

**Meeting of Montgomery County Workforce Development Board (WDB)**  
**January 6, 2021**  
**8:30 AM**

A full recording of this meeting can be accessed [via Zoom](#) using passcode **x.4\*a65x**

**Attendees:** Melissa Boone, John Cain, Mark Drury, Barbara Ebel, Gordon Ellis, Jerome Fletcher, Ryan Gandy, Wyatt Genser, Steve Greenfield, Jeff Guido, Mahesh Kalva, Mary Lang, Beth Lash, Lesley MacDonald, Roxana Mejia, Yomi Ntewo, Michelle Bell Smith, Derek Turner, Diego Uriburu

**Staff:** Sarah Van De Weert, Communications & Marketing Manager

**WELCOME**

Mr. Drury, Board Chair, welcomed those in attendance.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SEARCH UPDATE**

Mr. Drury updated the Board that the new Executive Director, Anthony Featherstone, will be starting on January 19<sup>th</sup>. He's been vetted and interviewed by the County Council. Everyone is very excited for him to start.

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

Employment Recovery Committee: Ms. Ntewo provided a brief update. Committee met on Dec 16<sup>th</sup> and discussed how WSM should move forward in terms of employment recovery. The Committee determined that it's better to take action now as the new Executive Director will be focused on the Job Center.

An apprenticeship with the International Painters Association was discussed – it allows for employment while learning and training. They take on 10 apprentices at a time, they work full time, attend school once every other week. Upon graduation, starting hourly pay is \$35-\$50. State recognized. They've worked with DC school system but will work with others within the DMV. Bilingual opportunities are available too. The cost of drug tests and transportation is not covered. The Board could possibly cover those costs. The Committee made the recommendation that WSM begin an apprenticeship pilot program to support low income workers.

The Committee requested that WSM provide the WDB with a list of programs where they serve low income residents. Ms. Mejia state that board member, Mr. Guido is also with the construction trades. There are 17 other trades in the area and Mr. Guido works with all of them too. Mr. Uriburu said that this sounds like an amazing opportunity and with ten people per cohort within 17 trades that could reach many people. The challenge is getting people to maintain their attendance until they start seeing paychecks come in. He suggested that WSM could possibly support participants until they're able to support themselves.

Mr. Drury suggested that a bootcamp is held to expose potential employers to the possibility of these apprenticeships. There's a need to ensure that the programs are the right fit for the industry and trades. Mr. Guido mentioned that something like this had

been discussed previously and there was an attempt made to set a program up through the AJC.

Mr. Diego expressed the urgent need for a program like this. Some WSM programs are coming to an end and there needs to be something in the pipeline for the most vulnerable. What is WSM funding and how many people are being reached?

Mr. Drury responded that a lot are in the dark on that question and there is no budget information available for review.

Mr. Ellis, Chair of the WSM Board, explained that WSM is coordinating on a biotech bootcamp in January and February 2021. There are 12-18 participants in that taking classes at the Universities at Shady Grove and Montgomery College. In order for WSM to initiate any program much more detail is needed than what's been discussed today. For example, we need to know what costs are supposed to be covered, the profile of individuals to recruit, and a realistic program timeline.

Mr. Greenfield explained that he had more information on the bootcamp mentioned. It's beginning Jan 11<sup>th</sup>. It's a 4-week, 64-hour bootcamp for dislocated workers. There's a plan to have subsequent bootcamps. For the current one, county funds are being directed through WSM – they were responsible for recruiting and selecting students. MCEDC is also involved. I understand that these are county funds flowing through WSM. They recruited and selected the students.

Mr. Uriburu expressed concern over programs coming to an end. He explained that It's difficult to plan and put a proposal together without budget or financial information. HE suggested that there be a WSM budget presentation before the next Board meeting on February 3.

Mr. Ellis responded that WSM is going through two annual audits currently and financial staff are very tied up with that. WSM is also preparing their 2021 budget for county review. Information on finances and programs can be pulled together, but probably not until the end of the month (January). WSM is committed to establishing partnerships and providing apprenticeships for people of the County.

Ms. Ntewo continued the Committee's report reminding the Board that during the last meeting the concept of a shared employee with EDC came up. A number of the economic development strategies call for EDC and WSM to collaborate. A shared employee would help initiate program development, curriculum, build relationships. The salary would be split 50/50 between WSM and EDC. This shared employee concept is supported by the County Executive's office and County Council. EC and Council, and the economic recovery group also recommends that this take place quickly. The Committee requested that a decision on this is made by 1/15 with an incumbent in the role by February. Mr. Wu said that they will move forward with a job description and the hiring process.

Program Committee: Ms. Hester provided an update. The group is keeping the contract with Grant Associates in mind. Additional conversations with Workforce Montgomery Board and Staff are on hold until the Executive Director starts.

Business and Community Engagement Committee: Mr. Turner provided an update. No meeting took place in December.

### **OPEN DISCUSSION**

Mr. Uriburu: Our committee had a few asks. How do we move forward to get that information? Who has the ability to put forward recommendations and check with the staff to see if we can move forward with these?

Mr. Drury: We are a policy Board, we don't have budget or staff. WSM Board is the governing Board. They execute the programs and deal directly with staff. They have the ability to hire and fire, etc. If we don't have a budget, it's very hard to initiate anything. I think the Boards need to work closely. All the turmoil with a new Board during a pandemic has made it a little more confusing.

Other members agreed and shared similar sentiments. Mr. Drury then asked if there could be a "state of the organization" presentation in one week, on January 13<sup>th</sup>.

Mr. Ellis was then recognized for his commitment to the organization over the past several months since WSM has been without leadership.

The meeting adjourned at 9:36 AM.

The next meeting will take place on January 13 at 8:30 AM.