



**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

*Supporting the Development and Retention of a World Class Workforce*

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director

Carl A Donato Jr., Chair

**ABILITIES COMMITTEE  
MEETING MINUTES  
THURSDAY, APRIL 11, 2024 (ZOOM)**

**ATTENDANCE**

COMMITTEE INFORMATION AND ATTENDANCE										
Name	Organization	Trustee Member	12-Oct-23	9-Nov-23	7-Dec-23	11-Jan-24	8-Feb-24	14-Mar-24	11-Apr-24	
Askie-Rosario, Andrea	CC Commission for the Blind			X	X	X		X		
Aston, Arthur	Build Jake's Place								X	
Bowan, Jennifer	The Arc of Camden County					X	X	X		
Cirri, Frank	Camden County One-Stop	✓	X	X		X	X	X	X	
<b>Donato, Carl, Chair</b>	Wawa	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Forman, Lois	Jewish Family & Children's Service		X	X		X		X		
Fugee, Antoinette	Cooper University Healthcare		X					X		
Galvin, Tim	Cooper University Healthcare									
Gregory, GERALYN	Wawa			X						
Heaney, Melissa	JFCS w/Project Search									
Hoban, Colette	Lenape Regional High School Dist./Project Search				X			X	X	
Kaur, Nimit	Camden County Health Dept.					X				
Lavarin, Esther	CC Commission for the Blind								X	
Lucas, Angela	JEVS HireAbility				X					
McClintock, Monica	Rowan University		X	X		X	X		X	
Page-Soncrant, Jeanne	NJDOL - Business Rep.		X	X	X		X	X	X	
Perez, Irene	NJDVRS		X	X		X	X		X	
Rizzi, Stephanie	M & T Bank				X		X			
Scott, Jessica	The Arc of Camden County		X	X						
Starcher, Connie	Wawa			X						
Storm, Jeanne, Vice Chair	American Water		X	X	X		X	X	X	
Stubbs, Andrea	Gloucester Township			X						
Tyndell, Maurice	Bestworks Industries			X				X	X	
Weinberg, Oriel	Jewish Family & Children's Service			X						
Wikiera, Erik	Wawa			X	X					
Gutbezah, Maayan	WDB Staff				X	X	X	X		
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB Staff		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Vaughn, Debra	WDB Staff		X	X		X	X	X	X	

**WELCOME**

Carl Donato, Committee Chair, greeted the attendees and called the meeting to order at 8:35 AM.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Carl asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the March 14, 2024 meeting. Motion was made by Lois Forman, seconded by Monica McClintock. With a majority vote to the affirmative, the motion carried and the minutes for the meeting held on March 14, 2024 were approved.

**COMMITTEE DISCUSSION**

Carl Donato, Chair

- Carl opened with comments about the Pathways to Possibilities event.
  - The mayors of Clementon and Gibbsboro and the Clementon Memorial Library Trustees have been invited to attend.
  - Lois Forman asked if there would be any new coverage of the event. Frank mentioned meeting with Deputy County Administrator James Rhodes and that the flyer has been distributed to him and Dan Keashen.
  - Jeanne Page-Soncrant offered to broadcast the event flyer to Camden County residents, and to share the event on the DOL calendar.
  - The event expenses have been provided for by Atlantic City Electric. Wawa will provide pretzels, and water will be purchased.



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- Commissioner Jonathan Young will not be available to attend but other trades resources will be invited.
- Carl proposed an in-person Abilities Committee meeting for June, prior to a recess for the month of July.

**COMMITTEE UPDATES**

Esther Lavarin, NJDOL Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired

- Esther introduced herself to the committee as the new Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Coordinator, managing the statewide unit, which consists of the deaf-blind, transition, and college units.

Jeanne Storm, American Water

- American Water is utilizing an AI assistant (Brooke), which has freed up some time by scheduling appointments and meetings. Today is "Inclusion Day." American Water is observing and participating in local Diversity Equity and Inclusion (DEI) events and attending meetings with the DEI group, which is providing data on the corporation's progress in those areas. A new hire for the Customer Care Unit is visually impaired and will begin training with a coach in the next week. In April, participants will be put through a simulation of what an applicant would do to apply at American Water, step by step.
- Next Tuesday, Jeanne Storm will be meeting with Jeanne Page-Soncrant, Irene Perez (DVRS) and Andrea Aski-Rosario (Commission for the Blind & Visually Impaired) to discuss hosting an event in October that highlights the abilities of people with disabilities.

Maurice Tyndell, Bestwork Industries for the Blind

- Bestwork Industries has approximately 85 visually impaired or blind employees who work in the textile manufacturing lines and recently started a document scanning/imaging line that is completely run by four visually impaired employees. They also have an e-commerce site that offers janitorial supplies and more.

Jeanne Page-Soncrant, NJDOL

- Business Services has been busy, averaging about three recruitments a month and attending local job fairs, in addition to focusing on the youth initiative and veteran services.
- April is "Second Chance Month." Jeanne is working on ways to support resources for people seeking opportunities for re-entry in the job market after incarceration. Frank offered Sharon Bean's contact information. Jeanne stated that the Rutgers Jobs Program won the DOL's contract to provide services for ex-offenders and she will be working on an event planned for June. On April 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Probation Division is hosting a career and resource event for re-entry applicants at its Cherry Hill office.
- Irene inquired about the referral process for re-entry to the Rutgers Jobs Program, and Jeanne offered to provide contact information for Lydia Ramsey (Rutgers JOBS program, supporting reentry workforce). She also noted that the State has a program for any employer who has a concern about being able to bond an employee.

