

OFFICIAL
MINUTES
ARKANSAS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD
October 20, 2020

The Arkansas Workforce Development Board convened the Full Board meeting through electronic means on October 20, 2020, beginning at 10:05 a.m. The meeting was conducted remotely utilizing Zoom and teleconference. Chair Tom Anderson presided with the following members voicing their presence: Mr. Joseph Baxter, Mr. Len Blaylock III, Ms. Karen Breashears, Mr. Scott Bull, Dr. Charisse Childers, Mr. Jeff Griffin, Mr. Randy Henderson, Ms. Abby Houseworth, Mr. Charles Johnson, Mr. Johnny Key, Ms. Candice Lawrence, Ms. Holley Little, Mr. Brian Marsh, Dr. Trenia Miles, Dr. Julie Roberson, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes, Mr. Robert Thorne, and Dr. Diana Wright. Board members Judge Brandon Ellison, Mr. Randy Finegan, Mayor James Sanders, and Mr. Kelley Sharp joined after roll. Board members Dr. Maria Markham and Secretary Mike Preston were heard by staff as voicing their presence on the public line.

Mr. Lindsay Brown, Ms. Chanda Chacon, Ms. Melissa Hanesworth, Mr. Alan Hughes, Ms. Rebecca Ives, and Mr. George "Gan" Nunnally, were unable to attend.

Chairman's Opening Comments: Chair Anderson called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. upon seeing a quorum. Chair Anderson introduced three new Board members followed by reappointments: New Members - Mr. Joseph Baxter, Ms. Candice Lawrence, and Mr. Charles Johnson; and Reappointments - Judge Brandon Ellison, Mr. Alan Hughes, Mr. Gan Nunnally, Dr. Julie Roberson, and Mr. Robert Thorne. Additionally, Chair Anderson stated for the record that, the One-Stop Certification Document was tabled previously in April and July due to COVID-19 delays and will continue to be tabled with the hope to revisit this item in the January 2021 Full Board meeting.

Report of Board Director: Chair Tom Anderson recognized the Arkansas Workforce Development Board Director, Arnell Willis. Mr. Willis provided an update to Board Members and attendees on Governor Asa Hutchison's Executive Order No. 20-10 of March 26, 2020, amending "Executive Order No.20-03 2020, regarding the Public Health Emergency Concerning COVID-19 for the purpose of restricting gatherings to prevent the Spread of COVID-19." This executive order was replaced with "Executive Order 20-37 2020, to renew the Disaster and Public Health Emergency to mitigate the spread and impact of COVID" that is set to expire December 11, 2020.

He acknowledged the Local Workforce Development Boards who followed the lead of the State Board by convening their meetings through electronic means in order to continue their efforts in serving Arkansans through innovative means under the guidance of the governor.

Agenda Item 1 – ACTION – Minutes of the July 21, 2020, Full Board Meeting and the minutes of the August 21, 2020, Executive Committee Meeting: Chair Tom Anderson asked if there were any additional corrections or revisions to the July 21, 2020, Full Board meeting minutes.

Hearing none, a motion to accept the July 21, 2020, Full Board meeting minutes with no corrections or revisions was made by Ms. Karen Breashears followed by Dr. Trenia Miles making the second motion. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.

The following votes recorded and voiced by Board Members on a roll vote to Approve, Disapprove, or Abstain for no vote: Mr. Joseph Baxter – Approve, Mr. Len Blaylock III – Approve, Ms. Karen Breashears – Approve, Mr. Lindsay Brown – Absent, Mr. Scott Bull – Approve, Ms. Chanda Chacon – Absent, Dr. Charisse Childers – Approve, Judge Brandon Ellison – Approve, Mr. Randy Finegan – Approve, Mr. Jeff Griffin – Approve, Ms. Melissa Hanesworth – Absent, Mr. Randy Henderson – Approve, Ms. Abby Houseworth – Approve, Mr. Alan Hughes – Absent, Ms. Rebecca Ives – Absent, Mr. Charles Johnson – Approve, Mr. Johnny Key – Approve, Ms. Candice Lawrence – Approve, Ms. Holley Little – Approve, Dr. Maria Markham – No Vote Voiced, Mr. Brian Marsh – Approve, Dr. Trenia Miles – Approve, Mr. George Nunnally – Absent, Secretary Mike Preston – No Vote Voiced, Dr. Julie Roberson – Approve, Mayor James Sanders – No Vote Voiced, Mr. Kelley Sharp – No Vote Voiced, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes – Approve, Mr. Robert Thorne – Approve, and Dr. Diana Wright – Approve.

