



Supporting the Development and Retention of a World Class Workforce

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director

Matthew Verney, Board Chair

LITERACY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 14, 2021
ZOOM MEETING

ATTENDANCE – LITERACY COMMITTEE

MEMBERS		4-Apr-21	4-May-21	1-Jun-21	6-Jul-21	3-Aug-21	14-Sep-21
Brahl, Ken CHAIR	Ravitz Family Shoprites	X	X		X	X	X
Patti Beach	Learning Link, Camden County One-Stop Career Center	X		X	X	X	
Cirii, Frank	Local Area Operations Director, Camden County One Stop	X	X		X	X	X
Dann, Carol	Hopeworks Camden		X			X	X
Daunoras, Heidi	Pine Hill School District	X		X	X	X	X
Druce, Jennifer	Camden County Library			X			
Fugee, Antoinette	Center for Family Services, Inc.						
Hill, Lauren Dr.	Camden County College	X			X	X	X
Kalitan, Marlyn Vice Chair	Kalitan Consulting	X	X	X	X	X	
Knopf, Dick	Marketing Professional Services	X	X		X		X
Martin, John	Rotary Club					X	
Mitchell, Danielle	RobinsNest Inc						
Strobl, Holly	Council Women, Clementon Borough				X	X	
Walker, Eric	RobinsNest Inc	X	X		X	X	
Young, Jennifer	Verizon				X		X
Levitt, Alex	WDB				X	X	X
Swartz, Jeffrey S.	WDB	X	X	X	X	X	X
Varallo, Kathleen	WDB	X	X	X	X	X	X

WELCOME

Ken Brahl, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:42am. Ken asked the committee to review the minutes dated Tuesday, August 3rd 2021. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes pending review for some minor spelling errors, Heidi Daunoras made the first motion; Dick Knopf made the second motion. By unanimous vote to the affirmative, the motion was carried, and the minutes August 3rd, were approved.

ONE-STOP & LEARNING LINK UPDATES

Frank Cirii, Local Area Operations Director, reported Patti Beach, Counselor, Learning Link, is on leave. He directed the committee to forward any Learning Link referrals or requests to his attention. He said the Learning Link is continuing to function both virtually and by appointment as needed. There has not been much in-person traffic outside of testing. He is hoping to get more people into training. There has been a slight uptick in customers requesting training. Most of those requests have been for training in medical or CDL.

Frank reported the State is planning to bring partners back to in-person office work sometime in mid to late October, but nothing has been officially announced. He said we are still waiting to

see how customer flow will increase with the expiration of extra Cares Act benefits and unemployment extensions. GSETA has provided signage, for outside of the building, that lets customers know unemployment cannot be accessed in the building. Some customers are still coming with concerns and some are coming multiple days in a row. Frank said we try to help them as best we can and we are allowing customers access to computers in a safe social distanced manner with masks on at all times. All county functions are open to virtual and by-appointment service. State partners are seeing customers virtually only. Follow this link to the Camden County One-Stop Career Center -Virtual Services Directory:
<https://www.camdencounty.com/service/employment/job-training-placement/>

The Committee discussed customer flow and service requests with the end of extensions. Ken said there does not seem to be the influx of customers that were expected. Frank said there may be a delayed response that might hit once some realize there will be no more extensions to unemployment. There have been lots of emails going out to customers, whose grants are ending, to let them know about service options. All agreed it may take a few more weeks or months for customers to feel the financial pinch of expired benefits. The Committee also discussed the abundance to jobs available for those that want to get back to work. Some businesses are still closing or altering schedules because of the lack of help, and summer college help is leaving to return to class. Heidi Daunoras, Director of Curriculum, Pine Hill Schools, noted that some people are planners and look ahead and some will procrastinate until they feel the financial crunch. She predicted that many will wait until the New Year before actively looking for work.

Frank announced the County will be co-sponsoring a Job Fair at the Cherry Hill Mall on Friday, September 17th from 10am-2pm. He said the job fair will give staff a better perspective of what the jobseeker market looks like. This will be the first in-person job fair the County has participated in for over a year. Dick Knopf, Independent Business Consultant, said he visited the mall and it was very empty. He said people still seem to be very reluctant to attend in-person events due to concerns about COVID variants. Ken said Ravitz Family Markets are at the lowest employment rate since he has been with the company. The employment roster normally runs at about 1000 and right now they are at 890. He said the stores have always had open positions, but right now there is a shortage of about 120 people. The stores have installed more self-check-out counters, and the delis now have pre-order kiosks installed. The stores have also adjusted their opening hours. He noted an article, he read, about one state calling in the National Guard to drive buses to get kids to school.

