

Board Meeting Minutes

March 24, 2021

Welcome/Call to Order: Chairman Cooper called the meeting to order at 8:06 am, greeted the members and said that it is very good to see everybody “in-person”. He then stated that some members are attending via zoom in order to comply with quorum requirements.

Mr. Cooper welcomed and introduced speaker Corey Fram, Executive Director of the 1000 Island International Tourism Council.

Privilege of the Floor: Chairman Cooper invited the WDB members to the privilege of the floor. The invitation was declined.

Presentation: The State of Tourism in the Region
Corey Fram, Executive Director of the Thousand Islands International Tourism Council

Mr. Fram began the presentation with pre-Covid numbers from 2015-2019 that depicted the expenditures, the number of jobs in the county related to tourism, gasoline prices and the Canadian/American exchange rate. He explained that the Canadian/American exchange rate was expected to grow by 1-2% in 2020 but this never happened.

Mr. Fram then reported that as Covid-19 concerns rose in March of 2020 revenue decreased by 30% and tourism dropped by 50%. He pointed out that most of our visitors travel by car to get here as domestic travelers. Domestic travel is down more than 33% and International travel is down almost 70% since the pandemic began. He also pointed out that total traveler spending was down by 42%. Mr. Fram next stated that there have been 5.6 million jobs lost due to the pandemic. Of those jobs lost, 65% were in the tourism industry.

Mr. Fram explained that there have been changes in the way people travel. Lodging has decreased by 30% while camping and Air B&B rentals have gone up. Mr. Fram is hopeful that with the stimulus package and tax season things will improve for this summer.

Mr. Fram provided 4 factors that affect employment in the tourism sector:

1. Pre-Covid-19 factors: The hospitality and tourism sector makes up about 10-11% of the county’s workforce and most of the positions are seasonal.
2. Unemployment insurance: Unemployment is paying an extra \$300 per week to recipients, which makes it difficult for employers to find workers. Individuals are incentivized not to work. This is particularly true in housekeeping, which are difficult and low paying jobs.
3. Regulations: You must be vaccinated or have a negative Covid-19 test to travel to other states, and dancing restrictions on weddings.
4. Shift in travel behavior: A 60% increase in Air B&B rentals is great for owners, but it doesn’t create more jobs.

Ms. Pettit and Mr. O'Driscoll commented on the increase in Air B&B rentals and outdoor activities such as ice fishing. One example is the Bassmaster Tournament.

Mr. Hayden commented that there has been a decrease in Canadian travelers in our area, and although the bridge goes both ways, most Americans don't go to Canada. Canadians are more likely to come to the states. Mr. Fram added that 20-25% of our visitors are Canadian.

Mr. Fram concluded his presentation with an image of the 1000 islands bridge and the rising sun. He is optimistic that the industry will rise again as more people become vaccinated.

Approval of Minutes:

- Chairman Cooper asked for corrections or discussion of the minutes for the January 21, 2021 Board Meeting. There were none. Chairman Cooper next asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Mr. Stehlin made that motion. Ms. Pettit seconded. All were in favor.

- Chairman Cooper asked for corrections or discussion of the minutes for the March 18, 2021 Executive Board Meeting. There were none. Chairman Cooper asked for a motion to approve the minutes. Ms. Pettit made that motion. Mr. Castillo seconded. All were in favor.

Correspondence: Executive Director Mayforth stated that no correspondence had been received.

One-Stop Operator/Provider Report: Angel Munson, One-Stop Operator/Provider/Manager

Ms. Munson, stated that there is not a One Stop Operators report due to the fact that the quarter is not yet over.

Ms. Munson went on to present the new WorkPlace Online. It is a new webpage on our Jefferson County website to provide 24/7 virtual access to job seeking customers. Ms. Munson has added some of our workshops that we usually provide in-person to the site and plans to add more. We will send out a press release when the site is more complete.

Director's Report/Financial Report: Cheryl Mayforth, Executive Director

Director Mayforth presented the latest financial report and made clear that there was a slight issue with youth spending but we should be back on track in PY20 which is still on-going until June 30, 2021. She explained that the WIOA rule is to carry over 20% of funding into the next program year and spend that money first. She also added that TANF funding ran into a little issue due to the Covid-19 pandemic as the money was received late in the season. Director Mayforth asked if there were any questions on the financial report. No questions were asked.

Director Mayforth announced that Youth Coordinator Ethan Brown is in touch with high school counselors and moving forward with the Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). She said that there are two requests for proposals out to local camps to provide participants with a team building activity day at camp prior to starting work in the program. Director Mayforth stated that youth have lost out on social interactions due to Covid and we would like to bring it back. She also encouraged members to get in touch with Mr. Brown if they would like to participate in SYEP by employing summer youth at their business. We pay minimum wage at no cost to the employer and it is a great opportunity to help our youth gain valuable work skills.

