

Meeting Minutes

SEPTEMBER 16, 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

Gary Bockrath

Jennifer Bodensiek

Gavin Buckley

Andrea Chapdelaine

Veronica A. Cool

Michelle Day

Katarina Ennerfelt

James D. Fielder

Wanda Smith Gispert

Robert L. Green

Steve Groenke

Kevin D. Heffner

Stacey Herman

Cheryl Kagan

Rona E. Kramer

Sandra Kurtinitis

Andrew B. Larson

Carl Livesay

Roya Mohadjer

Gary Murdock

Chad Nagel

Alexander Núñez

Lourdes R. Padilla

Charles Ramos

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 Atterbearly

Alice Blayne-Allard

Larry Letow

Amie Long

Stephen K. Neal

George W. Owings, III

Tiffany P. Robinson

Kelly M. Schulz

Gerald "Jerry" Shapiro

(2 VACANT SEATS)

GWDB STAFF

Mike DiGiacomo

Darla Henson

Ken Lemberg

Molly Mesnard

GUESTS *

Gary Antonino

Linda Armstrong

Charlotte Ahearn

Perrice Austin

Rachael Barrett

Tiara Booker-Dwyer

Latishia Brooks

Todd Cagwin

Brian Cahalan

Tisa Clark

Dwight Carr

Natalie Clements

Gary Cohen

Kim Cohen

Eric Colchamiro

Yolanda Cullin

Ruthy Davis

Scott Dennis

Mark Drury

Molly Dugan

Judith Emmel

Bruce England	Meka McNeal	Jeff Samuels
John Feaster	Cee Cee Molineaux	Sarah Sheppard
Grace Fielhauer	Bryan Moore	Loren Shimanek
Laura Flamm	Ed Mullin	Walter Simmons
Ellen Flowers-Fields	Kirk Murray	Jim Smith, III
Lauren Gilwee	Dwayne Myers	Bruce Spector
Jamie Gunnell	Marsha Netus	Steve Spector
Cynthia Gurne	Denise Nooe	Jennifer Sproul
Kimberly Hahr	Andi Overton	Rachael Stephens
Rishan Habte	John Papagni	Phillip Stoner
Charlotte Hearn	Kendra Parlock	LeRoy Thomas
Daraius Irani	Janice Peete-Bey	Fran Trout
Kenneth Jessup	Amy Petkovsek	Adrea Turner
Netsanet Kibret	Heather Powell	Rose Volynskiy
Heather Lageman	Matthew Pyne	Erik Wallace
Cailey Locklair	Ed Roberts	Felecia Webb
Brian Lynch	Christine Ross	Rebecca "Becca" Webster
Mary Manzoni	Erin Roth	
Kaitlin Marsden	James Rzepkowski	

**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, September 16, 2020, via tele-conference call. Chairman Louis Dubin provided welcome and opening remarks. He provided a few housekeeping reminders regarding attending another virtual board meeting. Chairman Dubin noted that there was a Governor's cabinet meeting that overlapped with our meeting, so several of our Secretaries might not be present but could potentially join us later. He asked for updates from Secretaries and/or Vice Chair that were present.

Secretary Sam Abed from the Department of Juvenile Services indicated, in conjunction with the Lt. Governor, that there was a collaboration with the Home Builders Institute (HBI) to start a carpentry program within the juvenile system, which would also benefit the Baltimore Public Schools. A cohort of youth had already started and successfully completed the first part. HBI has been providing the curriculum and instructor.

Secretary Robert Green from the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services communicated that opening up of correctional schools was in progress. Maryland Labor was helping, with a data driven process. The reimagine focus continues, maximizing technology and workforce development. On September 23, 2020, a new Executive Director of reentry and workforce development will start, Ms. Donna Rojas, a dynamic personality. We will continue to benefit our returning citizens.

Secretary Padilla of the Department of Human Services provided a brief update. The MDThink statewide platform was continuing to evolve with sister agencies. Performance measures were being updated. The Child Adult Management System is now on line in all county systems (child welfare systems). The Department of Human Services represented the State on a federal Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) panel recently.

State Superintendent of Schools Karen Salmon referenced schools, child care, and sports. The statewide school system was moving forward. For example, a new school opened up in Caroline County, the first in 40 years, where she and the Governor recently visited. She visited four schools in Cecil County – including the Cecil Public Schools Technology Center – where 120 students were back with their instructors. The majority of school systems were helping bring back small cohorts of students in person. The Governor was providing \$200 million to the local schools. Devices and broadband connectivity were being purchased.

Chairman Dubin had a few additional housekeeping items. With a continued focus on equity, he noted that a meeting is scheduled in October to discuss equity and inclusion in the workforce among the chairs, vice chairs, and directors for the state and 12 local workforce development boards. The objective for this meeting is that this will be a continuous conversation, and discussions will continue with the various boards on challenges and solutions.