Colette Hoban, Lenape Regional High School

- Colette works as a skills trainer for TD Bank's Project Search. Lenape Regional High School has students in the program age 18 to 22 who are learning transferrable work skills before seeking work in the community.



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- On April 25<sup>th</sup>, there will be a “reverse job fair” at TD University. Students will be behind the table, and the employers come to question them in preparation for real-life interviews. Jeff asked Colette to send a flyer to the WDB to circulate regarding this event, and Collette said that she would do so.
  - Carl commented that this Friday, there will be a mock interview event at the Yale School.

Arthur Aston, Executive Director, Build Jake’s Place

- Carl introduced Arthur to the committee:
  - Executive Director/Spokesperson for Build Jakes Place, a non-profit organization that creates inclusive play spaces for people of every ability and the General Manager for Camden County, NJ Miracle League. Build Jake’s Place currently has 2 playgrounds, in Cherry Hill and Delran, and is consulting on building 7 new playgrounds in New Jersey.
  - The Camden County Miracle League is a baseball league for children and adults of all ages. The league’s games are played on Saturdays for 8 weeks in the Spring and 6 weeks in the Fall. The Spring season opens on Saturday, April 17<sup>th</sup> at 101 Old Bortons Mill Road in Cherry Hill (Boundless Field).

Monica McClintock, Tri-State HRMA,

- On May 2<sup>nd</sup>, Tri-State HRMA will hold its 37<sup>th</sup> annual conference at the Weston Hotel in Mt. Laurel. The theme of the event is “Laugh and Learn.”
  - The afternoon keynote presentation will be "Happiness at Work - The New Power Play for Success" by comedian-turned coach, Shereen Thor.
  - Tri-State’s 2023-2024 “Charity of the Year” is BookSmiles.
- Carl and Jeff will represent the CCWDB and the Abilities Committee.

Lois Forman, Jewish Family and Children’s Services

- Jewish Family and Children’s Services is having their annual “Stepping Out” fundraising event at 6:30 tonight at Congregation Beth El in Voorhees. In addition to the evening’s festivities, Joyful Noise, a singing group of individuals with disabilities, will perform and brief video presentations will be shared.
- On May 10<sup>th</sup>, there will be a vocational breakfast for JFCS’s supported employment clients who have been successfully employed. The employers and employees will be recognized for their work. The event will take place from 8:00 AM to 10:00 AM. Lois will send out the flyer for this event as well.
- The JFCS continues to offer its job board to post opportunities and provide family assistance to people in need of employment assistance.

Irene Perez, NJ DOL DVRS

- DVRS held 2 well-attended targeted hiring events for people with disabilities in April. During the events, presentations were scheduled for several employers.
- This year, the DVRS will focus on promoting paid internships.
  - Five contractors were awarded grants and will receive referrals for clients.
  - This summer, some clients will be placed at food banks that participate as vendors.
- The Business Outreach Unit has developed a NJDVRS Paid Internship Policy. NJDVRS pays 100% salary for up to 6-8 weeks. The goal is to assist recently trained individuals or clients that have not worked for 3 years and need work experience to enhance their resumé.



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Frank Ciri, Local Area Director, Camden County One-Stop

- Sanctions for SNAP and TANF clients in NJ have been reinstated. The waiver for employment activity has been lifted and activity at the One-Stop will increase as a result. Approximately 125 TANF clients were referred to the One-Stop for services and 35 are now enrolled in programs.
- The One-Stop GED testing center is averaging 45 people per month. Approximately 35 to 40 people have received their high school diploma per month since September.
- On May 17<sup>th</sup> and September 13<sup>th</sup>, the One-Stop will be a gold sponsor for job fairs at the Cherry Hill Mall from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM. The flyer will be distributed when it is available.
- The One-Stop will be launching its new outreach program through print media, social media ads, PATCO ads, a bilingual radio ad for a Spanish speaking radio station in Camden, and others.

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director, Camden County Workforce Development Board

- WDB staff are scheduled or have attended a number of career/job fairs at local high schools.
- The WDB has been awarded the grant for this year's Summer Youth Work Experience Program (formerly the Summer Youth Employment Program).
  - Applications for interns and work-learn sites are now available online.
  - There are 50 intern slots to be filled for the program.
  - Applicants must be Camden County residents ages 16 to 24.
  - The program begins on June 24<sup>th</sup> and runs for 8 weeks.
- The Camden County WDB was the first local area to submit its completed, signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Infrastructure Funding Agreement (IFA) to the State.
- One proposal for the One-Stop Operator Procurement is being graded. The Procurement Task Force will then submit its recommendation for the One-Stop Operator for final approval.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Carl asked for a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Frank Ciri and seconded by Jeanne Page-Soncrant. The motion was carried with a majority vote to the affirmative and the meeting was adjourned at 9:38 AM.

**NEXT MEETING**

The next Abilities Committee meeting is scheduled for Thursday, May 9, 2024 at 8:30 AM. The meeting will be conducted via Zoom.

Submitted by,

Debra Vaughn

Assistant to the Executive Director