

MINUTES
MEETING OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
ARKANSAS WORKFORCE INVESTMENT BOARD
May 9, 2000

A regular monthly meeting of the Executive Committee, Arkansas Workforce Investment Board, was held on Tuesday, May 9, 2000, Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce, 410 South Cross Street, Little Rock, with Chairman Bill Fisher presiding. The Chair called the meeting to order at 9:10 a.m. and welcomed twelve members and approximately 100 public representatives. Members attending were Florine Bingham, Joe Dillard, Robert Drechsler, Lisa Ferrell, Bill Fisher, Steve Franks, Alan Hughes, Gloria Lynn, Kathy Matlock, Karen McFarren, Helen Moore, and Campbell Wilkerson. Those unable to attend were Larry Featherstone, Jodie Mahony, and Bill Sutton.

Chairman Fisher stated that Executive Committee Member Lisa Ferrell arranged for the State Chamber of Commerce to host this meeting and lunch; he expressed thanks to the Chamber officials and to Representative Ferrell.

Mr. Fisher expressed appreciation to Ms. Rebekah Lee, Governor's Liaison to the Board, and Ms. Michelle Driscoll, Dallas Office, Department of Labor, for their attendance at this meeting.

Two hand-outs had been placed at each member's place: a letter of May 4 from Judge Buddy Villines of Pulaski County to Dr. Linda Beene, the Board's Executive Director, and a flyer promoting attendance at Business Opportunity 2000 Conference, May 22-23, Embassy Suites Hotel, Little Rock. Judge Villines' letter was one of support for a waiver request by the Central Arkansas Planning and Development District.

Minutes: Minutes of the Board meeting of April 11 were unanimously approved as mailed in advance on motion made by Mr. Campbell Wilkerson and seconded by Representative Lisa Ferrell.

Director's Report: Executive Director Linda Beene reported on work of the Board staff during the past month and specifically described a trip she made with others to Racine and Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to observe their local WIA programs. She said that the June agenda of the Executive Committee will include the proposed budget for fiscal year 2001 as well as a funds analysis that Senator Jodie Mahony requested sometime ago. She said that she expects in the next day or two a letter from the United States Department of Labor that will provide in-depth comments on the Arkansas Unified State Plan. She encouraged participation in the Business Opportunity 2000 Conference sponsored by the Arkansas Department of Economic Development.

Approval of Activity Responsibilities Under Workforce Investment Act: Chairman Fisher directed attention to a six-page chart which was mailed in advance to Executive Committee members and which had been carried on the agenda for the Executive Committee meeting of

March 21 but was postponed because of time pressures. After a review of the document and suggestions for change, **motion was made by Ms. Helen Moore, seconded by Ms. Florine Bingham, and carried unanimously to approve the document after adding a check under WIB for Lines 21 and 25 (receive funds from federal agencies and evaluate individual program effectiveness).** (A copy of the revised chart is on file in the office of the Executive Director.)

Clarification of Roles of Two-Year Colleges on Local Workforce Investment Boards: Chairman Fisher reminded members of a motion which had been adopted unanimously on January 26, 2000, to read: "That at least one member of each local board will represent a two-year institution—community college, technical institute, or technical college." At Mr. Fisher's invitation, Dr. Kathy Matlock commented on the importance of two-year colleges and technical institutes to WIA programs and reflected on practices of selected other states. **Motion was made by Representative Lisa Ferrell, seconded by Mr. Campbell Wilkerson, and carried unanimously that, instead of the above motion, the Executive Committee vote to include two-year college representatives on each local board and, where technical institutes exist, include representation from the technical institutes also.** In discussion it was agreed that addition of any new local board members could result in the need to add additional business representation.

Dr. Matlock agreed to bring to the next Executive Committee meeting copies of a publication, WORK: The Four-Letter Word That Pays, --one for each member.

Report of Local Plan Review Committee: Chairman Fisher listed the following nine Board members who served with Representative Lisa Ferrell (Chair) on a Special Committee appointed to assist the Board staff in reviewing local plans: Ms. Florine Bingham, Mr. Joe Warren, Mr. Jack Smurl, Dr. James Hendren, Ms. Diana Hueter, Mr. Don Finley, Ms. Karen McFarren, Mr. Jim Putlak, and Mr. Jim Smith.

Representative Ferrell reported that the Special Committee met yesterday. She said that each committee member had reviewed executive summaries of all ten local plans and had studied in depth one assigned local plan. She said that they found almost all of the mission and vision statements to be good. She listed the following weaknesses that seemed to be common to most of the plans:

- Aiming too low.
- Not enough focus on assisting workers to upgrade.
- Some dependence on the "way things used to be."
- Lack of MOUs, although many are obviously working on the MOUs.
- Not enough visible involvement of workers and business in development of the plan and expected implementation.
- Not sufficient involvement of local educational agencies.
- Plans appeared to be staff-driven.

Representative Ferrell described the format for the Special Committee meeting: each State Board representative gave a short report of the strengths/weaknesses he/she saw in the reviewed local plan; other Committee members commented; and the appropriate Board staff representative commented. She said that the Special Committee members and State Board staff representatives would now work together to make available to each local board a detailed analysis, by letter, of the local plan. She said the letters are expected to be mailed by Friday, May 12, or Monday, May 15.

