Minutes for the Northeastern Workforce Development Board **March 16, 2021**

**Call to Order.** Chairman Sean Lavin called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The meeting is being held electronically per COVID-19 restrictions. Presence of a quorum was determined by roll call with **twelve (12) members present:** Chair Sean Lavin, Vice-Chair Janet Russ, Dr. Kimberly Gregory, Dave Carroll, Larry Donley, Diane White, JD Williamson, Larry Lombardi, Dr. David Loope, Tameka Gibbs, Richard Thorne, and Montique McClary. **Members Absent with Notice:** Sandi Brickhouse Smith and Terri Gallop. **Members absent without notice:** Vernon Brinkley, Debra Keenan, and Rex Anderson. **Guests/Partners/Staff**: Annette Barnes, Emily Nicholson, Amber Morse, Matthew Fowler, Lora Aples, Kenny Kee, Phillip Holloway, Alfonso Jimenez, Nancy Hamilton, Jeri Hansen, and David Whitmer.

**Welcome/Introduction**. Chairman Lavin welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**Approval of Agenda (VOTE).** Chairman Lavin asked for a motion to approve the agenda. **Motion by Kimberly Gregory, seconded by Larry Lombardi, to approve the agenda. The motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote.**

# Approval of Minutes (VOTE): Motion by Janet Russ, seconded by David Loope, to approve the minutes as written. The motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote.

**Mission Moment – Success Story, Alfonso Jimenez:** Career Advisor Phillip Holloway introduced Alfonso Jimenez, a NWDB participant who has achieved success with help from the NCWorks Career Center in Dare County. Alfonso spoke about having low paying jobs and worrying about how to get ahead when he was told by a friend about the services of the NCWorks Career Center and that he should apply to get his CDL. He said that Career Advisor Paige Griffin at the Dare NCWorks Career Center was very helpful in getting him through the paperwork and getting him authorized to go to school for his CDL. When Paige moved on to another job, Phillip Holloway stepped in and assisted him in getting through the program and obtaining his CDL license. He said he now works as a truck driver in Wilmington; has his own apartment and is making $50,000 a year. Alfonso said he can’t stop smiling because his life is so good. He thanked Phillip and all the NWDB staff for helping to pave the way for him.

**Administrative Reports.** Director Whitmer introduced Nancy Hamilton who has filled the open Career Advisor position at NCWorks Dare County. He reported that after nine years, Lora Aples is leaving NWDB and moving to another state. He said it has been a pleasure to work with Lora and she will be missed. Recruiting to fill her position has started. Lora thanked everyone, stating that she has enjoyed being part of the organization these last 9 years.

Director Whitmer provided an update on the Career Centers status. After concerns about COVID number increases were brought by the center management, the Leadership Committee met with Larry Donley (DWS Regional Operations Manager and One-Stop Operator for NWDB) to discuss those concerns. As of February 1st, the Career Center staff are working a schedule where only half of the staff will be in office, with the remaining working from home, shifting each week; appointments will be encouraged and recommended for customers; the center will still serve walk-ins as staffing levels allow, but they will be encouraged to make appointments for additional services. Doors will be locked, so walk-ins and appointments need to call/text upon arrival; customers will not be allowed to wait in the center. They will be instructed to call or text when they arrive and wait in their vehicles until they are called in; and, virtual services are encouraged for services as much as possible and

drop boxes are installed outside of the center for customers needing to drop off paperwork. 1

Director Whitmer reported that with the increase in the use of virtual services, Heidi O’Neal, Outreach Coordinator, is conducting a virtual services assessment. This will include an assessment of virtual service delivery in our region, including a SWOT analysis with recommendations for improvement. Once completed, the Career Center committee will review the assessment and make recommendations for improvement if needed.

