

**West Central Workforce Development Board Minutes
April 8, 2021**

TEAMS Meeting

WDB members present: Kathryn Baxter, Jonathan Bibb, Karen Breashears, Clayton Caldwell, Aleah Davis, Kelli Embry, Neil Golden, Jimmy Hart, Karen Hofford, Tammy Passafiume, Bill Weston, and Scott White

WDB members absent: Greg Black, Larry Carr, Louisa Daniels, Bridget Glover, Steve Hubbard, Mike Lipton, Margot McLeod, Alan Nolan, Dr. Lewis Shepherd, Jr.,

WCAPDD staff present: Margaret Dearmon, David Moore and Dwayne Pratt

Guests: Bill Allison, Dawn Fitch, Andy Hightower, Tom Pittman, Lori Strumpf

Mr. Weston declared a quorum and called the meeting to order at 10:34 a.m. Mr. Weston asked Mr. Moore to take roll call.

Mr. Weston gave the invocation.

Agenda Item 1 – Chair Comments - ACTION

Mr. Weston directed members' attention to the unofficial minutes of the February 11, 2021 meeting. He asked if there were any additions or changes to the minutes. **Hearing none, a motion to accept the February 11, 2021 minutes, as presented, was made by Ms. Breashears, seconded by Ms. Embry.** Mr. Weston stated that in order to save time, Mr. Moore was going to combine the roll call for approving the minutes and the excused absences. Mr. Weston said that the following people asked to be excused from the meeting today, Bridgett Glover, Louisa Daniels and Dr. Louis Shepherd, Jr. Mr. Moore stated that there were a few more members who requested to be excused. He said that Alan Nolan is on the Statewide Partner Meeting and Mr. Carr is out of town. **Ms. Breashears would like to amend her motion not to only accept the minutes, but also the excused absences, seconded by Ms. Embry. Mr. Moore took roll call from each member the motion carried unanimously with none opposed.**

Mr. Weston said the next agenda item were the budgets. Mr. Weston said that we have underutilized this year, but after talking with David, we have another 14 months to use these funds. Mr. Moore stated that we had three other grants and due to the staff involvement in those grants, a lot of their time was charged to those grants instead of the formula money. This caused us to be a little behind on our normal expenditures. Mr. Weston asked if there were any questions or concerns on the budgets, there were none.

Agenda Item 2 – Informational

Mr. Weston introduce the One Stop Operator and the Monitor, Mr. Andy Hightower and Lori Strumpf of Hightower Initiatives LLC. Mr. Weston turned the floor over to Mr. Hightower. Mr. Hightower gave a little background on himself. He has been in the public policy arena for 20 years. My most recently years, through 2019 he was at the Kentucky Education and Workforce Development Cabinet where he was the senior policy advisor and the point person for WIOA implementation in Kentucky. For the last year, I have been teaming up with Lori to bring better workforce service within in the WIOA structure to a few local boards throughout the country. Lori brings 35 years of experience. She has been through all the various acronyms of workforce in the history, and she has a lot of one stop operations experience as well, in places throughout the country from Maryland, Virginia, California and Washington state. Together, we just want to help West central Arkansas become the best workforce area in the state and the best workforce area in

the country. Mr. Hightower turned the floor over to Ms. Strumpf. Ms. Strumpf stated that they are partnering together in the particular engagement as the One Stop Operator, as Andy said. She stated that she is currently, singularly, the One Stop Systems Operator for three One Stop areas at the moment. We work with the local boards to do strategic planning and all those things. We are just excited to begin this engagement. Ms. Strumpf said that her and Andy just wanted to introduce ourselves. She turned it over to Mr. Hightower to ask a few questions to the board. Mr. Hightower said they have been to the Hot Springs and Russellville and met with the partner leadership in each center and saw how they were operating and begin what we call an environmental scan, which is a fancy term for gathering information in an organized way. We got to talk with Larry and had a lot of conversation David and Margaret. We are trying to figure out both the state of things as they are and the ambition of the board and the staff of where they want to go and what they think services should look like. We have taken that information and created a list of what we call emerging processes. We are going to take that back to the leadership teams this month to both prioritize them and put the tasks together that are going to take from where we are to accomplishing those goals and put a timeframe on them, so we have a real strategic plan of action of how we get from where we are to where we want to go. Mr. Hightower summarized their early interactions, it is no different than any other workforce area in the country, in the sense of we can add some tools of communications and facilitate communications among partners to better bridge what WIOA is looking for in terms of leveraging the partner services and build seamless services. We got to talk to Larry, and he got to tell us about the West Central area. We touched on the fact that there seems to be deemphasis on career and technical education in the post-secondary area. How the pandemic has affected services and affected employers in the area. Mr. Hightower opened the floor to see what are the things you see are big locally and what you would like to see from us address as the one stop operator. Discussion followed. Mr. Hightower and Ms. Strumpf discussed the timeframe of submitting their reports to the board, which will be every other month.

Mr. Weston thanked Mr. Hightower and Ms. Strumpf for joining and that we look forward to working with you on this in the future.

Mr. Weston said the next agenda item is for open discussion of any local communities that board member would like to bring up. Mr. Moore said he would like to thank Andy and Lori because, if you remember we had to go out of RFP for a 2nd time for One Stop Operator. They applied for One Stop Operator and Monitoring Services. They came in on March 1st and the program is over June 30th, so they have a whole years' worth of work to do a in short time span. They have really opened my eyes just to some questions. They have been very professional, and they have been great to work with. He said he would just like to thank them both.

Mr. Weston adjourned the meeting at 11:02 a.m., on a motion made by Judge Hart, seconded by Ms. Baxter.



William "Bill" Weston, Acting Chairman

6-24-21

Date