



## **NEMO WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

111E. Monroe • Paris, Missouri 65275 • Tel: 660.327.5125 • Fax: 660.327.5128 • TTY: Dial 7-1-1

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### **NEMO Workforce Development Board (WDB) Employer Engagement Committee Meeting November 9, 2020**

#### **Members Present**

Jim Kolve  
Julie Rodgers  
Donny Carroll  
Erin Dennis

#### **WDB Staff Present**

Diane Simbro  
Sharon Hillard

#### **Members Absent**

Steven Garner  
Glenn Eagan  
Lesa Barber  
Darin Arnsmeier  
Annette Sweet  
Mac Wilt  
Dennis Gill  
Michael Purol  
Shyla Brauch

#### **Guests Present**

Dana Keller  
Randy Lane  
Shari Schenewerk  
Sheree Prebe  
Chad Eggen  
Janet Hickey  
Kim Cull  
Erica Davis  
Mike Krauch  
Tammy De Los  
Sherri Henderson  
Amanda Rose  
Don Smith

### **CALL MEETING TO ORDER**

Jim Kolve called the NEMO WDB Employer Engagement Committee Meeting to order at approximately 1:05 pm. The meeting was conducted electronically through Zoom.

### **ROLL CALL**

Roll call was taken. Four Committee members were present and a quorum was established. Seventeen people were in attendance.

### **APPROVAL OF MINUTES AND AGENDA**

Donny Carroll moved to approve the Agenda and the August 10, 2020 Meeting Minutes. Julie Rogers seconded the motion and the motion was approved.

## **MICHAEL KRAUCH REGIONAL DIRECTOR NE REGION UNIVERSITY OF MO EXTENSION - PRESENTATION**

Michael talked about The University of Missouri Extension and Engagement Week 2020. The focus of the event was workforce development. They had 8 to 10 regional breakout sessions, and they were still digesting the information gathered. The goal was to begin a discussion of workforce issues so the Extension could figure out where it fits and how it might be able to provide leadership in some of the areas. Some of the regional workforce issues identified were:

- Declining populations
- Abandoned downtowns
- Skill sets (academic and soft skills) needed for the varying communities within the region
- Lack of entry level workers
- Lack of mid-level jobs
- Miss-match between workforce and available jobs
- Access issues: public transportation and internet/broadband

Michael said some of Missouri's larger communities were booming, while the more rural communities with less resources, were declining. He said committee members may want to explore the Extension's *All Things Missouri* mapping tool to see how individuals flow from one community to another. Michael said workforce development is a broad conversation and it's going to require partnerships across industry, government, education, private sector, non-profits and others to improve the situation. This will take a collaborative effort. No one group of people is going to be able to solve these issues. He felt the Extension could help by serving as a pivot point to bring folks into the conversation and move things forward. Folks need to figure out how to move from the conversation to action. He mentioned that a virtual *Creating Entrepreneurial Community Conference* was going to be held in Hannibal in 2021. The conference will be targeted toward decision and policy makers. He said our communities must build from within. Small business provides jobs and we need to discover how we can help our small businesses thrive. Creating entrepreneurships will be one part of that.

### **ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION – ALL ATTENDEES INVITED TO SHARE EVENTS, ETC.**

Diane said a youth focus group was being formed in the Hannibal area. They are working to put together a group of schools, counselors, etc. to address youth issues. She said the goal is to keep our youth in our communities and keep our communities growing.

Donny Carroll said the Extension conference was very interesting. He noted that he always stresses growing and strengthening our partnerships and this was stressed quite a bit at the conference. One of the things he heard mentioned during the session was getting into the high schools and starting at the sophomore level to identify the needs and prepare our youth for the workforce. Ranken Tech was discussed during the session as well, and he was enthusiastic to hear about all they have to offer.

