

Maine Jobs Council Meeting

February 27, 2009: 9:00 AM

Frances Perkins Room at the Central Maine Commerce Center

Maine Jobs Council Meeting Augusta, Maine February 27, 2009

Minutes

Present: Mike Roland; Lisa Martin; Mel Clarrage; Kathy Coogan; Antoinette Mancusi; Steve Duval; Barry Martin; Jeanne Paquette; Susan Swanton; Stacey Palmer; Gene Ellis; John Leavitt; Mel Arsenault; Greg Dugal; Al Menard; Chris Hastedt; Margaret Harvey; Kim Lipp; Joanna Russell; Bob Trail; MaryFran Gamage; Bryant Hoffman; Dena Winslow; Peaches Bass; Sharon Barker; Steven Pound; Esther Clenott; Phil Dionne; Garret Oswald; Susan Gigere.

Phil Dionne called the meeting to order.

Committee Reports:

Business and Industry – Lisa Martin

Working on initiative called Industry Partnership. Merle and Lisa are holding fourth industry roundtable next week. We are looking at model from Pennsylvania regarding customized training plans.

Maine Technology Institute has awarded MAME almost a half million dollars; that will be very strong in the manufacturing sector, the IT and the composite sector. We are having conversations with those industries as well as University and other partners: Brunswick Naval Station, Embry Riddle, National Center for Aerospace Leadership.

We are working on wind energy activities, providing information to the Governor's office, and working with University around opportunities to manufacture various things in alternative energy places.

Thanks to Merle Davis for her assistance in putting things together.

At this juncture, Bill Peabody, Director of Labor Standards, today is representing the Maine Chapter of American Society for Public Administration. Their Public Service Award goes to an individual who expends time, energy and passion to make government work better. This year's recipient is Phil Dionne.

Women's Employment Issues Committee – Sharon Barker

We are getting ready to release in April the next annual report on status of women in the Maine workforce. This allows us to track success of women in the workforce and also provides an educational tool in a lot of venues.

Pay equity is one of the focuses of our work. Annie Houle is on our committee. She received a grant to do workshops for women who are entering workforce. We completed one at University of Maine. It covers everything from negotiation and budgeting to being able to benchmark salaries. A companion piece to the project is bringing together professional women who attend training, to offer information in their own venue.

Another thing discussed is the experience of minority women in Maine. This issue was raised in last year's report. It is difficult to do statistically due to low population number. There have been interesting discussions about the new Mainers, the immigrant population, and also the indigenous people, the native populations. Guest speakers attended their meetings to give more perspective.

Another recommendation that we will stress this year is increasing participation of women in non-traditional career fields. We have been watching discussion on national level; in critiques of the stimulus package, there is encouragement for more resources and participation in sectors where women are more heavily represented. In Maine, we have been paying attention to not only women in those sectors, but to look at strategies to get women into the areas not as well represented, such as trades and science and engineering fields.

We have also been discussing, in meetings with Phil and Garret, ways to collaborate better among the committees. This will assist in extending communication to better serve crossover population.

It was brought to Committee's attention that Sharon has been nominated and will be inducted into the Women's Hall of Fame.

Commission on Disability and Employment - Mel Claridge

Committee is overall trying to get disability and employment fully integrated in all workforce conversations, with ultimate objective of lowering rate of those with disabilities not in the workforce. There are still six out of ten with disabilities not working at all. Our strategic plan from our Federal DHHS grant is to look at infrastructure change. That is continued for another two years; also trying to pull all state agency advisory groups together.

We have an annual work plan that we are developing. We are always in need of members.

Youth Committee – Linda Smith

One area of report is around strategies for Disconnected Youth population. How do you access young folks that are 18 – 24, and statistically show up as disconnected in education and employment? It is difficult to find them. We began brainstorming at last meeting to try to locate youth. That will be one ongoing piece.

Another level is in trying to disperse information to other groups. Jeanne Paquette's network will allow us to pull together resources to serve kids and get the word out.

The 2008 committee activity offered opportunity for DOL dollars, for Struggling Population. Grant was written and defined youth as one of those populations. Local workforce boards volunteered time and energy. We received \$9,000. Walter Ridlan did presentations to various centers of Gold Collar events. This presentation brought together many people and it was very successful. This event was recorded on a DVD.

Apprenticeship – Gene Ellis

Gene distributed copy of 2008 Annual Report. The Apprenticeship Return on Investment was discussed. Our \$600,000 budget reinvested approximately 53.6 million dollars into the economy last year. Our return on investment was approximately \$98.00 for every \$1.00 of the General Fund expenditure. The 2006 report reflected about \$37.00; the 2007 report reflected about \$51.00. The budget is the same each year. We also have an excellent 'cost per-' of about \$450.00.