Chairman Ferrell said that five local areas **requested waivers** (Northwest, Central, West Central, Southwest, and Western) to allow the local board's administrative/fiscal agent to provide core and/or intensive services or be a one-stop operator. She said that the Special Committee discussed whether waivers should be granted and that they felt waivers should not be granted but that alternatives should be pursued. Many questions were asked, and much discussion was held. Mayor Joe Dillard said that he disagreed with the Special Committee's decision on waivers—that he believed that denying waivers would tie the hands of local boards. Mayor Dillard said that he understood some of the problems related to the requests. Chairman Fisher invited representatives of each of the five local areas to explain for five minutes their waiver requests; and the following made presentations:

- Northwest – County Judge Jerry Hunton of Washington County and Mr. Henry Walker
- Central – County Judge Butch Calhoun of Prairie County and Mr. John Martin
- West Central – Mayor Marvin Vinson of Clarksville and Mr. Marvin Gerlach
- Southwest – County Judge Frank Scroggins of Lafayette County and Mayor Mike Dumas of El Dorado
- Western – County Judge Ray Stanley of Polk County and Mr. J. R. Marlow

The presenters mentioned the following points:

- When the Executive Committee declines to approve a waiver, it leaves chief elected officials with fiscal responsibility but no authority.
- Although some new options are available under WIA that were not formerly available, not all JTPA was undesirable.
- One presenter said that his local board of 40 members includes only two that were on the old PIC council.
- There is need for a smooth transition from JTPA to WIA, and local boards are closely associated with ways to make this transition.
- One presenter said that his local area invited RFPs for five years and received no responses.

Chairman Fisher asked Ms. Michelle Driscoll to comment on the attitudes that exist in other states about waivers, and Ms. Driscoll said that this is a current struggle throughout the country. She said that final regulations are to be issued soon that may affect this issue but that regional personnel do not know what they contain.

Mr. Drechsler asked in what form the waivers were presented to the Board staff, and Dr. Beene responded that all five were narratives included as a part of local plans and that one was sent also to the Governor. Mr. Drechsler suggested that a format, which required demographics and other basic information that prompted local boards to apply for waivers, should be developed and that all applicants should submit the required information. Members of the group then considered various plans for providing short-term, conditional waivers. **Motion was made and amended by Mr. Drechsler, seconded, and carried unanimously to receive from waiver applicants by uniform format their applications and justifications and that, if necessary, to continue discussion on granting waiver(s) in the regular June meeting.** Mr. Drechsler and others emphasized the need for Executive Committee members to receive the waiver applications as much in advance of the June meeting as possible. In discussion it was agreed that, even if waivers are denied in June, the Executive Committee could make conditional, short-term provisions for services to be provided. One member remarked that it would be helpful to know what arrangements local boards, which did not request waivers, made for the areas in which five local boards requested waivers.

Chairman Fisher and Dr. Beene asked local board administrators and other interested parties who were present to meet with the two of them immediately after adjournment if they wished to discuss further some of the strategies discussed/adopted at this meeting.

Meeting Break: Chairman Fisher declared a break, which lasted from 10:55 a.m. to 11:10.

Report on WIA Data Collection and Reporting System: Chairman Fisher mentioned that the Executive Committee, in its meeting of March 21, 2000, agreed to release \$1,000,000 of \$1,900,000 projected cost for a fiscal and management accountability system. (This action was ratified by the full Board on April 11, 2000.) At the March 21 meeting Mr. Bill Searles of the Department of Information Systems spoke to the group and answered questions about plans DIS was making for a data collection system to be “up and running” by July 1. Mr. Searles was recognized by Chairman Fisher to bring the Executive Committee up to date on development of the system.

Mr. Searles and two analysts from his office, Nancy Ray and Ann Thrash, commented and answered questions about the status of current work. Mr. Searles said that he now believes that the collection screen can be completed but possibly not tested by July 1 and that the reporting screen would follow. He said that some risks are involved in implementing a system before it is tested. He and Dr. Steve Franks commented on the workforce education system, which is also being developed by DIS. They pointed out that the two systems can utilize common data as well as data from other state programs.

Mr. Fisher recognized Eugene Jones, a computer engineer, who had consulted with the Board staff about providing information on time frame for the project. He said that additional costs are incurred in belonging to an integrated system such as DIS but that the advantages are obvious. He agreed with Mr. Searles that compressed time requirements cost money. He offered these suggestions as possibilities:

- To invite RFPs. He said he does not consider this feasible with time pressures.
- Give DIS some “breathing room” with more time.
- Hire a project manager to keep the Workforce Investment Board informed.

Various ideas were discussed for collecting data manually, if necessary, but none of the suggestions were detailed.

A motion was made by Dr. Kathy Matlock, seconded by Ms. Helen Moore, and carried unanimously that the Executive Committee release a full 1.9 million dollars for the data system. (Mr. Searles had mentioned previously that it’s possible that some savings could be realized but that he could not make a commitment to this.)

Chairman Fisher indicated that he would appoint a representative to work with DIS on development of the system.

Announcements: Mr. Fisher said that the next Executive Committee meeting would be held on June 13 at a place yet to be determined. He said an effort would be made to find a place with plenty of room for public representatives to be seated. He said that the full Board would hold its next quarterly meeting on July 11.

Mr. Fisher said that plans are being made for one-day workshops during June 12-16 for local board members and that the following sites have been tentatively identified: El Dorado, Little Rock, Mountain Home, West Memphis, and Fort Smith. He said suggestions for different sites, if any, should be submitted to Dr. Beene.

Chairman Fisher announced that Geneva Guthrie, who has served on the Board staff from the beginning of staff activity last August, is retiring on May 12. He expressed appreciation to her for commitment and dedication and presented a gift from the Executive Committee and Board staff, a framed print of Thomas Kincade’s The Light of Peace.

Adjournment: The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 noon.

Bill Fisher, Chair

Linda Beene, Executive Director

Minutes recorded by Geneva Guthrie
Staff of Workforce Investment Board