Shari Schenewerk said Northeast Missouri has an extremely strong economic development group and they have been selected for a number of pilot projects with the state. They were instrumental in getting the broadband grant ready and rolled out for Missouri, and when the Cares Act funds became available, they were able to act quickly. They have great partnerships and they are working with the Extension, Workforce Development, the Workforce Development Boards, the chambers and others.

Shari said they had their first Childcare/Housing Committee meeting. Some communities are in need of market rate housing and the only way to get that is to do a housing study. This is very expensive so they are going to work together as a region to identify the needs. The study will include underemployed individuals. She said everyone would benefit from the study and individual communities would have the option to pay extra to get a more detailed study of their area. She added that the river ports from St. Louis to Iowa were working to see how they can market together to promote the interest in stop-off points for river cruises.

Shari said due to the pandemic, childcare has become an even greater barrier. They have three childcare expansions occurring in the northeast which is very expensive. They are looking at how to leverage state and local funds to offset the costs. There will be a Childcare meeting Friday, November 13<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am in Kirksville to discuss the issues and possible solutions. The meeting will be offered virtually as well and anyone interested was welcome to join.

Shari said there is a lot of projected activity and they are very busy with expansions and new company development. If everything goes as planned and they meet their job goal, 485 full-time jobs will be coming to the area. These jobs will pay 90% or higher county wage, and provide 50% or more of the health insurance premiums for their employees. She said we need to make sure we are ready. We need people who are interested in these jobs and we need to market them early. We are also going to need apprenticeships. Shari said we are on the right track and we have to work together.

Julie Rodgers said Ranken Tech opened bids for construction last week. Those contracts should be awarded soon and then construction would begin. The facility should be open in 2021 and they are working to connect their local employers to them. They were doing a lot of apprenticeships. Lincoln County has an aggressive re-entry program. They are working to start conversations with St. Charles Community College and they are working with their local education facilities to promote post-secondary education.

Chad Eggen said BRPC was working with some great partners including Julie at Lincoln County. He said they had done several entrepreneurship assessments but they always seem to miss the connection with the Extension. He would like to see some labor studies done that were inclusive of all the counties we know as the Northeast Region. Several had been done but they never seemed to match up with our region's boundaries. He would like to partner with the University to see if this could be developed. He added that the Cares Act funding provided the opportunity to work on a lot of projects and needs. The gap financing and reimbursements had been helpful to several struggling businesses. He said workforce would be an issue as they ramp up or expand because they have no bodies to be trained or no trained bodies available.

Don Smith said, as a Workforce Coordinator, he works to help individuals transition from companies that are downsizing or closing to companies that are growing or expanding. The work that Shari and Julie were doing was very important in this effort. He said the service industries in St. Louis City had taken a big hit and even though the unemployment rate had gone down to 6.9% we still have 700,000 people applying. We need to get this group retrained and get those skills gaps narrowed for the opportunities coming. Partnerships are very important in this effort and it's important that we all be on the same page and share the data so we can put the resources where they are most needed.

Jim said it has been reported that a COVID vaccine is going to be released as soon as it's approved by the FDA. However, this could be six months from now. It's a mystery as to how the government can support the airlines if they are forced to downsize. In addition, our service industries continue to have hundreds of thousands of people displaced.

Sherri Henderson, Local Veteran's Employment Representative St. Charles including the NE counties of Lincoln, Warren and Montgomery, said she's busy working with Incumbent Worker Apprenticeships, On-the-Job Training and a DOL Apprenticeship with Cat-5 Construction for a drilling operator position. She would like to explore how to engage our youth to participate in apprenticeship. She fears that if we don't engage the youth and others to participate in these apprenticeships, we aren't going to have any employers that are willing to participate. Diane agreed and said we need to put together a group to address this.

Janet Hickey said BRPC was busy preparing their first drive through event scheduled for November 17, 2020. They are also busy working with the schools and alternate schools on enrollments.