Next, Chair Anderson asked for any corrections or revisions to the August 20, 2020, Executive Committee meeting before ratification by the Full Board.

Hearing none, a motion to accept the August 20, 2020, Executive Committee meeting minutes with no corrections or revisions for ratification by the Full Board was made by Mr. Robert Thorne and seconded by Ms. Abby Houseworth. The motion carried unanimously with none opposed.

The following votes recorded and voiced by Board Members on a roll vote to Approve, Disapprove, or Abstain for no vote: Mr. Joseph Baxter – Approve, Mr. Len Blaylock III – Approve, Ms. Karen Breashears – Approve, Mr. Lindsay Brown – Absent, Mr. Scott Bull – No Vote Voiced, Ms. Chanda Chacon – Absent, Dr. Charisse Childers – Approve, Judge Brandon Ellison – Approve, Mr. Randy Finegan – Approve, Mr. Jeff Griffin – Approve, Ms. Melissa Hanesworth – Absent, Mr. Randy Henderson – Approve, Ms. Abby Houseworth – Approve, Mr. Alan Hughes – Absent, Ms. Rebecca Ives – Absent, Mr. Charles Johnson – Approve, Mr. Johnny Key – No Vote Voiced, Ms. Candice Lawrence – Approve, Ms. Holley Little – Approve, Dr. Maria Markham – Approve, Mr. Brian Marsh – Approve, Dr. Trenia Miles – Approve, Mr. George Nunnally – Absent, Secretary Mike Preston – Absent, Dr. Julie Roberson – Approve, Mayor James Sanders – Approve, Mr. Kelly Sharp – Approve, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes – Approve, Mr. Robert Thorne – Approve, and Dr. Diana Wright – Approve.

Report of Chairperson: Chair Anderson informed Board Members that he has been monitoring the Local Workforce Development Boards across the state. Most of the meetings have been remote with the Eastern Local Workforce Development Board being the exception. Chair Anderson proceeded with informing Board Members about information distributed by the National Governors Association (NGA). The information provides Board Chairs the various approaches and initiatives each state has regarding the unemployment rate, creativity with jobs, and the continuation of business on a remote basis. Chair Anderson noted for the record the One-Stop Certification document was tabled in April and will be tabled again with the hope of revisiting in the January meeting.

Report of Director: Chair Tom Anderson recognized Board Member and Director of Arkansas Division of Workforce Services (ADWS) Dr. Charisse Childers to address the Full Board. Dr. Childers encouraged Board Members and guests to visit the ADWS website for the news release on unemployment before she provided a brief overview. Dr. Childers stated the unemployment rate decreased to 7.3% in September 2020 from the 7.4% in August 2020. Meanwhile, across the State, Arkansas Workforce Centers are operating one-on-one with individuals, while the monitoring of Centers' performance is required for provision of services, assistance with job search, and the administration of training to make sure they're being accomplished in a very safe and careful manner. These services are provided by WIOA Core partners

and stakeholders. ADWS has seen a significant decrease in UI claims and to lesser extent in PUA claims for the week ending October 17, 2020. Additionally, the UI extended benefits are expiring, and that assistance will be moved to PUA. Dr. Childers reported Arkansas Division of Workforce Services' legacy budget along with the programs included under ADWS before government transformation will meet with the Arkansas Legislative Council on Wednesday, October 21, 2020 to discuss their budget for the fiscal year.

Report of Staff: Chair Anderson recognized Board Staff Mr. Kris Jones. Mr. Jones spoke on the comments of Director Arnell Willis regarding performance. Mr. Jones reported the Department of Labor has not made any adjustments but will look at possible adjustments after a complete analysis has been made on the impact of COVID-19 performance data.

Mr. Kris Jones reported the Employment Assistance Unit is close to rolling out virtual job fair platform to implement across the state while some Local Workforce Development Areas are already providing curbside job fairs.