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

PRESENTATIONS:

The meeting was turned over to GWDB Executive Director Michael DiGiacomo. Mr. DiGiacomo provided some updates. The Reimagine Grant was submitted in late August, and we expect to hear back in mid-October. The next virtual board meeting is anticipated for December 9, 2020. We will send details as we get closer to the meeting date. We have over 110 people participating today.

Next, Mr. DiGiacomo introduced again to the Board Bryan Moore, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Division of Unemployment Insurance, for updates on unemployment insurance compensation in Maryland. First, Mr. Moore gave an update on the Work Sharing program, where a vendor marketing campaign is being procured. There is a new manager of that unit, Yolanda Cullen, and three employees have been hired to work on the program. Prior to the pandemic, there were only 2 Work Sharing plans; now there were 268 unique employers, with 428 plans in total. A primary objective has been to avert layoffs and help employers in their reopening. There have been webinars held across the state. The GWDB staff has been assisting Mr. Moore's staff with employer evaluations.

Next, Mr. Moore spoke about the Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) Program. After the \$600 additional unemployment compensation per week went away, a new program emerged with \$300 additional per week. Maryland was awarded federal funding to allow for \$300 for the first 6 weeks, or \$1,800, for individuals who receive at least \$100 per week in UI in any of 8 programs (thus at least \$400 per week eligible), through September 5th. There is provision for individuals for a one-time self-certification

(directly related to COVID) for the 6 weeks of retroactive payment of \$1,800. Once the funds are gone, they are gone.

There has been full modernization of the BEACON 2.0 system – online application where the acronym indicates the combined ability to handle benefits, appeals, and contributions from employers. Historically, there was an old mainframe system in use; this will be shut down, with the new system to be available this coming Sunday morning. On Monday morning the new system would be available for employers. Claimants will be able to go into the portal at any time to get current updates. Employers and/or their third party administrators can submit wage reports and be able to make appeals. A new call center is being established for employers and third party administrators hired by employers. UI data will be made easier to utilize. A mobile application will be available October 5 for employers and claimants. The main UI webpage has more information on the BEACON 2.0 updates.

Next, Mr. DiGiacomo introduced Walter Simmons, Executive Director of Employ Prince George's, to provide local workforce board COVID updates. Mr. Simmons' workforce area is one of several in the state to purchase the Career Edge workforce training platform, being used primarily for youth services, as in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Frederick County. Prince George's County is providing \$200 in immediate emergency response relief funds to unemployed individuals (per week), while Anne Arundel is providing \$500. There are remote services and basic skills assessments necessary for determining training going on, with some American Job Centers opening to staff and partners. There continues to be a focus on in-demand industries. There are monthly virtual job fairs and recruitments. There is connecting to government resources and surveying job seekers. There is promotion of the Work Sharing program. Prince George's County has the Employ PG Edge Workforce Portal, www.employpgedge.com, and the SkillUp platform (Metrics Learning). One can search for a training provider. There is leveraging of resources, such as through the Latin American Youth Center. There is diversity of funding, including nontraditional workforce development funds. Mr. Simmons stressed that cited programs and tools are customizable for each local area. Mr. DiGiacomo said that the local areas had done great work in pivoting in a short time under challenging conditions.

Next, Mr. DiGiacomo turned discussion over to Jim Rzepkowski, Assistant Secretary of Labor, Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning, for an update at the state level. Mr. Rzepkowski indicated that services were being maintained remotely for job seekers and employers. He said that Secretary Robinson, who sends her greetings, was at a subcabinet meeting. He mentioned four major discussion points: layoff aversion program; helping small business; securing additional funding; and the State Plan. Since the Governor's State of Emergency on March 13, 2020, the public workforce system has largely transitioned from a face-to-face one to various technology forms, including virtual Job Centers. The effectiveness of the new approach has been demonstrated by an increased show rate of job seekers into unemployment related programming. This has involved State merit staff, operating under Title III, Wagner Peyser. There was a virtual job fair. In Correctional Education, staff have returned to the classroom as of the beginning of September, behind the fence. Team Labor is continuously improving, as conditions evolve, within the context of a remote work model.

There has been a COVID Layoff Aversion Fund (starting March 23, 2020), in such high demand, particularly with small businesses, that the funds ran out. The objective was to reduce and eliminate layoffs, as well as quickly get funds to small businesses. There were 445 employers awarded, utilizing

funding for equipment and software, as well as activities such as additional training and cleaning of facilities to slow the spread of COVID-19. The process helped nearly 9,000 Marylanders keep their jobs. The State has received a number of federal grants since January, with the submission of 9 federal grant applications. There was \$6 million in State Apprenticeship Expansion Grants, combined with an additional \$7 million in funding (already awarded since 2016). We are approaching 11,000 registered apprentices in the State. The state record was 10,000 apprentices in October 2018. Maryland was awarded \$4 million for the U.S. Department of Labor (US DOL) Support Communities Opioid grant.