Director Whitmer reported that NCWorks is partnering with the Currituck Chamber of Commerce to hold a drive-thru job fair on May 1st. Also, NCWorks is partnering with ECSU, the Currituck Chamber of Commerce, COA’s Small Business Center, and the SBTDC to hold a job fair at the K.E. White Center on April 15th. He also gave an update on Project GAP, a partnership with ECSU funded by a Golden Leaf grant, which is targeted at helping individuals with significant barriers to employment to obtain the skills and credentials needed to accomplish their career goals. He reported that ECSU has identified students who don’t meet the parameters of GAP but could benefit from services at the career center. A spreadsheet has been developed with these individuals to share with center staff. Joint workshops with ECSU, both virtual and on campus, will start in March.

Director Whimter updated the board on the #worklocal campaign. He said that a presentation in Dare County went very well. The next presentation is scheduled for Hyde County on March 22nd.

Director Whitmer reported on the many Outreach efforts staff has focused on this year:

* Video Project: The plan is to produce 5 videos highlighting the good work that NWDB and NCWorks due for communities. The first video has been completed, focusing on an overview of the NCWorks Career Centers (video was shown to the board). Future videos will focus more on the board, specific services, and additional partners.
* NWDB 2020 Accomplishments: A document and poster has been created to highlight accomplishments from 2020. The intent is to show the impact NWDB and NCWorks have on the communities served.
* New Year postcard outreach campaign: Postcards were mailed to 3,000 registered job seekers, 1,500 registered employers, and 100 partner agencies. There has been some job- seeker contacting the center from this effort, but by far the most activity has been from employers, with over 50 job postings by employers who contacted us after receiving the postcards.
* The 4th quarterly newsletter has been completed and is attached for board review.

**Committee Reports.**

**Leadership:** Chair Lavin reported that as he had agreed to take on the responsibility of the Chair only until the end of Zach Bray’s term, the board needs to consider who will fill the position when election of officers come in July. He noted that only private business members are eligible to hold office positions. He reported that at their last meeting, the Leadership Committee discussed changes to the career centers due to COVID as well as discussing the benefits of conducting business virtually.

**Career Center Committee:** Committee Chair Tameka Gibbs reported that the committee authorized approved training for healthcare and IT related training conducted by a company called MedCerts.

The committee also reviewed the Performance Dashboard and approved making changes to the dashboard. The committee will review the changes at their next meeting.

**Business Resources and Opportunities:** Committee Chair Larry Lombardi reported that the committee received an update on the business surveys currently being conducted. He reported that

2

they reviewed an excellent demo of the digital platform for the LMI Books, adding that this is a great tool. He also reported that he shared with Amber Morse, Business Services Representative that Tractor Supply in Moyock will be opening in July and asked that she reach out to offer assistance in hiring employees for the store.

**NextGen:** NextGen Program Manager Lora Aples reported on behalf of Chair Terri Gallop. She thanked the committee for their strong commitment to the youth in our region. She said it had been her great pleasure and honor to work with everyone. She said she especially wanted to give kudos to the career advisors, saying that NWDB has a great NextGen team. She reported that the committee is still working on the updates to the WEX incentive policy. She also reported that Career Advisor Phillip Holloway has conducted a couple of virtual workshops – “From the Block to the Boardroom” and “Making Money at any Age”, that have been well attended.

**Finance:** Committee Chair JD Williamson stated that since this is the first time the Board will have participated in the budget process, he would reserve his comments for the budget presentation and subsequent review and hopefully, approval of the budget.

**NWDB FY2021-22 Budget (VOTE):** Director Whitmer presented the proposed NWDB Budget to the board. He reported that that the Finance Committee reviewed and approved the budget being sent to the NWDB Board on March 9th. The budget is also required by law to be approved by the NWDB Consortium and then included in the Albemarle Commission budget for adoption.

Director Whitmer emphasized that workforce boards do not determine how much Title I funds they receive nor do they know how much funding they will receive until the allocation levels are released near the end of the program year. Therefore, revenues in the budget are estimates based on past year’s allocations. Title I funds are received annually and have a two year life. If the funds are not used within two years, the remaining funds go back to the state for use in other areas.

