

Durham Workforce Development Board of Directors Meeting

May 27, 2021

Members and Staff Present: **Members and Staff Present:** Chair Paul Grantham, Scott McGregor, Wade Smedley, Michael Dombeck, Henry McCoy, Jr., Nicole Thompson, Ernie Mills, Jeffrey Frederick, Rebecca Axford, George Hining, Gregory Bellamy, Kenneth Angeli, Geoff Durham, Julie Pack, Roger Shumate, Councilmember DeDreana Freeman, Commissioner Nimasheena Burns, Commissioner Nida Allam

Staff: Executive Director Andre Pettigrew, Deputy Director Adria Graham Scott, Jennifer Fox, Russell Ingram, James Dickens, Courtney McCollum, Chuk Manning, Sandra Lassiter, Tony Carrington; Eckerd Connects: Matt Fields, Terry Johnson, Yolanda Chisolm

Guests Present: Susan Amey (Discover Durham), Cara Rousseau (Discover Durham)

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Paul Grantham. This being his last official meeting as Board Chairman, Mr. Grantham expressed his thanks and gratitude to the Board for their support, hard work, and dedication as members of the Board, as well as his honor in serving with them over the past years. He also announced the following two nominations for new Board officers: Jeffery Fredrick to serve as the new Board Chair and Rebecca Axford to serve as the new Board Vice Chair.

Andre Pettigrew echoed the comments made by Adria Graham Scott prior to the official call to order of the meeting. He informed the Board that he has been speaking with members of the City Council about the Durham Workforce Development Board and has received their full support. He praised the current Board as stewards of the great work that has been done in laying the groundwork towards the City's workforce strategy.

Mr. Pettigrew acknowledged the following outgoing Board members for their commitment to the Board and the Durham workforce system and presented them with awards of appreciation in recognition of their work while serving on the Board:

- George Hining
- Wade Smedley
- Steven Williams
- Paul Grantham

Mr. Pettigrew shared with the Board his opinion, from his vast experience in workforce development systems across the country, that "there literally is no better community in America to raise kids that can have a great education, job and career than in Durham County."

The next order of business was the formal nomination and approval of each of the following 2021-2022 DWDB officers:

- Jeff Frederick – Chair
- Rebecca Axford – Vice Chair

In an official vote, each nominee was unanimously accepted and approved by the Board. Secretary and Treasurer nominations will be presented at a later time.

The Board also approved recommendations for the following new DWDB members to fill Durham Workforce Development Board seats effective July 1, 2021:

- Elaine Madison of Duke University to fill a Business Sector seat
- Kevin Griffin of Avant Group to fill a Small Business seat

Susan Amey, President and CEO of Discover Durham and Cara Rousseau, also of Discover Durham were present at the meeting as invited guests to discuss the “Pandemic Impact on Hospitality Trends in Durham.” Their presentation informed the Board that the hospitality sector supports nearly 13,000 jobs throughout Durham, and they discussed the impact of COVID over the hospitality sector. They shared with the Board an overview of a data report regarding sales during the past year showing that the hospitality industry has been the hardest hit with 74.5 percent of overall job losses in North Carolina. Ms. Amey noted that nearly 13,000 jobs throughout Durham are in the hospitality sector and commended the Board for the work it does in workforce development throughout the City, particularly in the area of hospitality.

Ms. Rousseau provided an overview of a Hospitality Employer Survey, which revealed the following information about today’s hospitality industry:

- employers are receiving a lot of “ghost” applications from people who have to check the box that they’re job seeking in order to keep their unemployment benefits active;
- more than half of open positions in hospitality are paying more than \$13/hr;
- a benefit to employment in hospitality is that it is an accessible industry that does not require a college degree;
- employers are in urgent need of workers but people are not applying for the jobs; and
- 43 percent of jobs in hospitality are employed by people of color.

Ms. Amey expressed her desire for Discover Durham to participate in a job fair with the Durham Workforce Development Board. General discussion ensued, including about how the Board could better help small businesses downtown and throughout Durham. It was noted that Durham employers are concerned about getting bad reviews on their businesses due to the shortage of employees who are still expected to provide the same level of adequate services to customers. Mr. Pettigrew shared that he is looking forward to working with this sector and that working with Discover Durham was a good sector strategy and a great opportunity to work with an industry leader.

Jennifer Fox presented a DWDB Social Media Overview and demonstrated how social media is a great way of amplifying messages through digital communication. DWDB’s website may be a central place where we want to drive people; it can be used as a referral strategy. In addition to its website, DWDB’s digital/social media platforms include Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, Linked In, Hashtags that make it easier to search for a content, and At Mention which works well with larger followings. The Board’s Marketing Committee will improve on best practices in social media for DWDB. It is important to have consistency with messaging,

keeping up with relevant content, being personable, using hashtags, and being strategic about the time we post on platforms. Ms. Fox suggested that it is important to continue to learn about these networks and for the Board to have a Technology Subcommittee. An email will be sent with all social media accounts as a follow up to this information. Board members were presented with four action items: (1) follow all DWDB social media accounts; (2) encourage colleagues to follow accounts; (3) if your organization has any accounts, please have administrator follow our pages; and (4) share our posts and help get our message out into the community.

Updates on Goals and Priorities for 2021-2023

Marketing and Communications Subcommittee/presented by Jennifer Fox

Goal 1. Enhance exposure and awareness of the DWDB Board and workforce services by (a) interacting with churches and faith-based organizations, community groups, and participating in events with other organizations; (b) distributing information within DPS about jobs; and (c) displaying “Define Your Future” posters throughout the schools and other sites.

Goal 2. Foster relationships between DWDB and businesses

Goal 3. Expand the Board’s social media following and messaging

Youth Council Report/presented by Rebecca Axford

Goal 1. Equity

Goal 2. Expand outreach in the community

Goal 3. Expand engagement in the community

Goal 4. Reward

Ms. Axford encouraged Board members to serve on a Board subcommittee if they are not already doing so, and to engage in speaking or mentorship opportunities with the Youth Council.

NCWorks Career Center Subcommittee Report/presented by Michael Dombeck

Goal 1. Handling day-to-day activities with customers (How can the Board help and get word out about the Center to the community and private sector?)

Goal 2. Publicizing services

Goal 3. Providing customer support in this new virtual environment

Goal 4. Maintaining staff and clients safely in this covid environment

Business Services Subcommittee Report/presented by George Hining

Goal 1: Focus on Ambassador Program led by Nicole Thompson

Goal 2: Refine and enhance current infrastructure

Mr. Hining announced that Nicole Thompson will be assuming the lead for the Business Services Subcommittee.

Mr. Grantham closed by reiterating his honor and pleasure to have served as chair of the Board, and the official meeting of the Board was adjourned.