The Combined WIOA State Workforce Plan (2020 to 2024), following a collaborative process and approval of this board, received approval in June 2020 from the US DOL. On October 1, 2020, regional and local plan guidance will be released. On December 11, 2020, regional plans will be due, and on March 1, 2021, local plans will be due. Board volunteers are welcome for the review process. Mr. DiGiacomo pointed out that even during crazy times, the work still goes on at the Division of Workforce Development and Adult Learning.

Next, Mr. DiGiacomo introduced Rachael Stephens and Loren Shimanek from the National Governors Association (NGA) to give some information on how the NGA works with state boards and other national updates. The NGA, since 1908, has been the nonpartisan organization of the nation's governors. The NGA Center for Best Practices, a research and consulting organization, provides customized technical assistance, as well as peer learning, and researches and publishes reports. Within the Center for Best Practices, there is the Workforce Development and Economic Policy Program, which includes economic development. Projects have included Registered Apprenticeship and those involving low-income workers and families. Workforce development technical assistance programs incorporate both general technical assistance and customized assistance. There is coordination with NGA's Office of Government Relations. Winter and summer sessions of NGA bring peers together, incorporating best practices and emerging practices. Maryland has played a leadership role in various endeavors. For example, NGA hosted a Career Edge webinar, a program in which Maryland has been actively engaged. Jim Rzepkowski will be Vice Chair of the National Association of State Liaisons.

There is the NGA Internal COVID-19 Taskforce, with resource development under www.nga.org/coronavirus. On September 24, 2020, there will be the next NGA UI call, with real-time peer learning. Related resources and events include: Reskilling and Recovery Network (in partnership with the American Association of Community Colleges); Apprenticeship; Occupational Licensing; On-Demand Workforce; and Contact Tracing Workforce.

Mr. Shimanek spoke after Ms. Stephens. He referred to Maryland as a leader, with an exemplary profile, for what other states are doing, including bolstering of UI systems and small business layoff aversion. He spoke about workforce development across the states. Issues mentioned included: increasing access; deploying staff; targeting outreach; advancing equitable opportunities; and leveraging grants and CARES Act funding for strategic investments. He highlighted Tennessee's Talent Exchange and Connecticut's SkillUp initiatives. Virtual job fairs have been developed in New Jersey and in Colorado (early stages). All states are in relative triage mode. There is Lost Wages Assistance, as well as job training and skill development. NGA has had to pivot, with its UI agency partners. There has been remote working and meeting of participants where they are. Maryland is commended for its Work Sharing and comprehensive layoff aversion strategies, including for small businesses. With CARES Act

Coronavirus funding, across the states there has been encouragement of entrepreneurial activity. For example, Maine has expanded efforts. Equity and access are at the forefront, with examples in Rhode Island and Delaware. Wyoming has a noteworthy adult education program.

The last presenter introduced by Mr. DiGiacomo was Dr. Daraius Irani, Chief Economist at Towson University, to provide some information on the economic outlook and the impact of COVID. Dr. Irani reported a 9% drop in second quarter GDP – annualized at a 32% drop. Consumption has had a significant decline, and private investment is down; government spending is up. We still import more than we export. There are more unemployed people than job openings. People are staying at home and educating at home. This is unprecedented in our lifetime, with continuous unemployment. National retail sales have shown a large decrease. Within a 0% rate environment, people are still buying and selling homes. The stock market has been volatile in the past few months. Nationally, manufacturing was in a recession, with a slight uptick in January.

Maryland is a service-oriented state, with 9% of the workforce in manufacturing. Unemployment claims are decreasing. It is predicted that until 2022, the state will still be short on enough jobs. Travel, restaurants, bars, etc., (where there are mass gatherings of individuals) are still trying to recover. Hits were taken in state and local government, food services, and arts, entertainment, recreation, etc. Many economists are predicting a full recovery in mid-2025. Office real estate has been affected, including in downtowns. The pandemic has been inequitable on low-income wage workers. Contractors can work from home.

Mr. DiGiacomo indicated that all presentation materials would be on our website. He thanked all presenters, board members, and interested parties.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mr. DiGiacomo then asked for a motion to adjourn. This motion was made and seconded. The meeting adjourned at 5:25 pm. The next meeting is scheduled for December 9, 2020.

Submitted by:

Ken Lemberg