Director Whitmer gave an overview on some general items regarding the budget:

* Revenues are estimates as we will not know our actual allocations until June or July.
* The Albemarle Commission conducted a salary survey. The Commission has not yet determined if the recommendations from the survey will be implemented, therefore the salaries could change from what is included in the proposed budget. In addition, a 1.75% COLA has been included, but as with the salary decision, the Commission has not made a decision on whether it will be implemented.
* The indirect rate remains at 26%. Director Whitmer explained that the Indirect Funds are what is paid to the Albemarle Commission who serves as the NWDB’s Fiscal Agent. Indirect Funds cover the NWDB's cost for rent, various office supplies, and portions of the Executive Director, Human Resources and Finance Officer Salaries. Indirect costs are 26% of NWDB Salaries and Benefits.

Director Whitmer reported that the total proposed budget is $3,307,324, and is basically flat (5%) as compared to the current budget. The driving factor behind the revenue decrease is the Enhancement Grant. This grant concludes on June 30, 2021 and enhancement grants are no longer available.

Revenues include estimated allocations and carryforward for Title 1 formula funds. In addition to Title I formula funds, NWDB has revenues from several special grants – Business Services, Finish Line, and Infrastructure funds. As stated previously, NWDB does not know what their FY21-22 allocations and carryforward will be so once the actual allocations are received next fall, and actual carryforward is determine, budget amendments will be made accordingly.

3

Total Salaries, Benefits, and Indirect total budget estimates are $1,339,408, an increase of 14%. This is due to:

* Salary increases as recommended by the Commission’s salary study.
* Increase in the Local Government Employees’ Retirement System contribution.
* Addition of Vision insurance.
* Addition of the new Strategic Initiatives & Outreach Coordinator, which was approved by NWDB Board earlier this year.
* Additional indirect costs paid on increased salaries and benefits.

Salaries are distributed through multiple programs resulting in some percentage changes in salaries due to proration changes made throughout the different programs.

Operating Expenses are $1,967,916, which is a 15% decrease. The decrease is due to the completion of the Enhancement Grant; completion of the Local Career Pathways Specialist project; and, significant decreases in travel and travel related expenses for both staff and participants. Travel is expected to increase in the new budget year as the impacts of COVID 19 lessen.

Director Whitmer added that in addition to Title 1 formula funds, there are other funds included in the budget, known as Special Grants. These include Business Services ($111,000); Finish Line Grants ($45,000), and Infrastructure Funds ($33,167).

David went on to explain the budget detail. There is a budget detail for each Program as well as the Special Grants. He explained that Revenues are broken out into two funding streams: Federal Revenues (Title I formula funds) and Program Year Carry Forward. Salaries & Benefits are broken out into Wages, Indirect and Taxes & Benefits. Operating Expenses are broken out by Participant Costs, Travel/Training/Conferences, General Office, and Carried Forward. Carried forward is the estimated amount of funds that will be carried forward into the next budget year but if needed, they can be used for the current year by amendment if necessary.

# Motion by Vice-Chair Russ, seconded by Dr. David Loope, to approve the budget as presented and approved by the Finance Committee and to recommend moving forward to the NWDB Consortium, allowing for any changes as made by the Albemarle Commission. The motion passed unanimously with a roll call vote.

Chair Lavin stated that there will be new board member announcements at the next meeting. The NWDB Consortium will be voting on that at their meeting on March 24th. He noted there are applicants for 3 private sector business positions and 1 applicant for the Higher Education opening.

**Environmental Scanning/Other Business:** JD shared that the federal government is allowing for an exclusion on paying taxes on unemployment for the first $10,000 for single filers and $20,000 for joint filers.

**Adjourn (Vote).** With no further discussion, **motion by Janet Russ, seconded by Larry Lombardi to adjourn the meeting. Motion passed with a voice vote.** Chairman Lavin adjourned the meeting at 7:17 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, May 18th at 6:00 p.m.

06 / 25 / 2021

NWDB Chairman, Sean Lavin