



CAPITAL AREA WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
MEETING MINUTES  
December 6, 2007

The Capital Area Workforce Development Board met in regular session on Thursday, December 6, 2007, at 8:30 a.m. at Wake County Commons Building, Raleigh, North Carolina. Members present: Robert Barham, Bruce Clarke, Kenny Gibbs, JoAnne Honeycutt (for Dr. Anthony Parker), Susan Jackson, Earl Marett, Gerald Mitchell, Dr. Donald Reichard, David Rockefeller (for Dr. Del Burns), Nelson Rose, Vickie Shore, Marie Watson and Durwood Woodall. Staff: Regina Crooms, Alfreda Barnett, Susan Jablonski, Nikki Marshall, Lisa Ramsey, Georgia Steele, Jane Sterner and Brenda Wilkerson. Guests: Lisa Arnette, Employment Security Commission Raleigh Office; Reginna Ford, Labor Market Information, Employment Security Commission Central Office; Nancy Stancil, Capital Area JobLink at Johnston Community College; Jackie McMillian, Workforce Development Unit, Employment Security Commission Central Office; Gene Norton, Capital Area JobLink at Raleigh Employment Security Commission; Denny Jenkins, Wake County Human Services; Carol Collins, Community Partnerships Incorporated; Dana Martinez, Community Partnerships Incorporated; Chris Droessler, Wake County Public School System; Susan Portman, Weststar Precision, Inc. and Sepi Asefnia, SEPI Engineering Group.

Chairman Barham called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. He commented on the previous board meeting held at Wake Technical Community College, Western Wake Campus at Millpond Village, and the generosity displayed from host Gerald Mitchell with Wake Technical Community College. Chairman Barham proceeded and asked if there were any corrections to the draft minutes of October 25, 2007. The minutes were approved as written.

Incumbent Worker Training Spotlights were first on the agenda, and Chairman Barham announced that representatives from Weststar Precision, Inc. and SEPI Engineering Group, incumbent worker grants recipients, would speak on how the grants were used in their companies. Chairman Barham provided a brief review regarding the incumbent worker program, the application process and how the program benefits business by enhancing the skills of employees. He asked the Strategic Alliance Committee to provide an update for the program. Alfreda Barnett provided the update indicating that the North Carolina Department of Commerce oversees the program, and Capital Area is currently in its 4<sup>th</sup> year of administrating the program for Wake and Johnston Counties. Companies can receive up to \$37,500 in incumbent worker training funds with a lifetime maximum of \$50,000. At this time, Ms. Susan Portman, Vice President, Weststar Precision, Inc. was introduced.

Ms. Portman began by giving a brief history of the inception of Weststar Precision, Inc. Her husband, Mr. Ervin F. Portman worked for a Fortune 100 company for twenty (20) years and came to realize what it was like for a person to buy from vendors. After numerous relocations across the country, he decided to open his own business. In 1996, Mr. Portman founded Weststar Precision Inc. located in Holly Springs, North Carolina.

Weststar is a contract manufacturer specializing in rapid development and manufacturing of precision devices for commercial and industrial customers throughout the world. The company excels in rapid prototype development and contract precision machining. During the past eleven (11) years, the business has grown to twenty-four (24) employees working two (2) shifts in Holly Springs, North Carolina. Expansion efforts to San Jose, Costa Rica has granted Weststar a second facility that operates on a 24/7 schedule and employs one hundred twenty-five (125) workers.

Ms. Portman indicated that receipt of the incumbent worker training funds has provided the company the opportunity to remain competitive by allowing employees to be trained in Lean Manufacturing. As a result of the training, Weststar has recently received the ISO 9000 certification for their organization. Ms. Portman went on to say that she utilizes Capital Area JobLink Career Centers to list open positions, and currently employs workers that were referred by the centers.

Chairman Barham called upon Ms. Sepi Asefnia, President, SEPI Engineering Group to provide an overview of her company and how it has benefited from the receipt of incumbent worker training funds.

Ms Asefnia proceeded by saying that SEPI Engineering Group is a full service civil engineering firm located in Raleigh, North Carolina. Employing forty-four (44) workers, SEPI works on site/civil design, surveying, roadway and structure design, environmental planning, construction management, traffic engineering and operations, water resources, natural resources, feasibility studies as well as projects for the Wake County Public School System.

The incumbent worker training funds have benefited SEPI Engineering Group by enabling workers to be trained in project management, AutoCAD and senior leadership training. This training supports SEPI's very aggressive growth program plus offers organizational development.

Chairman Barham thanked both Ms. Portman and Ms. Asefina for their wonderful spotlights, and then moved on to the next agenda item – Capital Area Board Standards. He called upon Regina Crooms to provide an update.

