

SWWDB – WORKFORCE SERVICES COMMITTEE

October 19, 2005

MINUTES

3:00 to 5:00 p.m.

Mr. Finley, Chairperson

The SWWDB Workforce Services Committee met on Wednesday, October 19, 2005. Attendance was as follows:

Members Present:	Dr. Gary Albrecht	Ms. Jennifer James-Baker
	Mr. Jon Angeli	Mr. Geoff Upperton
	Mr. Jim Finley	Mr. Bruce Palzkill
	Ms. Cindy Harrington	
Members Excused:	Ms. Amy Banicki	Dr. Eric Larson
	Mr. James Bond	Mr. Steve Scaccia
	Mr. Charles Elliott	Mr. James Otterstein
	Mr. Ken Hendricks	Mr. Tom Hogan
	Mr. Eugene Releford	Ms. Regina Prude
	Mr. Larry Rentfro	
Guests:	Lori Rhead, Beloit College & Blackhawk Human Resources Association	Nancy Forbeck, Beloit Chamber of Commerce
	Steve Huth, Janesville School District	Greg Quam, Platteville School District
	Hal Roach, Rock County Juvenile Court Advisor Board	
Staff Present:	Dr. Robert Borremans	Ms. Barb Tucker
	Ms. Shannon Moe	Ms. Annette Meudt

Dr. Borremans called the meeting to order at 3:10 p.m. for Mr. Finley who arrived shortly after the beginning of the meeting. Dr. Borremans introduced Ms. Barb Tucker who was recently hired as the Director of Program Operations.

1. **Presentation on Workforce Readiness Issues and School District Programs Related to Workforce Preparation** – (Information/Discussion)

Dr. Borremans indicated that the agenda for this meeting is different compared previous WSC meetings. Throughout the spring and summer, SWWDB staff has been involved in a number of meetings with a variety of groups addressing issues related to workforce readiness, collaboration with the secondary school system and programs for individuals with special needs. A recurring theme consistent in all of these meetings is, that employers are finding it increasingly difficult to find workers who possess basic job and workforce skills – i.e. good work ethic, reporting to work consistently and on time, good basic skills (communications, math and writing skills), ability to interact positively with other employees and good judgment and initiative. Employers are expressing frustration finding and keeping workers who have a basic understanding of what it means to be a “good employee.”

The WSC has asked at previous committee meetings for more information about activities provided by the school systems. The school systems operate a number of different programs intended to help students understand the "world of work". School districts are trying to make the connection between education and work, but faced with a growing number of regulatory mandates, and increasing financial restrictions and budgetary limitations, it is becoming increasingly more difficult for schools to deliver these programs without the active support and participation of local employers. Many employers want to help, but are unaware of the needs or how to provide assistance.

Therefore the focus of the meeting was on workforce readiness issues and the programs school districts are offering to connect education and work. Five agencies were invited and presented information from their perspective:

- Hal Roach, representing the Rock County Juvenile Court Advisory Board (RCJCAB) – RCJCAB is group of citizens working with the juvenile court system in Rock County to help at risk youth. RCJCAB, through an affiliate organization called “Partners in Prevention”, recently conducted a one-day conference titled Youth-at-Risk Comprehensive Assessment. More than 170 people from the area attended. SWWDB and the Rock County Job Center were the major sponsor of the conference. Mr. Roach explained the RCJCAB, noting that job opportunities and transportation identified as the major barriers for at-risk youth.
- Steve Huth, representing Janesville School District – Janesville Schools have been involved in a number of programs intended to bridge from school to work. He provided a brief summary of several workforce related programs offered through the schools (Enclosure 1 – on file). There are also a variety of programs that work with at-risk students or students with special needs. The schools also operate technical skills programs – like Project Lead the Way – that are intended to help students prepare to enter technical career training programs. Janesville Schools are involved in Project Lead the Way as well as collaborating with other community agencies to respond to the needs of at-risk and special needs students. Mr. Huth stated that there are 64 schools in the State of Wisconsin who offer the Project Lead the Way program. Janesville Schools have also been involved in discussions on workforce readiness through the Forward Janesville Education Committee.
- Greg Quam, representing the Platteville School District – Platteville Schools also operate a number of programs intended to help students transition from school to work and provide specific assistance to at-risk youth. They also are delivering instruction through Project Lead the Way. Mr. Quam stated that the goal of the Project Lead the Way, is to prepare students for Technological Programs not just Engineering students. He added that the Platteville School District offers a test, either in a paper or on-line format, entitled “NACHTI Test”, which measures workforce readiness.
- Nancy Forbeck, representing the Beloit Area Chamber of Commerce (BACC) – Due to growing concerns from Beloit area employers, the BACC has formed a subcommittee to examine workforce readiness issues. BACC, which is represented on the BHRA subcommittee, has heard from its members many of the same concerns BHRA has identified with workforce readiness. The BACC has been meeting to discuss how to address these concerns. Ms. Forbeck stated that the BACC is partnering with Forward Janesville to address issues facing at-risk youth. Mr. Upperton stated that employers are not offering enough Apprenticeship Programs, and felt that there is a real need for them.
- Lori Rhead, representing Blackhawk Human Resources Association (BHRA) – BHRA is an organization of human resource professionals representing employers throughout Rock County. In addition to other projects, BHRA has formed a subcommittee on workforce readiness that has been meeting to discuss ways to improve the readiness of the local workforce. Ms. Rhead stated that their statistics are showing that supervisors are spending 80% of their time with 20% of the workforce. Youth are entering the workforce without the basic soft (employability) skills. Ms. Rhead explained that the BHRA is partnering with the Blackhawk Technical College to write for grant funds to offer a Pilot Project with Soft Skill Initiatives. Ms. James-Baker stated that she would be very excited about this type of initiative, because her business deals with employees lacking soft skills.

Dr. Borremans thanked the presenters and stated that these are important issues that SWWDB should consider when implementing programming for the next program planning year. Workforce readiness should also be considered as SWWDB implements the GROW Wisconsin funding

initiatives.

2. **Other Business**

No other business was discussed.

3. **Adjournment**

Mr. Palzkill moved and Dr. Albrecht seconded the motion to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously. Mr. Finley adjourned the meeting at 4.55 p.m. The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 18, 2006.