

**Meeting of Montgomery County Workforce Development Board\***  
**January 5, 2022**  
**8:30 AM**

\*A full recording of this meeting can be accessed [via Zoom](#) using passcode b+8wS=99

**Board Attendees:** Michelle Bell-Smith, Mark Drury, Barbara Ebel, Steve Greenfield, Courtney Hall, Mary Lang, Beth Lash, Omar Lazo, Lesley MacDonald, Roxana Mejia, Helen Nixon, Sharon Strauss, Diego Uriburu, Ben Wu

**Non-Board Attendees:** Jewru Bandeh, Ken Lemberg

**Staff:** Anthony Featherstone, Tiffany Ocasio, Executive Assistant; Sarah Van De Weert, Director of Government & Board Relations

**CHAIRPERSON WELCOME**

Mr. Drury welcomed all members. Motion to approve November minutes w/ no opposition.

**INTRODUCTION OF JEWRU BANDEH**

Mr. Drury introduced Jewru Bandeh as the new Assistant Chief Administrative Officer for Workforce Development, taking over for Jerome Fletcher.

**2020-2024 LOCAL PLAN**

Mr. Drury explained that the Local Plan has been approved by the Governor's Workforce Development Board but if Board members have any comments they must submit feedback by March 2, 2022. Mr. Featherstone explained that any changes to the plan for mid-point updates need to be completed by June 30, 2022.

**NEW MEMBER UPDATE**

Ms. Van De Weert was absent for the meeting due to illness. Mr. Featherstone reported that the final round of applicants will be interviewed this week or next. Nominations are expected to be submitted to the County Executive's office by the end of next week. At this point next month, new members could be confirmed.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT**

- Mr. Featherstone opened the floor prior to his report to Jewru Bandeh. Mr. Bandeh expressed his excitement to participate in Board meetings. He explained his expanded role and updated title to read as "Regional Director and Senior Advisor to the County Executive for Workforce Development." His role is to help build and expand the infrastructure needed to deliver one-stop employment services to Montgomery County residents. He then offered a review of his past experience as it relates to workforce development.
- Mr. Featherstone recognized Ken Lemberg, Deputy Director for the Governor's Workforce Development Board. The current, approved version of the Local Plan will be forwarded to all members but signatures from the Board Chair and the County Executive are needed before the final submission to the state.

- Mr. Featherstone introduced Naté Gordon, WSM's Director of Administration & Finance. She will manage all of WSM's contract life cycles, policy development and implementation. She will occasionally work directly with Board committees on policies and getting them approved by the full Board.
- Mr. Featherstone began his slide presentation and shared that a few tasks must be completed between now and July 15, 2022:
  - Board Certification (documents ready for approval and submission to the state by Board meeting in May)
  - American Job Center Certification (documents ready for approval and submission by May meeting)
- Comprehensive Monitoring Report Findings for Program Year 2020-21
  - 55 case files were reviewed – 25 documents were found missing
  - Mr. Featherstone explained that he expects better results next year and that this report could be graded as a “B-.”
  - Mr. Hall asked if the findings could result in decreased funding and if the findings are related to complaints that have been received in the past about quality of service? Mr. Featherstone explained that Title I programs should not be adversely affected due to the report. There is definitely room for improvement. To Mr. Hall's second question, a definitive answer is difficult to give – documents were missing. WSM's new Career Services Manager is committed to document everything in the respective systems.
- ARPA Progress Update
  - Grant Relief for Onboarding Workers (GROW) – gearing up for second round
  - Workforce Recovery Network (WRN) – mid January RFP release
  - UpSkill MoCo – launch early Spring '22.
- Mr. Uriburu expressed concern over how little money the County has allocated for workforce development. What can the Board do to advocate to build more workforce development infrastructure? He requested that the Board have a separate conversation about what we can do to advocate for more. Mr. Bandeh expressed that the County Executive is most interested in collaborative models that address employment barriers. Mr. Hall agreed and challenged the County Executive to offer additional money to organizations in the county that are doing workforce development – no more research is needed, action is.
- Mr. Drury reminded the members that WSM has brought contracts to local organizations for service delivery and severed ties with national providers. It's important that committees meet regularly and have actionable items.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Program Committee: Ms. Bell Smith reported that partnerships with the other committees are necessary for employer engagement. Also, working with the local Chambers to get in front of employers who have successful workforce programs.

Employment Recovery Committee: Ms. Nixon reported that she had a recent orientation meeting with Mr. Featherstone & Ms. Van De Weert about what her responsibilities are as Chair. The first meeting will be scheduled soon.

Business and Community Engagement Committee: Mr. Greenfield reported that he and Ms. Lang were co-chairing after Derek Turner's departure. Understanding what the

business community requires in order to engage with WSM customers. One of the initiatives is to better understand who the customers are so that we can better communicate to businesses what "our product is." Ms. Lang mentioned that engagement goes beyond awareness with the business community. How do we create a system where they are actually created job and training opportunities? Partnership with MCEDC is crucial for this coordinated approach.

#### **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WORKFORCE BOARDS CONFERENCE (NAWB)**

- Mr. Drury announced that early bird registration rates are available now. In DC from April 11<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup>. It's a great opportunity to network with Board members from other jurisdictions. RSVP by January 19<sup>th</sup> to Ms. Van De Weert.

#### **MONTGOMERY COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP. UPDATE**

Mr. Wu explained that in October, MCEDC release the "Connecting Dots Report," which lays out the perspective on where we should go from 20 business leaders in the county. The report is available on MCEDC's website. The Economic Development Strategic Plan (Moving Forward Together) was submitted to the County Executive recently who has 31 days for input with the Council taking it up in February. Both reports provide the framework to help concentrate resources toward the vision and values that are held highly in Montgomery County.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion to adjourn at 9:53 AM.

The next meeting will take place on March 2nd, 2022 at 8:30 AM.