Ms. Crooms commented that we are six (6) months into a new fiscal year and therefore six (6) months into the process for board standards. She has spoken with Graham Watt, Director of Administrative Services for the Division of Workforce Development, and he has indicated that there is no new information.

At the beginning of June 2007, a new assessment guide was implemented by the Division of Workforce Development that reviews how boards are measured. The self-assessment guide was retracted and will be reviewed at a later date.

Ms. Crooms said that while Capital Area Board is meeting standards, we needed to focus on the continuous improvement process. Areas cited for improvement include the State of Workforce Community Audit ensuring that Strategic Plans align more with outcomes. She indicated that these areas would be addressed at the forthcoming Capital Area Board Retreat. Chairman

Barham concluded that we needed to be consistent with the Malcolm Baldrige Model of Continuous Improvement.

The next agenda item, Educational Comparison – A China Perspective, was presented by Ms. JoAnne Honeycutt, Director of Career and Technical Education with Johnston County Public Schools. Johnston County Public Schools has created an educational partnership alliance with the school system in Wuxi, China, and Ms. Honeycutt was recently afforded the opportunity to tour the school system there.

According to Ms. Honeycutt, the population of Wuxi, China is close to three (3) million people, and the Wuxi School System is structured much differently than in North Carolina. There is a tremendous focus on schools and education with students studying English in the third grade.

Testing determines the placement levels for high school students with 40% to 50% of children attending traditional school and the remaining students attending vocational school. There are two career paths, a Humanities path or a Science path, from which a child may choose. Students have a demanding schedule with fifty (50) children in the same classroom from 7:30 am to 5:00 pm daily; often attending school on Saturdays or Sundays. One (1) exam determines where the student attends college.

Rural schools are structured differently with emphasis placed on learning basic skills. Children are able to see the difference between those who have and those who have not, and that is one reason why they work so hard. Parents expect their children to be ready for school and to do well. Teachers are pressured to ensure the students are achievers.

Ms. Honeycutt concluded that this visit provided a “cultural exchange” as we are learning from them while they are learning from us. There are plans for representatives from the Wuxi School System to travel to Johnston County, North Carolina in Spring 2008. Chairman Barham thanked Ms. Honeycutt for the enlightening presentation.

Moving on to other business, Chairman Barham announced that at the October Capital Area Board meeting, a discussion was held regarding one of the youth services contractor’s decision not to extend their contract beyond probationary status. He called upon Mr. Chris Droessler, Youth Council Chairman, to provide an update.

Mr. Droessler reported that the caseload from Haven House will be transferred to Community Partnerships Incorporated, and they are requesting an additional \$77, 500 in funding allocation to serve the additional youth. Chairman Barham opened the floor to receive a motion.

Dr. Reichard made a motion to accept; Susan Jackson seconded the motion. Motion carried.

At this time, David Rockefeller asked Chris Droessler to mention his new position. Mr. Droessler announced that he has been named National President of the School-to-Work/Careers Section of the Association for Career and Technical Education. The Board congratulated Mr. Droessler on his new position.

Chairman Barham provided a Disability Program Navigator update. Capital Area Workforce Development Board received a grant in the amount of \$200,000 to coordinate disability services

in the Capital Area and Durham Workforce Development Regions. He called on Georgia Steele, Disability Program Navigator Coordinator, to provide information regarding the efforts thus far.

Ms. Steele indicated that four (4) local areas across the state of North Carolina were chosen to administer the program, and Capital Area Workforce Development Board has hired three (3) part-time navigators to cover Wake, Durham and Johnston Counties.

She indicated that the program would enable staff to provide comprehensive services to people with disabilities within the JobLink Centers by helping them access and navigate various programs that impact their ability to gain/retain employment. JobLink staff should be able to assist people with disabilities in securing employment without feeling the need to consistently refer them to Vocational Rehabilitation. Additional goals include marketing the services to the community and developing partnerships to expand the capacity to serve customers with disabilities.

Currently the Disability Program Navigators (DPN's) have been attending training and meeting with JobLink Coordinators and various staff members to provide information regarding the program. The DPN's will also be working on developing a Resource Guide to provide additional assistance to persons with disabilities. Ms. Steele reminded everyone that people with disabilities are an "untapped resource" for our workforce.

At this time, Ms. Crooms announced that a WARN notice had been received, and Sento will be laying off forty-eight (48) employees. Ms. Crooms added that Sento typically hires people with disabilities, and we need to assist in getting these workers back to work as quickly as possible.

