



NCWorks Commission Business Session

Wednesday, May 13, 2020

1:00 – 2:00 P.M.

Go to Meeting, Webinar

Raleigh, NC

Minutes

Present: Chairman Tom Rabon, Mike Okun, Walter Siegenthaler, Marti Matthews Martin, Trey Michael (Mark Johnson), Suzanne Johnson, Shawn Brown, Kim Toler, MaryBe McMillan, Paul Lawler, Maureen Little (Peter Hans), Jessica Englert (Governor Cooper), Josh Arant, Anita Bachman, Sherry Carpenter, Jeff Frederick, Mel Chernoff, Chris Egan (Mandy Cohen), Olalah Njenga, Pam Townsend, Scott Daugherty (William Roper), Brock Ashburn, Himanshu Karvir, David Miller, Osceola Ellis, Tony Copeland, Candace Lowry (Machelle Sanders)

Absent: Ronnie Smith, Stan Sherrill, Jim Van Camp, Steven Hunt, Christopher Gergen

Opening Business

NC Department of Commerce Secretary Tony Copeland opened the meeting and welcomed everyone in attendance. He expressed that we are fortunate to have the ability to adapt to the current conditions and continue to conduct our business through technology. He expressed COVID-19 has been one of the most difficult times in the recent history of North Carolina. He stated we quickly went from a booming economy to skyrocketing unemployment with this pandemic. Our primary focus will be on protecting public health, preparing to get our citizens back to work, and improving our state's economic health.

Secretary Copeland agreed with Governor Cooper and North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Mandy Cohen that North Carolina companies are on the front line in the battle against COVID-19, providing testing kits, PPE and other critical supplies and expertise. He stated there are too many NC technological employers to name. This just goes to show how much our state has become home to life-saving research, development and production in the health and life sciences. He pointed out three employers in the sector are represented on this Commission: Grifols, Mako Medical and PPD, Inc.

Secretary Copeland stated he was proud of our hospitals and our dedicated health care professionals. Their efforts are truly heroic. He also praised our world-class institutions of higher education, including the University of North Carolina system. The Small Business Development Technology Center is providing invaluable support to North Carolina businesses at this challenging time. Secretary Copeland is also proud of our independent colleges and universities. For example, Duke is collaborating with UNC, East Carolina and the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services on a major COVID-19 research project. Wake Forest Baptist Health is involved in an antibody testing study, while Campbell University will be launching a rural-focused testing and treatment initiative.

The North Carolina Community College System and our K-12 school systems are demonstrating creativity and flexibility by rapidly expanding online education and finding new ways to create talent pipelines.

Secretary Copeland also stated the North Carolina Department of Commerce has been on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis providing staffing support to the Division of Employment Security (DES) which manages the state's Unemployment Insurance system. For perspective, prior to COVID-19, DES received about 3,000 claims per week. Since March 15, we have paid over \$1 billion in unemployment benefits to the people of North Carolina - a majority of that coming from new federal funds. DES has carried out the complicated task of starting three new federal programs amid this crisis. It has been an extremely challenging time, but we have made great strides by adding more staff and enhancing technology.

Furthermore, other members of our department have, often been behind the scenes, doing their part to support both businesses and workers. We have been collecting data and providing information to employers to connect them with resources. This pandemic illustrates how interrelated our businesses, educational institutions, and government agencies are, and how we all must work together. Even while this pandemic has dominated the headlines, the economic development work of our department has continued. We have announced jobs literally from one end of the state to the other - from Murphy to Beaufort - in the last two months. One of the biggest announcements was here in Raleigh. Bandwidth, Inc., a leading global provider of communications software, is expanding its Raleigh headquarters in a move that will bring 1,165 new jobs to North Carolina over the next eight years. We still have a sound economic foundation in this state. Our gross state product is still larger than the gross national product of countries like Sweden.

Secretary Copeland closed his remarks by thanking all for their collaboration, service and leadership.

Chairman Tom Rabon welcomed Commission members and guests to the first virtual Commission meeting. Chairman Rabon reiterated Secretary Copeland's remarks referencing how COVID-19 has changed our entire landscape within the past two months but stated the NCWorks Commission has remained strong to stay the course and move forward responsibly. Throughout the devastation COVID-19, emerging is our extraordinary ability to adapt, engage and make tough decisions has emerged. This is a defining time for the Commission and the important work we do.