Ken asked Dr. Lauren Hill, Director, Adult Basic Skills (ABS), Camden County College, about this year's enrollments. She said there is still a concern regarding enrollment and in-person learning on the college side. She said the ABS division is happy with its numbers because it allows them to keep the class sizes small. ABS started a session last Wednesday, September 8th

onboarding 155 students. The Consortium is at about 280 for this first fall session of enrollment, and that is about normal. She said the college side certainly did not expect the lower enrollment. Ken said he is amazed at the current environment. He expressed his concern about what is considered normal for these times. Dr. Hill coined a new phrase, “The new normal has yet to be defined”

NJ SkillUp

Kathleen Varallo, Administrative Assistant, WDB, reported the WDB is continuing to promote the NJ SkillUp program on social media platforms. She said program administrators have been collecting data on usage, by county, but no numbers have been reported to the local area yet. Follow this link to the NJ Career Services Website: <https://www.nj.gov/labor/career-services/education-training/skillup-nj/index.shtml>

LITERACY LIBRARY RESOURCE GUIDE & OUTREACH

Jeffrey S. Swartz, Executive Director, reported he and Leslie Williams, Comptroller, attended the Back-to-School Backpack event at the Orchards Family Success Center on Thursday, August 19th. 5-7pm. He said the center is a community partner and is located in the southern part of the county, in Sicklerville, which is Winslow Township. The WDB had a table and was able to connect with residents to promote the One-Stop Virtual Services Directory, The Library Resource Guide, and the Atlantic City Electric Training Initiative. He said it was a very nice event. Jeff said it's a good idea to attend outreach events where ever possible in the county and will continue to do so. He encouraged the committee to let the WDB office know about any upcoming events and attend as their schedule allows. Jeff informed the committee that the WDB did receive a sponsorship from the Haddonfield Rotary Club for \$500.00 to pay for the printing of the Library Resource Guide. He noted the Literacy Committee has forged a good relationship with the Haddonfield Rotary Club, who has the same focus on promoting Literacy programs. As Ken has mentioned, in past meetings, we are very appreciative of their partnership. Ken asked and Jeff confirmed, the WDB did send them a thank you letter on behalf of the Board and Literacy Committee.

Ken opened discussions about the Literacy Family Day, usually held in the second week of October, at the Clementon Memorial Library. He said the event can be put together quickly, because the committee has been organizing it for a few years now. Ken said it can be decided at the next meeting on October 5th. He asked the committee if there was any news of a fire prevention day or if the library was opening. Jeff said staff can follow up with Holly Strobl, Councilwomen, Clementon Borough, to see if any dates or activities have been decided.

SUMMER YOUTH EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM WORKSHOPS

Kathleen reported the Summer Youth Employment Program went well with 29 youth participants finishing the program. She said there may be one permanent hire out of the group. Jeff said it may have been a hire with one youth that interned for the County. Alex Levitt, Administrative Assistant, WDB, said we are waiting to hear about it. The young gentleman was working in the County IT Department. They had all good things to say in his evaluation. Jeff said the employers were very pleased with the youth. Jeff reiterated that it was an extremely challenging year to find youth that wanted to work, and work for the \$12.00 per hour stipend. The WDB was competing with many retailers willing to pay significantly higher wages. The program was built, not just as a job, but also as an educational opportunity where young people had a chance to improve their skills. He was pleased with the outcome and the WDB will look to run the program again, next year, pending grant approval. Kathleen thanked Ken again for Ravitz contributions to the weekly skills development workshops. Jeff thanked state partners and committee members for lending their time and experience to the workshops. He also thanked the WDB staff for their work on the program. It was a real team effort by Leslie Williams, Alex Levitt and Kathleen Varallo. He said Leslie Williams, Comptroller, handled the financial aspects of the program.

Jeff reminded the committee there is a WDB Quarterly meeting scheduled for Wednesday, September 22nd. The master budget will be approved at that meeting. He also said there will be an employer panel discussion about the local challenges they experienced during COVID. He invited Dr. Hill to join the panel discussion to give views from the college's perspective. She said she will follow up with Jeff after the meeting. Jeff said it promises to be an engaging panel discussion.

Heidi Daunoras, Director of Curriculum, Pine Hill Schools, reported the school is offering events such as back-to-school night the community can attend virtually. The school may be continuing the practice because it has increased accessibility for the parents, and attendance seems to be better when hosted virtually especially for the middle and high school classes. She encouraged the committee to send any materials to her, because the school now has a resource page which is shared with all parents. Changing to a virtual format has had a good response. The Committee discussed and agreed some virtual platforms are producing better participation. Heidi said there are cost savings and more efficiency with the process as well as gaining a further reach to more residents and families in the southern region of the County. The Committee discussed more personal views about what the new normal will look like. They also discussed predictions about the coming months regarding COVID related product shortages, production, and employee hiring challenges.

Ken thanked everyone for attending and asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Heidi Danauras made the first motion; Dr. Lauren Hill, made the second motion. By unanimous vote to the affirmative the motion was carried and meeting adjourned at 9:10am.

NEXT MEETING: The next Literacy Committee Meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, October 5th, 2021 at 8:30am. The WDB will send out meeting materials and Zoom conferencing information prior to the meeting.

Submitted by

Kathleen Varallo,

Administrative Assistant