

Bucks County Workforce and Economic Development Department

Board Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: September 23, 2020

Teleconference

In Attendance: Board of Directors – Erin Lukoss, Mark Bortman Kyle Cloman, Anita Diggs, Ted Dorand, Maria Marybeth Ferguson, Gallo, James Horan, Jerry Kilhefner, Greg Krug, Jan Rossi, Marcine Schiehser, Brian Shields

BCWDB Staff: Billie Barnes, Alice Colyar, Deana Giorno, Dianna Kralle, Frank McGovern

Guests: Brian Cummings Larry Melf, Greg Hart, Robert Pisko, Kevin Morrow, Paul Bencivengo, Kelley Keeling, Lisa Paglaicetti

Next Meeting: December 23, 2020 – 9:00am – *Virtual*

Agenda Discussion

I. **Welcome & Call to Order, Erin Lukoss**

Erin Lukoss called the meeting to order at 9:02 and greeted attendees.

II. **Meeting Minutes, Erin Lukoss**

Ms. Lukoss directed Board Members to review the June 24, 2020 meeting minutes.

Ms. Lukoss requested a motion to approve the 6/24/20 meeting minutes.

Action/Vote: Mr. Horan made the motion. Mr. Krug seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed.

III. **County Transition Update, Billie Barnes**

As of July 1, 2020 the BCWDB was dissolved and transitioned to the Department of Workforce and Economic Development of Bucks County (WED). The physical move began in July to 1260 Almshouse Road, Building G, Fourth Floor, Doylestown, PA 18901. The Bristol office was vacated in early August.

US Department of Labor monitoring of the National Dislocated Worker Grant (NDWG) was ongoing for one week in August. All findings will be sent via office response from USDOL no later than 9/30/2020.

Currently the WED is in the process of merging with the County's Procurement, Fiscal, Public Relations, and Human Resources departments to assimilate into the County's structure. Processes to pay invoices, make purchases, and update contracts with vendors are ongoing.

In the transition the Workforce Development Board merged with Economic Development and Deanna Giorno joined the staff as the Program Manager for Economic Development.

IV. County CARES Act Funding, Deanna Giorno

Ms. Giorno introduced herself and has been an employee of Bucks County for four years. She has been the Point of Contact for both of the Bucks Back to Work Grants (BBTW) funded through CARES funding. Funds are available to pay outstanding bills and operating expenses. The first round of BBTW had 1,600 applications which resulted in \$14.6M disbursed to 900 Bucks County businesses. Awards ranged between \$5,000 and \$25,000. Nonprofits and franchise businesses were not eligible to receive funds. The second round of BBTW grant funds is currently being evaluated. The deadline to apply was September 18th resulting in 400 applications. Approximately \$15.0M is available to assist small Bucks County businesses with grant funds. Franchises were eligible to apply for the second round of funds. Funds should be disbursed in October.

V. Performance Overview, Brian Cummings

Mr. Cummings presented metrics that displayed PA CareerLink® Bucks County information from July 2019 through the present. Categories were PA CareerLink® foot traffic from July 1, 2019 to March 16, 2020 was at 16,174 for Bristol and 1,487 for Perkasie. If projected through the remainder of the year the numbers would have exceeded the prior year's totals. Clients were served in a virtual capacity from mid-March through mid-September. The PA CareerLink® has opened by appointment and serving approximately eight-ten onsite clients per day. Other metrics that were viewed were Out-of-School Youth, EARN, and Business Services. Business Services exceeded their metrics offering virtual interviews, workshops and employer services.

Additional data included graphics displayed quarterly for PY19 (July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020). Metrics included WIOA Enrollments, WIOA Exits, EARN Enrollments, ITAs started (Individualized Training Account), OJTs started (On-the-Job-Training), Virtual Workshops for resume writing, interviewing virtually, and computer skills upgrades, Recruitment Events using Zoom, Job Postings from the Business Services Team.

Unemployment Compensation Data provided by Mr. Cummings included on January 5th, 2020 Bucks County had 4,417 continued Unemployment Compensation claims for the week ending September 12th Unemployment Compensation is reporting 23,701 continued Unemployment Compensation claims.

VI. Fiscal Updates, James Horan and Frank McGovern

Mr. Horan shared that approximately \$800K had been received and all vendors are paid. The WED will continue with process improvements to be in place and tighter fiscal transparency.

Mr. Horan presented the PY20 (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021) State budget and noted that the WED is within budget expectations and within the compliance measure guidelines on the budget.

Mr. Horan requested a motion to accept the Draft PY20 Budget

Action/Vote: Ms. Ferguson made the motion. Mr. Cloman seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed.

VII. Visit Bucks County Presentation – Paul Bencivengo, Kelley Keeling, and Lisa Paglaicetti

Mr. Bencivengo shared a presentation of "Visit Bucks County". The organization is solely funded through a 5% occupancy tax on all overnight rooms in the county. The closures from COVID-19 has been especially difficult for the hotel and restaurant industry and recovery is slow. Ms. Paglaicetti shared metrics that in 2018 there were approximately 8.1M visitors to Bucks County resulting in \$1.06B of economic impact with 30% in the food and beverage industry. Additionally, there were approximately 28,700 jobs which is 12% of the county's workforce.

Visit Bucks County, the WED, and the BCIDA (Bucks County Industrial Development Authority) have partnered to create a report on tourism and job development creation. An RFP was issued and EConsult Solutions, Inc., an economic development firm in Philadelphia were awarded the contract. Research into the industry led to a SWAT analysis creating recommendations including identifying, training, and maintaining a workforce pipeline. Reasons for the lack of a skilled workforce include elevated housing expenses, lack of transportation, and low industry wages.

The full study is available if any Board Member would like to review.

VIII. General Discussion

Ms. Barnes added that Mr. Jones requested the status of the 2010 Solutions contract. 2010 Solutions, a marketing company has been hired by the WED to aid in building a marketing plan to increase traffic. A three-step email campaign had been started and in the second phase when the COVID-19 closures began. Employers did reach out to the PA CareerLink® Bucks County's Business Services Team (BST) for assistance. Many were new employers who were located via the marketing campaign. There was a large amount of Advanced Manufacturing employers in search of skilled workers during the closure. The BST assisted by reaching out to potential job seekers to fulfill these positions. Most employers were given 3-5 candidates for their review. It was unclear if the lack of individuals looking for employment is due to the extended Unemployment Compensation, childcare/school related issues, or health/safety concerns.

VII. Adjournment, Erin Lukoss

Ms. Lukoss thanked all attendees and requested a motion to adjourn the meeting at 10:31A.

Action/Vote: Mr. Krug made the motion. Mr. Shields seconded the motion. All were in favor; none opposed. The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted:

Dianna Krall

September 24, 2020