Tuition reimbursement was increased for participants this year. We will have expended around \$60,000 as compared to \$43,000 last year.

There are challenges. Last year, USDOL rewrote ground rules, 29 CFR 29. Appendix A lays out major changes.

Initiatives for next year are in tourism and hospitality field.

He spoke about how something becomes apprentice-able. It is a new occupation as approved by the state of New York – called Energy Efficiency Technician. It consists of work process and related technical instruction. When three states approve an occupation, it will be added to national list of apprentice-able occupations. Goal is to become state number two or three. Our Review Committee will review and submit to Regional Director.

Phil explained the Governor must approve membership on the Apprenticeship Committee; new member applications would be welcomed.

Older Worker Committee - Bob Trail

By year 2030, 50% of Maine will be 55 or older. Older workers will be needed more and more. We struggle to promote the value of the older worker. In 2008, a number of initiatives were taken: with the help of Central Maine WIB, we were able to give vouchers to 89 older workers for computer training. This year's work plan is not yet completed; we are hoping to expand. We also reported that the committee will continue participation in the National Governors' Association Civic Engagement Policy. The Older Worker Resource Guide has been revised. We want to reach out to more employers than we have in the past. The Silver Collar award went to the Aging Excellence Company. They provide non-medical elder care services.

We have been involved in the application for the USDOL Older Worker Demonstration Grant. The purpose of this grant is to educate employers on value of older workers, facilitate outreach, and provide short-term skills training.

Our 2009 work plan is in process; it will emphasize the Silver Collar award, the oversight of the USDOL grant and serving older workers in the CareerCenters. We should add to our committee as many representative employers, both public and private, non-profit and for-profit. A suggestion was made to employ older workers as mentors.

Workforce Investment Board Reports

Local Area I – Dena Winslow

Northern Maine Community College has initiated Windpower Technology Program. Aroostook County initiated an additional semester to start in March. We have had total, as of today, of 1,057 workers on layoff from forestry industry just in Aroostook County. Additionally, there are 231 other workers and in the last couple of days, approximately 30 more workers on layoff; this is more than just forestry workers. Of 177 Fraser Timber workers laid off in January 2009, approximately 75-100 are planning to go back to training under the Trade Act.

Approximately 25-30 of the 61 Irving Pinkham workers are going to take advantage of the Trade Act.

Local Area II – Joanna Russell

One major initiative was to put WIA services out to bid and the information provides who submitted bids for adult and dislocated worker services and also who provided bids for youth services.

We went through program monitoring; no major findings for both Training and Development Corporation and Area II.

Shaping Opportunities – presented summary of how it is going and provided information about taking to Regional Council.

Youth Council – there was a major recruiting effort, all toward the Gold Collar event. Over 25 people present for Youth Council; willing to participate in working and developing system for youth in the area.

Received NEG grant for Katahdin Paper Mill. Workers with Red Shield are going back to work.

Information on County Transition Teams; they have been very active. Now coordinating effort for all day workshops throughout Area II.

Rapid Response – gave information on that. Have over 1,200 individuals laid off.

North Star Alliance Initiative – there will be more about Building Bridges; working closely with high schools and businesses in our area.

In Tri-County area, we are focusing on need for computer skills, not just with older worker but youth and adults as well. Bangor CareerCenter has created a computer boot camp.

Information distributed on 11th Annual Fall Job Fair.

Local Area III - Bryant Hoffman

Underwent changes this year, have new Board Chair – Peter Thompson was interim chair, and has been replaced by Craig Anderson from Goodwill Industries.

We have been anticipating the R & R monies coming and getting ready to look at training opportunities. Our emphasis has also been on business assistance services in the One Stop Center.

The new Mainers Workforce Partnership has enrolled 14-15 new people. We are working on the Youth Boot camp and start a program for foster kids in foster care.

We have had a lot of NEG, emergency grants.

Local Area IV - Antoinette Mancusi

Packets to be distributed.

Request for Proposal in region has kept everyone busy. Letters to three entities who bid for proposal went out last week. Decision was made that Goodwill Industries was the winning proposal. We are excited about opportunities to provide a new way of increasing access for residents. There will be a comprehensive One Stop in Portland area, and seven affiliates and ten or more service network access points.

Handout (yellow sheet) was distributed with information on all the numbers, summarizing the performance measures in our area. We are meeting all our target numbers.

NEGs continue to come in.

Pink sheet discusses the incentive award that will be received. Our area will get approximately \$43,000; we will ask our board to vote on three options that we think will be wonderful use of the money. One option will be to assist in automation of career center numbers. Another is to help do research on what economic drivers that we should focus on. The other is the Work Ready credential program.