Chairman Rabon recognized one of our Commission members, Kim Toler, Training Manager at Nutrien in Aurora, for receiving an award by ApprenticeshipNC for her ongoing dedication to registered apprenticeship and training programs. Chairman Rabon also recognized another Commission member, Himanshu Karvir, President of Virtelle Hospitality, for allowing healthcare workers, first responders, and anyone who works directly to mitigate the spread of COVID 19 to self-isolate for free at several of the local Asheville hotels owned by his company.

Minutes Approval: Chairman Rabon called for a motion to approve the minutes as written from the February 12th meeting. Jeff Frederick made the motion, Sherry Carpenter seconded the motion; having no discussion, the motion passed, and the minutes were approved.

Workforce Development Updates

Chairman Rabon introduced Assistant Secretary Jessica Englert of the Division of Workforce Solutions to provide remarks on COVID-19 and North Carolina's workforce.

Assistant Secretary Englert mentioned that the Division of Workforce Solutions has risen to the challenges of COVID-19, impacting the North Carolina workforce system and the NCWorks Career Centers. NCWorks

Career Centers temporarily shifted from seeing customers in person to serving customers virtually - via phone, email, video conference and through NCWorks.gov.

Moreover, the Division of Workforce Solutions has provided a total of more than 200 personnel to support the Division of Employment Security with unemployment claims full-time. The remaining DWS Career Center staff in the local communities continue to serve customers while working from home. While some businesses across the state continue to hire, an on-going top DWS priority remains to support the many businesses affected by COVID-19 across North Carolina. DWS has identified more than 2,200 business establishments, across 22 industries, that have been adversely affected by the crisis to date. The largest industry sectors affected continue to be restaurants/food service, manufacturing and health care/social assistance.

Additionally, Assistant Secretary Englert stated DWS has received more than 250 Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (or “WARN”) notices from businesses since March, reflecting mass layoffs or closures. Most of these employer’s plan on recalling their workers, so these are mostly temporary layoffs. DWS is working closely with other agencies to provide all these businesses the Rapid Response support they will need in the coming months. Our partners at the Local Workforce Development Boards will continue to engage with businesses to get them what they need. This includes using our “Business Edge” layoff aversion program.

Assistant Secretary Englert emphasized our primary focus is finding new ways to use technology. Some examples are 400 cell phones, 450 laptops and portable printer/scanners to facilitate transitioning DWS staff across the state to 100% telework and virtual services. Additionally, launching a cloud-based phone call management system through Amazon Web Services, starting in the Charlotte and Jacksonville locations allowing every career center to remotely manage all customer calls. Furthermore, the Division of Workforce Solutions has provided new guidance for Local Workforce Boards and Career Centers on how to utilize services to assist customers and made one-time grants available to the Workforce Boards, to be used for equipment and services needed for teleworking. Additionally, the Finish Line Grants program has made available one time offers for Local Areas to purchase laptops, tablets, and other similar devices to community college students who had to transition to e-learning. Another new approach is extended Wi-Fi access further into parking lots at NCWorks Career Centers, to help citizens that may not have access to wi-fi. Also, NCWorks.gov, has published a new COVID-19 jobs information hub to highlight current job openings and the employer-focused page (next.ncworks.gov) published links to COVID-19 resources for North Carolina businesses. In closing, Assistant Secretary Englert expressed her appreciation to the Information Technology Team at the Division and the 23 local Workforce Development Boards for their partnership and innovation and indicated all these technological advances will remain in place beyond the COVID-19 crisis.

Committee Updates:

Skills and Education Attainment Committee: Chair Sherry Carpenter reported that the committee convened via conference call on March 18, and featured an update from Cecelia Holden, CEO of myFutureNC. myFutureNC is focused on driving statewide public engagement and messaging the importance of high-quality credentials and postsecondary attainment. Work is being done around the credentials of value — a list of high-quality credentials that align with workforce needs and jobs that are in high demand, high growth and at least average wages. The challenge is how to track these credentials. myFutureNC also has a new dashboard that includes attainment indicators at the county level which will

equip communities with metrics and outcomes to drive improvement/attainment.
(<https://dashboard.myfuturenc.org>)

The committee expanded their goals to help reengage and retain individuals unemployed due to COVID-19 and help them get back into the workforce. Members welcomed new ad-hoc committee member Emily Roach, from the NC Department of Administration, Neurodiversity Apprenticeship Program. Lastly, several committee members served as beta testers for the new NCcareers.org Career Information System and all are very interested in its effectiveness and impending availability to job seekers, especially those affected by COVID-19. The next meeting is May 21st.