During the Chair's Report, Chairman Barham announced that the upcoming National Association of Workforce Boards Conference would be held in Washington, DC, February 23-26, 2008 with Regina Crooms, Susan Jackson and himself attending. He asked the Board if there was a consistent message regarding workforce development issues that they should take to Capitol Hill while visiting Washington.

Dr. Donald Reichard voiced the need to support long-term training as an item of interest. Dr. Reichard surmised that it is often difficult to effectively meet people's needs with short-term training programs.

Ms. Crooms commented that there needs to be a push on incumbent worker training with concentration on small- and medium-size businesses, as training funds can make a positive impact in these companies.

Mr. Woodall expressed concern with the amount of paperwork associated with many of the workforce programs. Mr. Marett concluded that the programs needed to be more outcome driven and less process driven.

Chairman Barham asked for the Board to email or provide written notice to him by February 1, 2008 of any additional issues that needed to be addressed.

Chairman Barham now opened the floor to Public Participation. Jane Sterner provided an overview of the new NC SHARE Network Program. Ms. Sterner advised the Board that the

program was implemented in 2006, and currently thirteen (13) local areas across the state of North Carolina are participating. Ms. Sterner and Ms. Ramsey will be heading up the program for Capital Area Workforce Development Board.

NC SHARE Network has two components – an online Resource Directory to provide customers with assistance in employment related areas and SHARE Network Access Points (SNAPS) that will provide basic core services to the community.

Access Points are fostered out of faith based or community organizations. People can go into their own neighborhoods or communities to look for jobs, assisted by trained staff or volunteers who can connect them to the JobLink system via computer or direct referrals. Capital Area Workforce Development Board will provide laptops, books and limited resources to the Access Points.

Implementation for the Resource Directory is scheduled for January 2008 as Ms. Sterner and Ms. Ramsey roll out the program to Capital Area JobLink Centers. The Resource Directory is not labor intensive, and agencies will be responsible for joining and maintaining their information in the directory. To view the NC SHARE Network Directory, go to [www.ncsharenetwork.com](http://www.ncsharenetwork.com).

Chairman Barham called upon Brenda Wilkerson to provide an overview of the Education Forum hosted by Capital Area Workforce Development Board, Durham Workforce Development Board and Regional Partnership Workforce Development Board.

Ms. Wilkerson indicated that the Workforce Development Higher Education Forum was designed for Human Resource associates involved in higher education to discuss hiring and training needs. Representatives attending the forum included Human Resource associates from Wake Technical Community College, Durham Technical Community College, North Carolina State University, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and North Carolina Central University.

During this roundtable discussion, it was noted that currently high schools are geared towards “getting students ready to go to college”. More emphasis needs to be placed towards assisting students who are not college bound. There are many good jobs in the workforce that do not require a college degree such as industrial maintenance technology. Suggestions included holding a Career Expo on a regular basis or possibly a summit for youth to become more informed and better prepared for the future.

David Rockefeller replied that the suggestions offered are exactly what Mr. Chris Droessler does in his School-to-Career program at Wake County Public Schools. General consensus from many Board members including Chairman Barham, Nelson Rose, David Rockefeller and Dr. Reichard indicated the necessity to ensure that the resources meet the needs. High school and college age students and parents need to be educated regarding workforce demands, so that in the future resources will be available to meet workforce needs.

Susan Jackson commented that the state has allocated \$30 million towards the Learn and Earn programs in North Carolina high schools.

Another issue concerning this topic is that the curriculum the teachers are required to teach does not necessarily match the workforce needs. Ms. Crooms added that this topic would be included on the Capital Area Board Retreat Agenda as it lends further attention and discussion.

Additional announcements included Chairman Barham requesting the need for volunteers for the JobLink Committee. The JobLink Committee meets every other month and its purpose is to ensure an effective, efficient system of JobLink Career Centers, to provide oversight of the JobLink Career Centers within the Capital Area JobLink system and to enhance partnerships within the JobLink system and explore additional partnerships. Mr. Durwood Woodall chairs the committee and Ms. Jane Sterner provides staff support. Board members interested in joining this committee should notify Mr. Woodall or Ms. Sterner.

As previously discussed at the October 25, 2007 meeting, Capital Area Workforce Development Board was awarded the YouthBuild grant. The program will assist out of school youth in Wake and Johnston Counties with education and employment opportunities in the construction area.

In order to assess the number of youth interested in the program, two (2) information sessions are scheduled for youth ages 17-24 on Tuesday, December 11, 2007 from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm at the Raleigh Safety Club, 513 Branch Street, Raleigh, North Carolina. A location to house the program has been solidified, and lease negotiations are underway.

Chairman Barham thanked everyone for attending and announced the next meeting is scheduled for February 28, 2008 in Wake County. The meeting was adjourned at 10:10 am.