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Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board
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LEONARD G. TOWNES

Commissioner, Westchester County Department of Social Services

THOM KLEINER

Executive Director, Westchester-Putnam Workforce Development Board

September 17, 2025 Board Meeting Minutes

I. Roll Call

Members Present: Thom Kleiner, Larry Gottlieb, Paul Greci, David Singer, Allison Madison, Robert Sanders, Rachel Adler, Jason Chapin,

Staff Present: Sonda Norris, Mary Skirchak, OJ Yizar, Elizabeth Oliveto, Emily Bender, Linda McKinzie-Daugherty, Marie Daley, Elizabeth Wilde, Cheryl Washington

Also Present: Fred Bruck (Marketing), Sherry Bruck

Absent/Excused:

II. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by David Singer.

III. Voting Items

A. Approval of Minutes – June 16 Regular Workforce Meeting

The agenda incorrectly listed this as an Executive Committee meeting. The minutes to be approved are from the June 16 Regular Workforce Meeting. No discussion. Motion carried to advance to the full Board.

B. Youth RFPs: YEP (January–June) and WDAY Year-Round Program

The Youth Employment Program (YEP) and WDAY year-round RFPs were properly issued by Liz Oliveto and the Youth team. Programs are in various stages of receipt, evaluation, and award. Retroactive Board approval is required. No questions from members. Motion carried to advance both items to the full Board.

C. PY24–25 Budget

Thom presented on behalf of Wiley Harrison, who was unavailable. Sonda and Mary prepared a comprehensive multi-page budget detailing fund sources, revenue, and PY24 vs PY25 comparisons.

Key discussion points:

- Dislocated Worker allocation decreased approximately 4.6 percent due to improved unemployment rates.
- Adult increased around 19 percent; Youth increased approximately 17 to 18 percent.
- Thom is seeking additional clarity from NYSDOL regarding the fluctuations.

Paul asked why two funding lines were reduced to zero. Sonda explained:

- “DLW Transfer to Adult” reflects a local transfer based on program need, not a state-level cut.
- “Training and Support Services” was tied to a special grant requiring 80 percent fund investment; that grant expired.

Larry recommended preparing scenario-planning models for potential federal funding cuts, led by Wiley.

Motion carried to advance the PY24–25 Budget to the full Board.

IV. Discussion Items

A. Federal Funding and Potential Cuts

Thom noted:

- The House version of WIOA funding includes devastating cuts.
- The Senate version does not align with the House.
- No conclusions can yet be drawn until the conference committee process advances.
- County leadership estimates federal impacts to Westchester could reach tens of millions in unrelated departmental areas, with indirect implications for WPWDB.

Members agreed scenario planning is needed once Congress finalizes federal allocations.

B. Grant Development and Capacity Constraints

Sonda reported:

- Four major grants have been submitted this year (WIOA Wider Grant, Pathway Home, Ready, RETI).
- Another clean energy grant is being written for November.
- Most available grants are now state-level and small.
- Federal reentry grants are declining.

- Internal staffing capacity limits the ability to manage additional grants; most new grants would need to be fully vendor-operated due to insufficient staffing.

C. Clean Energy Workforce Partnerships

Thom detailed ongoing collaboration with BCW, Sustainable Westchester, and the Clean Energy Coalition on:

- A regional training provider inventory.
- A clean energy employer contact list.
- Coordination for RETI and other clean energy training grants.

The Healthy Home program in Brewster (GCREW Grant) is included as a partner.

D. Career Center Operations and DSS Work Requirements

Sonda updated the Committee on significant operational changes:

- Federal SNAP/ABAWD waivers have been removed.
- DSS expects an increase in customers needing work requirements, job readiness, computer literacy training, and workshops.
- DSS staffing has dropped from five Office Workforce Assistants to two.
- Career Center staff will need to absorb additional workload beginning in November.
- Sonda is analyzing the budget to avoid compromising WIOA customers while assisting DSS.

Elizabeth recommended engaging Yonkers and Putnam Career Centers to share the workload since they are part of the network and receive WPWDB funding.

Members agreed this is an excellent recommendation.

E. Labor Market Concerns and AI Displacement

Members discussed early indicators that:

- Healthcare hiring may slow due to sector consolidation.
- AI is rapidly displacing entry-level occupations across industries.
- Training programs may need reevaluation to align with future entry-level job availability.
- A conversation with healthcare system leaders is needed to anticipate workforce shifts in 1–5 years.

V. Marketing Report

Sherry Bruck presented the May 1 through August 31 Marketing Report.

Key Highlights:

- 16 e-blasts distributed (10 focused on job seekers, 6 focused on employers).
- Average employer open rate remains strong at 44 percent.
- Job seeker registrations increased to 360 for the period, averaging 90 per month.
- Social media followers increased on all platforms except X/Twitter; a verified account subscription is being considered.
- Significant press coverage was achieved through Today Media, Skills Magazine, 914 Ink, and others.
- Clean energy program photography and storytelling have generated strong public engagement.
- A redesign of the One-Stop website is underway with the County IT team.
- Billboard advertising options are being assessed, particularly along the Hutchinson River Parkway.

Sherry estimated that the four-month marketing output equates to \$70,000 in advertising value, based on AI-assisted benchmarking.

Larry commended the depth and quality of the marketing work and recommended cultivating relationships with Latino/Hispanic media outlets.

VI. Additional Items

Thom reminded members that coffee and light refreshments will be available at the Career Center for tomorrow's hybrid Board Meeting at 8:30 a.m.

VII. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was made by Allison Madison and seconded by Paul Grenci. The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:30 a.m.

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