The North Country is ranked sixth out of the ten regions in reference to unemployment rates. New York City is ranked the highest. Director Mayforth pointed out that this has not always been the case. Jefferson County is normally at the bottom of the list. However, our January 2021 unemployment rate is actually lower than January of 2020.

Director Mayforth informed members that the national labor participation rate for women in the workforce is the lowest it has been since 1988 at 44%. She pointed out that more women have had to stay home and be the teacher as well as the parent. Childcare, which was bad prior to Covid-19, continues to be a major issue.

Director Mayforth reported good news in that we have had 800+ job openings posted in the last 30 days. While job leads are pouring in, the Department of Labor remains overwhelmed and is uncertain on how to get the leads to the right customers. Normally, those receiving unemployment insurance are scheduled to come into The WorkPlace to be entered into our One Stop Operating System (OSOS), which is not equipped to handle the amount of people receiving unemployment (5.6 million). DOL Representative, Shena Patrick, responded by saying that Labor Service Representatives have recently been instructed to begin conducting phone interviews for RESEA customers.

The bad news is the working class is poor. "ALICE" (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) makes up 41% of our workforce. These are people who are working but are basically still living in poverty. Unfortunately, minimum wage has not reduced poverty and has actually increased it. She made a reference to Bridges out of Poverty being a program hosted by CAPC to help these folks. Time will tell how the American Rescue Plan will benefit our local economy.

New Business:

- **Resolution 20-17 Approval of Revised Youth Incentives**
Chairman Cooper asked for questions on the revised resolution. There were none. He then asked for a motion for approval.
Motion: Ms. Pettit
Second: Mr. Stehlin
Approved: Unanimously

- **Resolution 20-18 Approval of Authorizing Use of Perkins Grant Funds**
Chairman Cooper asked for questions on the resolution. There were none. He then asked for a motion for approval.
Motion: Mr. O'Driscoll
Second: Mr. Monaco
Approved: Unanimously

- **Resolution 20-19 Approval of Youth Services Providers**
Director Mayforth explained the resolution. Chairman Cooper asked for questions on the resolution. There were none. He then asked for a motion for approval.
Motion: Mr. Zembiec
Second: Mr. Monaco
Approved: Unanimously

- **Resolution 20-20 Approval of One-Stop Request for Proposal**
Director Mayforth explained the resolution and clarified that the Workforce Development Board will vote on the proposal at our next meeting in June. Chairman Cooper asked for questions on the resolution. There were none. He then asked for a motion for approval.
Motion: Mr. Pettit
Second: Mr. Castillo
Approved: Unanimously

Career Jam: Director Mayforth discussed the continuance of the lawsuit regarding the use of the Career Jam name by another entity. She stated that Jefferson County continues to support the case.

Frontline Employment Partnership: Director Mayforth announced that CAPC, Anchor Recovery and The WorkPlace are collaborating to provide supportive services to individuals in recovery from substance abuse. CAPC will help with supportive services such as; vehicle repairs, food, clothing and housing; Anchor Recovery will be handling case management and the WorkPlace will help with employment related services such as job leads, resumes and interviewing skills.

Spring/Fall Job Fairs: Director Mayforth stated that there are plans to move forward with in-person annual Job Fairs beginning in the Fall going forward.

Roundtable Discussion & Questions

Chairman Cooper invited the members to provide updates and/or questions.

Ms. Hetzner asked about the impact of hybrid education on the teaching workforce. “Is there enough workforce to replace retiring teachers?”

Mr. Monaco replied that there is not enough teaching staff and enrollments for teaching degrees are down. Teacher prep programs will be looking for people to join the workforce. This is a tough time.

Mr. Murray added that not only is there a need for teachers but also for counselors to meet individual needs.

Ms. Hetzner agreed and stated that our Juniors/Seniors are suffering. She pointed out that these are our future workforce and they have been developmentally stunted. This could take years and in some aspects affect the rest of their lives. Further discussion ensued.

Director Mayforth noted that on March 28, 2021 the Executive Order for open meetings expires and all of our WDB meetings going forward will be in-person without the option to Zoom in.

Next Meeting: June 17, 2021 (Breakfast at 8:00 am, meeting at 8:30 am)
Tug Hill Vineyards
4051 Yancey Rd
Lowville, NY

Adjournment

Chairman Cooper asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Pettit made the motion. Mr. Stehlin seconded the motion. All were in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 10:01 am.

Attendance

George Anderson

Rod Castillo

Matthew Cooper

Marybeth LaVallee *via zoom*

Shellie Marks

Cheryl Mayforth

Fred Monaco

Lynn Murray

John O'Driscoll

Shena Patrick *via zoom*

Jody Pettit

Christine Rolfe *via zoom*

Dale Stehlin

Ty Stone *via zoom*

Dave Zembiec

Others in Attendance

Anthony Hayden

Lisa Hetzner

Angel Munson

Jennifer Pound