He reported the directors for the local workforce development areas are still receiving technical assistance from ADWS through the continuation of bi-weekly meetings via Microsoft Teams. These meetings provide the local workforce development areas the opportunity to continue to share best practices with the State for their innovations and adjustment to COVID.

Lastly, Mr. Jones informed Board Members how the Local Workforce Development Boards assisted individuals who did not qualify for the \$300 Federal Program through the Lost Wages Assistance (LWA) Program during this quarter. This assisted in closing the gap and provided TANF services to help those families in need.

Report of Committees:

The meetings of the Strategic Planning, TANF Oversight, and Program and Performance Evaluation committees of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board have been canceled indefinitely. Committee meetings have not convened since the first quarter of 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Agenda Item 2 – INFORMATIONAL – 2019 Annual Report: Chair Anderson recognized WIOA Roundtable members who represent the WIOA Core Programs to provide updates regarding activities during PY 2019. WIOA Core Partners presenting today were Mr. Kris Jones, Employment Assistance of Arkansas Division of Workforce Services; Dr. Trenia Miles, Director of Adult Education Section; Ms. Christy Lamas, Deputy Commissioner of Arkansas Rehabilitation Services; and Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes, Director of Arkansas State Services for the Blind. One of the functions of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board is to assist the Governor in the preparation of the annual reports as described in WIOA Section 116(d) paragraphs (1) and (2) of WIOA Sec. 116(d). Mr. Kris Jones listed and discussed the major components of the narrative report while both he and Mr. Elroy Willoughby reported on WIOA Title I and III performance.

Board Members then heard updates on WIOA Title II from the Director of Adult Education Services, Dr. Trenia Miles. Dr. Miles presented a Power-point presentation of the population most impacted by COVID-19 and reported a total of 18,499 individuals came into the program with 47% meeting the Measurable Skills Gain. Benchmarks for the State were met at 47% with others experiencing a challenge such as only nine of the 12 areas meeting the benchmark. Out of 3,430 employable individuals, 36% made an outcome. When COVID-19 really hit in the fourth quarter of the fiscal year, 29% made an outcome, while 25% of TANF, runaway youths, and displaced homemakers are making an outcome. With the help of WIOA, barriers to connecting individuals with employment are being addressed.

Next, Board Members heard updates on WIOA Title IV from Arkansas Rehabilitation Services Deputy Commissioner, Christy Lamas, who presented a summary report of performance measures to the Board. AR Rehabilitation Services serve mostly young adults between the ages of 16-24 who want a college degree and modest salary. Of 12,159 individuals receiving rehabilitation services, there were 3,482 successful exiters during the period of July 1, 2019 – June 30, 2020. The employment rate in the second quarter after exit was 57.6%; the rate for the fourth quarter after exit was 39.4%, with median earnings of \$4,835.57, and a credential rate of 7.0%. ARS' Measurable Skill rate was 45.5% for last year. The target for Measurable Skills Gain is 24% for Program Year 2020.

Lastly, Board Members heard from the Director of Arkansas State Services for the Blind, Dr. Cassandra Williams-Stokes. Dr. Williams-Stokes provided a brief overview on the new combined relationship with the Arkansas Rehabilitation Services for 2020 to meet the 24% threshold as a State. For the Program Year 2018, (Arkansas State Services for the Blind) submitted a 54% rate for Measurable Skills Gain; and for Program Year 2019, a 95.6% Measurable Skills Gain rate. Median earnings report for second quarter in 2018 -- \$6,623; 2019 second quarter exit -- \$5,892; a decrease of \$731 due to COVID-19.

Agenda Item 3 – Action – Administrative Forms – New Year: Chair Anderson recognized Board Staff Ms. Rebecca Edwards. Ms. Edwards reviewed the Administrative forms for the Board to update their information for the new year in the database system.

Agenda Item 4 – Informational – Reimagine Arkansas Workforce (RAW) Grant: Chair Anderson recognized Mr. Mike Harris, Coordinator of the Entrepreneurial Studies Program at Shorter College and Ms. Tara J. Dryer, Director of Training-Corporate Development & Academics at the University of Arkansas to address the Board about the creation, implementation, and replication of short-term educational programs and training courses to help displaced workers return to employment and help new workers enter jobs in in-demand industry sectors or occupations. Arkansas was one of eight states to receive this funding opportunity.

