

**ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD**  
**MINUTES OF May 11, 2011 MEETING**

**CALL TO ORDER:** Chairman Sue Caswell called to order the regular meeting of the St. Lawrence County Workforce Investment Board at 8:30 AM at the Best Western University Inn, Canton.

Members Present: Jack Backus, Sue Caswell, Don Hooper, Dr. Joseph Kennedy, Ron McDougall, Lisa McKeel, Richard Orton, Daphne Pickert, Karen St. Hilaire, Dallas Sutton, and Mark Webster.

Others Present: Lori Barr, Deb Bridges, Dee Burlingame, Paul Grasso, Jean Hantz, Chris Rediehs, Mary Beth McKee, Kelly Otis, Dave Sickler, and Greg Hart.

**CHAIRMAN'S COMMENTS:** The Chairman called the meeting to order and thanked everyone for coming.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

**MINUTES:** Pickert/Orton move to accept the March 9, 2011 meeting minutes. Approved unanimously.

**WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD ITEMS:**

FY 2012 Funding: Mr. Grasso explained that he had distributed to the Executive Committee and now to the full Board a handout of questions and answers. The questions arose from the last meeting about how funding is distributed from the federal government on down to local government. Mr. Grasso outlined the way funds were distributed last year in a memorandum which he handed out to the membership. The formula remains the same this year with a few exceptions which he explained briefly. Mr. Grasso explained that although the state has received the allocation it hasn't been passed down yet because of a very late Federal budget which called for a decrease in WIA funding of 10% to 11%. Of that WIA allocation the Governor keeps up to 15% for special projects. The Federal budget reduced the Governor's special project allotment to 5% with 10% to be distributed to the local WIB's. The legislation, however, was not clear whether that 10% reduction of the Governor's money takes effect on July 1<sup>st</sup> or October 1<sup>st</sup>. Once the Federal Bureaucracy is able to work that out local allocations will be determined. . Mr. Grasso expects to receive something by mid-May. He believes that we are looking at a 10% to 11% reduction overall.

Conflict of Interest: Mr. Grasso reported that WIA regulations require a Conflict of Interest Policy; in essence what that means is that if an agency or organization is likely to benefit from a board decision or backing, then those board members representing that agency can neither vote nor take part in conversation around program design. Board decisions have to reflect fair and open competition. Mr. Grasso stated that he has not found a Conflict of Interest Policy that complies with WIA regulations. The WIB has adopted the County's Code of Ethics and has a policy against nepotism. Conflict of Interest has primarily been an issue with the Youth Council where people at the table were helping design the programs and receiving money for the agencies they represented. The Youth Council asked for some clarifications from Albany which were provided; Albany agreed that we have to establish a Conflict of Interest Policy and they provided guidance. Mr. Grasso stated that he will come up with a policy that he will present at the June 8<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the WIB. It will be an issue at the Governance Review but as long as we are taking the steps to correct it there shouldn't be a concern.

June 1<sup>st</sup> WIB Retreat: Ms. Caswell stated there was discussion at the recent Executive Committee meeting regarding what is going to happen in the next few months when the North Country WIB has completed their contract with St. Lawrence County WIB. Mr. Grasso suggested a retreat with Mr. Twoomey from NYATEP would be a good idea. At the last Executive Committee meeting there was discussion regarding the options to move forward; Mr. Grasso provided a number of options. Mr. Grasso felt that the St. Lawrence County WIB hasn't had much chance to talk about the different options and the pros and cons of each. He believes that Mr. Twoomey, as a very respected and knowledgeable representative of NYATEP, knows about the different organizational structures of the 33 WIB's in the State. Karen Coleman from the NYS DOL has agreed to pay for Mr. Twoomey to come and facilitate this Retreat. Everyone should have received an email with all the details about the Retreat. Ms. Caswell is hopefully that everyone will be able to attend.

Mr. Grasso discovered that the St. Lawrence County WIB was incorporated in 2000. He will forward the scanned documentation to the membership for their information.

One-Stop Leases: The packet provided by Mr. Grasso gave each member a copy of the newly proposed lease and a map of space to be occupied under this new lease. Ms. Bridges reported that she and Mr. Rediehs were successful in getting the County to agree to a favorable lease. The new lease is a continuation of the current lease with all the formulas and how the rent structure is calculated remaining the same for another five years. The current lease goes to \$13.33/sq. ft. but the biggest change involves a significant reduction in the amount of space being leased, that is, they were able to reduce the space WIA is leasing from 12,205 sq. ft down to just over 8,600 sq. ft. This should reduce the overall rental cost to the WIB. The hope is that the opened space may be leased to other county departments.

Motion to accept the proposed lease: Backus/McDougall; Abstained Karen St. Hilaire and Lisa McKeel. Motion unanimously passed.

FY 2011 Fiscal & Programmatic Performance: Ms. McKee reported on training numbers; the report Ms. McKee handed out shows that Ms. Hantz has done well with training numbers and is right on target. Ms. McKee feels next year we need to focus on how and where to spend training moneys. Ms. Hantz agreed with Ms. McKee and will work with the Board to have a plan for FY 2011. Ms. St. Hilaire spoke about a company in St. Lawrence County that would like to expand his business with the potential to hire 100 - 200 employees. The owner has spoken with Mr. Rediehs and as a result of further conversations with this employer there has been a collaborative effort with the DSS Employment Unit, SLL BOCES, and the Workforce Development Institute to train people and assist this company with hiring. Ms. St. Hilaire agreed that we are all working together to be able to put training programs together for specific businesses. Mr. Orton asked about the salary structure meeting our WIB criteria. Ms. Hantz responded that because this particular company starts employees at \$8.00 - \$8.75/hour, depending upon the individual, and because this is less than the required wage for WIA programs, DSS Employment Training funds are being used for this effort. These particular positions can be upwardly mobile as the company tends to train and promote from within. Mr. Grasso spoke about a policy they use at the NC Workforce WIB; where anything that comes in below the threshold is looked at to see if there is a path to get them above the threshold once they've achieved the skills they need. The NC Workforce Board policy allows the Executive Director to waive the usual minimum wage when the entry level wage is a stepping stone to better wages. This policy gives a little more flexibility. Ms. Caswell stated that might be a policy the St. Lawrence County WIB may want to amend.

Mr. Backus reported that farm labor is a major issue in St. Lawrence and the surrounding counties. Farm labor, among other things, may consist of truck driving, and operating multiple farm equipment; and it allows people to be reasonably employed and live in the North County. Mr. Backus believes it is a tremendous opportunity for young people. Ms. Caswell recommended contacting the Cooperative Extension for more information. Ms. Hantz agreed to do some research and report back to the Board.

Ms. Otis shared projections for the end of FY 2010 which show a little carry-in for next year; with expenditures sufficient to make the WIB eligible for Supplemental DW money this and potentially eligible next year. Mr. Grasso commented that the fiscal department has done a good job; he received a complementary email from John Yaworski, the St. Lawrence County Fiscal Monitor, complementing Penny Scott specifically. Ms. Caswell also complimented the Fiscal staff.

Ms. Burlingame reported that the Youth Council had their monthly meeting. Currently being worked on for year round services are Internships and Work Study Programs; Kinney's in Potsdam and Massena as well as CPH have been helpful. The 2011 Summer Program has been finalized; it will be for 80 youth for five weeks; 15 paid by WIA funds and 65 by TANF funds.

**EXECUTIVE SESSION:** None

**ADJOURNMENT:** Moved by Orton/Sutton the meeting adjourned at 9:30 AM by unanimous consent.