Erin Dennis, with Vocational Rehabilitation, said she was working on a state-wide "Increasing Median Wage" pilot project. The goal is to connect their candidates with some higher paying positions across MO. She said median wage for MO is \$17.33 per hour and she is struggling with finding employers that will pay this rate or have a career pathway leading to this wage. She said this would be a slow moving project, and she would appreciate any suggestions or warm handoffs to employers from the group.

Erica Davis said she was busy working with employers and job seekers providing employment and training services at Hannibal. Kim Cull added that they have been focusing on apprenticeships and they may have a couple of businesses interested.

Diane talked about a team that is working on a project called *Career Pathways to Success*. They are working with employers to put together videos demonstrating various careers to promote career pathways. These videos can be used as a part of the school curriculum or shown at various events, etc. to promote career opportunities to youth. Jim said creating the videos was a great idea. Kids don't consider what they don't know, and showing our local career opportunities may help to keep them in our area.

### **COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN REPORT**

Jim said about 70 new jobs are coming to Kirksville. He added that this is Apprenticeship Week and we have several new apprenticeships with a welding trainer located near Hwy 36. He said our number one issue for workforce is healthcare. The Healthcare Association met October 28 and discussed the shortage of healthcare workers exposed by COVID. COVID has also exposed the need for broadband for virtual healthcare. Jill Williams with the Hospital Association has been a tremendous asset in the battle to train up individuals for our healthcare system. Diane will be following up with the Scotland County Hospital to help market positions for them.

Jim said the second workforce issue is manufacturing. Through COVID, 91% of our manufacturing facilities found out that they are essential businesses. A survey of the COVID impact on manufacturing revealed that people are realizing that we should be making more of our products in the U.S. and they are beginning to realize the value of manufacturing in our rural areas.

Jim said our third workforce issue was transportation. In a recent study, Missouri's infrastructure was rated a C-. If we are going to become a major hub for transportation, we need to work on this and it will be expensive.

Regarding agriculture, Jim said Mike White did an excellent report. The report identified the many jobs provided in agriculture and the need to be skilling up our workforce for those opportunities. Jim said our regional food manufactures were instrumental in feeding America through this COVID crisis and they were successful in keeping their workers safe.

Jim said Economic Development, Broadband Developers and the USDA would be meeting tomorrow from 10-12:00 to discuss *Broadband Development Grant* opportunities. He said we have done a good job at getting some of that money but we needed more. He said 90 million kids in America don't have adequate internet access.

### **BUILDING A STRATEGY FOR EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT**

- Step 1 – Define Strength/Weaknesses (Completed)
- Step 2 – Define the Skills Gap for Local Employers (Completed)
- Step 3 – Define the Training Needs of Employers and Who Will Deliver the Training

Diane said Steps 1 and 2 had been completed and Step 3, *Defining the Training Needs of Employers and Who Will Deliver the Training*, would be a continuous discussion we would all be working toward.

### **UPDATE ON DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

Shari Schenewerk said Economic Development has been playing an active role during the pandemic in terms of trying to figure out what's needed. The Department reached out to partners before the Cares Act Grant programs went out and our local partners had a lot to say about how those funds were distributed. Starting this week \$50 million is being rolled out in small business grants, non-profit grants and family farm grants. They are also staying in close contact with the major businesses across the state to provide information regarding COVID to ensure that these businesses have access to required PPE. She noted that 50 MO companies were now making PPE supplies. She said a website is being developed that includes links to resources for businesses. This should be approved soon and she would send the link to the group. Their goal is to be proactive regarding possible outbreaks. Information regarding businesses requesting assistance is confidential. Shari said our businesses are doing a great job in keeping people healthy and employed and they do not deserve any negative press if something were to happen.

### **NEXT MEETING DATE AND LOCATION**

The next Employer Engagement Committee meeting was scheduled for January 18, 2021.

### **ADJOURN**

Don Smith moved that the meeting be adjourned. Erin Dennis seconded the motion and the meeting at approximately 2:30 pm.