Agenda Item 5 – Informational – Western Arkansas Workforce Development Board: Chair Anderson recognized the Western Arkansas Planning & Development District (WAPDD) WIOA Director Mr. Dennis Williamson for insight on his area's implementation of efforts to assist clients during COVID-19. Western Arkansas Workforce Development purchased an electronic signature- capture device which is compatible with mobile devices, allowing field reps to reach out to rural areas. Additionally, the WAPDD acquired virtual meeting platform called Webex and Adobe Acrobat.

Agenda Item 6 – Informational – Southeast Arkansas Workforce Development Board: Chair Anderson recognized the Workforce Development Director Southeast Arkansas Economic Development District, Mr. Eddie Thomas for insight his area's implementation of events to assist clients during COVID-19. Mr. Thomas reported the Southeast Local Workforce Development Area increased outreach through social media outlets and community efforts. In Dumas, the General Adult Program held an Innovation Day with services provided by Food Banks, WIOA Title One, and Arkansas Division of Workforce Services. A total of 97 individuals had signed up for the provided services. Southeast brought in part-time certified teachers to help with career readiness within the Youth Program. Under the Business Services, an online resource guide was created to help and guide local businesses in obtaining small business loans and other resources.

Board Open Discussion: Chair Anderson asked board members for any additional items for discussion. Hearing none, Chair Anderson opened the floor to allow the public the opportunity to speak before the Full Board.

Public Speaking Opportunity: Chair Anderson addressed members of the public attending the meeting through electronic means and extended the opportunity to speak before the Full Board. After opening the floor for the public and a brief silence with the telephone lines unmuted and hearing no public comments, Chair Anderson moved into the announcements.

Announcements: Chair Anderson announced the committee meetings of the Arkansas Workforce Development Board will convene "as needed" due to the COVID-19 pandemic and out of respect of Board Member's schedules. He added the next Full Board meeting is set for January 26, 2021. Board Staff will keep everyone aware of any changes to the schedule or the type of meeting, whether virtual or in-person, as the State progresses through COVID-19 under the guidance of Governor Asa Hutchinson.


Adjourn: Chair Tom Anderson adjourned the meeting at 12:08 p.m., **on a motion made by Mayor James Sanders, seconded by Dr. Diana Wright, and carried unanimously with none opposed.**

The following votes recorded and voiced by Board Members on a roll vote to Approve, Disapprove, or Abstain for no vote: Mr. Joseph Baxter – Approve, Mr. Len Blaylock III – Approve, Ms. Karen Breashears – No Vote Voiced, Mr. Lindsay Brown – Absent, Mr. Scott Bull – Approve, Ms. Chanda Chacon – Absent, Dr. Charisse Childers – Approve, Judge Brandon Ellison – Approve, Mr. Randy Finegan – Approve, Mr. Jeff Griffin – Approve, Ms. Melissa Hanesworth – Absent, Mr. Randy Henderson – Approve, Ms. Abby Houseworth – Approve, Mr. Alan Hughes – Absent, Mr. Charles Johnson – Approve, Ms. Rebecca Ives – Absent, Mr. Johnny Key – No Vote Voiced, Ms. Candice Lawrence – Approve, Ms. Holley Little - Approve, Dr. Maria Markham – Approve, Mr. Brian Marsh – No vote, had to leave early, Dr. Trenia Miles – Approved, Mr. George Nunnally – Absent, Secretary Mike Preston – No Vote Voiced, Dr. Julie Roberson – Approve, Mayor James Sanders – Approve, Mr. Kelley Sharp – Approve, Dr. Cassondra Williams-Stokes – Approve, Mr. Robert Thorne – Approve, and Dr. Diana Wright - Approve.



Tom Anderson, Board Chair

Arkansas Workforce Development Board



Arnell Willis, Director Workforce Development

Arkansas Division of Workforce Services

*Minutes recorded by Monica Humphrey and Rebecca Edwards
Arkansas Division of Workforce Services Staff*