Local Innovation Committee: Mel Chernoff, Chair, reported that the committee's focus is *goal #3* of the strategic plan and the work related to promoting the replication of creative solutions to challenging workforce problems by supporting local innovation. The Local Innovation Committee last met on February 24th by phone. At that meeting committee members chose applicants from the Local Innovation Fund, that had interest in learning about who were not chosen for funding to spotlight, given that they have been able to move forward with their ideas. Committee members were to contact the grant applicants to learn more about their programs for future publication of Spotlight's. This part of the process is currently on hold due to COVID-19, however, Jade Manley, Commission staff has continued to create new spotlight's to be featured on Commerce's website and on other outlets.

The second activity since the committee last met included the creation of a draft Evaluation Request for Proposal (RFP) for the six NCWorks Local Innovation Fund Grants with the ideas and criteria committee members have brainstormed. The committee hopes to review and further develop the RFP in upcoming committee meetings as well as brainstorming ways to pivot committee work to address challenges due to COVID-19.

Employer Leadership Committee: Jeff Frederick, Chair, reported that the committee is focused on *goal #2* of the strategic plan. The Employer Leadership Committee last met on March 18th. Since that time Ken Allen has worked with LEAD to prepare a one pager of the findings from the surveys conducted last fall, prior to COVID-19. The second part of the Employer Needs Survey regarded focus groups conducted by NCSU, was delayed due to COVID-19. Later this summer, the committee plans to hold meeting for Reentry and other services provided by the Regional Partnership in Southern Pines, when travel restrictions are lifted. Another topic they have been absorbed in is employer engagement strategies, such as field trips to visit small business employers to learn about their experiences in working with local workforce development boards. The committee plans to meet in late June or July.

Governance and System Alignment Committee: Hope Williams, Chair, presented 3 activities their committee has been working on. First and foremost was the 2020 NCWorks Commission Annual Workforce Program Review. Per North Carolina General Statue each year the NCWorks Commission sends out an Annual Program Review to 19 separate state government agencies who provide workforce services across the state of NC. The committee has been hard at work developing the 2020 survey questions, several of which were revised to reflect the recent COVID-19 crisis. The final draft of the survey is 28 questions and it was sent out to the agencies on May 6th with a due date of June 17th, 2020. The second activity the committee has been engaged in is assisting the DWS Planning Department with developing several new questions for the Local Area Workforce Development Board Comprehensive Plan Guidance. This year's plan includes a new section devoted to the NCWorks Commission and alignment of the Local Area Workforce

Development Boards to the overall strategic plan of the NCWorks Commission. Commission staff will assist DWS in reviewing Local Area Workforce Development Board responses. The third activity the committee has been working on is confirmation that all sections of the WIOA State Unified Plan were successfully uploaded into the Federal portal for review and comments by US Department of Labor and US Department of Education. The committee has assisted DWS with editing their responses to comments by DOL on the ETP (Eligible Training Provider) waiver request. The committee is awaiting further comments from the Federal Review Panel.

Career Pathways Recognition

Tom Rabon invited Sherry Carpenter to introduce two new Career Pathways. Sherry recognized the Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Board for all their work certifying two new career pathways:

Aerospace and Aviation Career Pathway

The eastern North Carolina region is rapidly growing in aerospace and aviation manufacturing, maintenance, repair, and overhaul and logistics; with the major hub being the North Carolina Global Trans (GTP) in Kinston. GTP is home to several aerospace and aviation businesses as well as the Spirit-Lenoir Community College Composite Center of Excellence. The region boasts three community colleges that offer a variety of robust aerospace programs. The aerospace industry in Eastern NC offers employees a competitive and family sustaining wage, with an average salary of \$48,000.

Construction and Skilled Trades Career Pathway

One of the many industries flourishing in the Eastern Carolina Workforce Development Local Area is construction and skilled trades. Residential, industrial, and highway construction are all increasing and there is a consistent need for skilled workers. Three major reasons for the increase are: Hurricane Florence which caused \$24 billion in damages to homes and businesses, the expansion of Fleet Readiness Center-East which will be expanding its footprint due to the arrival of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter squadron and vertical lift fan repair facility, and the signing of the Military Corridor Transportation Improvement Act, which improves highway infrastructure and will allow for convenient transportation of military equipment and personnel along Highway 70.

Closing Business

Chairman Rabon reminded Commission members that the next meeting will be August 12th. With no other business to conduct, Chairman Rabon asked if there was any new business. There being none, Chairman Rabon adjourned the meeting at 1:45 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Annie Izod
Pending approval on August 12, 2020