Scott Jackman provided information on BNAS. There is a Demonstration Grant. (\$700,000) which provides training to military spouses. Training will take place in Maine, reciprocal with

Jacksonville, FL, where most of these people are going. This is not related to BRAC, it is about serving the military.

Transition Center is one of two centers in the history of BRAC that is actually located on the base; other is in Fort Campbell, KY. The grant was originally awarded to provide IT skills to secondarily impacted workers, outside the gate; was expanded to include primary affected workers, inside the gate. They have been enrolling in great numbers.

Incentive Presentation – Steve Duval

At February 6 meeting of the Policy Committee, we finalized the distribution of incentive funds that the full council appropriated for this year. Of the \$229,000 that was available, \$129,000 is going out to three local areas, I, III and IV, for meeting the required performance metrics for the WIA program and one of the categories that was adopted by the Jobs Council for the incentive purpose.

We will be working on the WIA Plan Modification for the period of July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010. There is no intention of rewriting the current state plan; we will be submitting a letter of modification to the plan to highlight significant changes, namely number of CareerCenters that are operational. We are now down to 12, with satellite locations.

Susan Swanton -

Invited last summer by organization called Workforce Alliance to serve on their Priorities Council. This was to create a platform for workforce development for the new administration. This week I attended the Annual Policy Summit along with Rob Brown from Opportunity Maine and Roy Gaddat from the Direct Care Alliance.

Packet was distributed for review, only one copy available at this time. Middle skill jobs are still huge portion of jobs that are out there. Last Congress, Senator Snowe and Senator Brown, D-Ohio, introduced the Sectors Act, strengthening employment clusters to organize regional success. It is a page from the playbook of North Star; recognizes the importance of focusing effort collaboratively on sector development. Copies of overview of bill were distributed.

Department of Labor Commissioner Laura A. Fortman:

The Commissioner discussed ongoing issues and the Recovery Act. There has been increased unemployment; trying to better meet needs of those folks. CareerCenter staff is dealing face to face with people trying to adjust.

UI staffing issues and hiring freeze issues were explained and discussed. In September, there were 18 UI staff statewide. The extended unemployment was implemented in July. At this point, we now have 9 more on staff.

Saturday hours at CareerCenters were completely voluntary. It is a six-week pilot project to assist those who have no computer access; staff will assist in completing UI applications. The

money comes from Federal unemployment accounts. Some staff have also been working evening hours.

There are other provisions under unemployment also; there is a new involuntarily laid off worker COBRA provision. If person is involuntarily laid off, defined by COBRA language, and working for someone who has health insurance, this will allow a 65% credit. We are working with Governor's Office on health policy and the Dirigo Health Program. We have been able to use Dirigo to help subsidize payment.

The Trade Program was completely rewritten as part of the Recovery Act. That goes into effect 90 days after the Recovery Act was signed. It expands the pool of eligible people from folks who produce an article to people in service sector and public sector who were impacted by foreign trade and does not limit the countries; in that, the health care tax credit is increased to 80%. There are timeframes on all of this; looking at 2009, 2010, possibly fiscal year 2011.

UI Modernization Act: need to be re-looking at who you are covering; part-time workers, to look at when people earned wages, etc. Maine has already done most of the items in there. Purpose of this is to make sure that everyone who should be eligible for UI check is actually getting that check.

There is funding for Vocational Rehabilitation services that fall into two clumps; one is general vocational rehabilitation and the other is independent living. People are looking at what that looks like and what are the options.

There will be Workforce Investment Act dollars as well. We do not have dollar amounts for the state yet. The message we received in Washington was transparency and accountability. The President has a website: Recovery.gov; the Governor has mirrored that site for Maine. The Governor, as does the President, wants to track every dollar that comes into state and exactly where it is going, who it is benefiting, and who is responsible for it, with phone numbers, so that anyone can call up and ask what does it mean.

A large amount of money is focused on Disconnected Youth, age 18-24; the Governor is also interested in a couple of sectors, "green jobs", energy green component. The Governor wants to make sure that every contract issued that is related to the Recovery package; the jobs will be listed with our job bank so that we can connect the workers to those opportunities.

It is our responsibility to identify what are those opportunities and then how do we connect people to those opportunities through supporting, access to education for them, or figuring out how to move people into jobs if they do have the skills.

There was continued discussion and various questions from the committee, i.e.: timelines, collaboration, job issues, education issues, processes for accountability, etc.

Cliff Ginn - President of Opportunity Maine:

Distributed information and discussed bill introduced by Representative Berry, plan to get Maine's buildings 30-50% more efficient over the next ten years. Information distributed included an outline of what is in the bill, and a short article that Rob Brown and Cliff wrote on intersection between energy policy and workforce development. Cliff will attend the May meeting.

Next meeting scheduled for 5/29/09.

Minutes submitted by Susan Turgeon