approve Annual Operating Budget**

**VOTED:** To approve Annual Operating Budget as presented.

**Motion:** Cathy Witherspoon      **Second:** Kendra Wheeler      **Vote:** All in Favor

#### **Approve Actual Financial Report through the First Quarter**

**VOTED:** To approve first quarter financial report as presented.

**Motion:** Chris Winstead      **Second:** Cathy Witherspoon      **Vote:** All in Favor

### **9. Unfinished Business:**

No new business. Razell mentioned that things are moving in a positive direction with steps laid out and people stepping up. Grant agreed and thanked Erin and Sara for their work.

#### **10. New Business:**

MDOL secured the QUEST grant, a National Dislocated Worker Grant worth over \$7 million dollars that will serve 780 people over a two-year period. Erin submitted a budget on behalf of the CWMWDB requesting \$1.2 million for the region of which \$125,000 was earmarked for the board. Unclear if the board grants will be fully funded. It will dovetail with the Opioid grant which ends December 31, 2022. Will serve an expanded definition of people who are long-term unemployed, people who meet the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Accessibility (DEIA) definition, expanded definition of people who are incarcerated (typically WIOA works with people who are within 6 months of release—expanded to within a year), which will dovetail with a training being proposed to offer CDL classes to people incarcerated and offer the driving portion upon release, and people self-employed who've lost 20% of their income due to the pandemic. Infrastructure, green energy, and the care economy will be three industries of focus but can also work with other industries. • Erin is working on an office location as the board needs a physical address. Every official document is associated with 77 Winthrop Street in Augusta, but there are also addresses associated with the Lewiston Career Center, and the LA Chamber. None of these physical addresses are valid. The board does maintain a post office box in Lewiston. • Completing the process of securing a Unique Entity Identifier number issued by the System for Award Management (SAM) is a priority for MDOL. CWMWDB needs this number to accept federal grant money. CWMWDB has a number assigned but it must be activated. Blaine started the process in February 2022, Kelly picked it up when Blaine left. This is a difficult and complicated process. Erin worked with Kelly to complete this process. After an hour on the phone with the feds and three letters of submission, we have passed the IRS review and must undergo two other reviews. • As well as contracting with Joanna Russell for the financial procedure manual, Erin would like to contract with former colleague Ben Hawkins for web site support. Ben maintained the website in his capacity as Coordinator of Communication for EMDC. Erin is also looking to contract IT services. • Erin is working on the contract between CWMWDB and EMDC for WIOA formula funds (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth). Should have been done before June 30. • Healthcare expansion grants are being sought through federal funds. Erin will attend a state-wide meeting to listen and find out how we might support this endeavor. Chris mentioned that the grant focused on two separate areas: nursing instructors and nursing expansion. The state has invested a great deal of money into the latter through the Maine Community College System and the University of Maine System, but there are not enough instructors to teach. The State will be looking at one application to fill the pipeline of qualified nursing instructors. He further shared that EMCC delivered a nursing program in Dover-Foxcroft through the Mayo Hospital. This could be replicated once there are more instructors. Without a unified approach to the grant, the state could lose out as it did with EDA Good Jobs funding.

#### **11. Adjourn Meeting**

**VOTED:** To adjourn meeting.

**Motion:** Chris Winstead   **Second:** Kendra Wheeler   **Vote:** All in Favor

**Next Board Meeting Date: January 26, 2023, 8:30 am – 10:30 am**