

Washtenaw County
Workforce Development Board
General Session

Meeting Date: Thursday May 4, 2006

Time: 8:00 AM – 10:00 AM

Members Present: Keith Peters, James Bunton, Cynthia Maritato, Suzanne Bade, Nicholas Fortson, Jim Frenza, Gene Graber, Sabrina Keeley, Eric Mahler, Mark Ouimet, Anne Williams, Donn Wolf, Bill Miller, Gregg Weaver, Steve Gulick and Diana McKnight Morton.

Members Absent: Gregory Gurka, Cindy Harrison (excused), Mary Kerr (excused), Jennifer Leach (excused), Clifford Smith, Jr., Timothy Robinson and Diane Davidson (excused).

Liaisons Present: Wes Prater, Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners CEO
Bob Guenzel, Washtenaw County Administrator

Guests Present: Michael Finney – SPARK, Inc., Christopher Rosborough – DLEG, Marcia Black-Watson – CLEG, Linda Hammond – WCC, Roger Palay – WCC, and Joanne Morris - Washtenaw County Michigan Works! Service Center.

Staff Present: Trenda Rusher, Jenny Bivens, Lynn Fountain and Yvonne Taylor.

1. Call to Order

Peters called the meeting to order at 8:00 AM.

2. Welcome and Introductions

Peters welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked that everyone introduce him or herself.

3. Public Comment

There was no public comment.

4. Approval of the Agenda

Wolf moved to approve the meeting agenda. McKnight-Morton supported. Meeting agenda approved.

5. Consent Agenda Items

A. Approval of the Minutes

Gulick moved to approve the minutes from the 03/16/06 General Session. Graber supported. Meeting minutes approved.

B. Resolutions

i. SOS Community Services Letter

Gulick moved to accept the letter. Graber supported. SOS letter accepted.

ii. Workforce Investment Act Statewide Activities MiRSA – Southeast Michigan

Hospitality and Tourism Grant Agreement received from the Michigan Department of Labor and Economic Growth in the amount of \$20,000 for the period of April 1, 2006 through June 30, 2006.

Wolf moved to approve the resolution. Bunton supported. Resolution passes.

6. Report of the Chair – (Peters)

A. Announcements and Updates

i. E3 Honor Roll

- The Washtenaw County Workforce Development Board (WDB) was honored at the Ypsilanti Area Chamber of Commerce's First Tuesday Breakfast as one of the partners in the business education program.
- The Chamber is very pleased with the involvement of the WDB and the others that were recognized.

ii. MEGA P

- The WDB is being very aggressive this year with its economic development and workforce development initiatives. Peters is excited as we move forward and begin to share some of the innovative ideas. There will be a big announcement made later in the meeting as one of the partnerships is developed. We look forward to getting positive results from this as the partnership grows.
- This Board can continue to set an example for other WDBs in the State and work with the Michigan Chamber of Commerce Executives. We can initiate programs throughout the State where there is a much deeper involvement by the Chambers working with the entities such as we have here in the County.
- Peters gave credit to his predecessors who paved the way.

B. Business Update

i. Ann Arbor Area Chamber of Commerce – Keeley

- Keeley noted that some of the businesses in the area are doing well but most of them continue to be affected by the economy in a negative way. This is the case particularly for the small businesses, which is not good for the Ann Arbor Area.
- The Ann Arbor Area and Ypsilanti Area Chambers of Commerce continue to work on items together such as looking at legislation in Lansing.
- Keeley thanked the WDB for approving the funding for the Ann Arbor Youth Leadership Program. This will be the second year of the program; last year was a pilot for the program where six high school students participated in the Chamber's leadership program. The program last year went very well and they hope to continue its success.
- This will be Keeley's last WDB meeting. Keeley took the opportunity to thank Board members for the opportunity to work on some of the programs. The Chamber will name an interim CEO and will begin the search for a replacement. Keeley's last day at the Chamber will be May 30. Keeley added that she is not leaving the area and that she is moving on to work at Detroit Renaissance joining Doug Rothwell.

ii. Ypsilanti Area Chamber of Commerce – Peters

- Tonight is the Chamber's Annual Dinner at the Washtenaw Country Club. Congressman John Dingell will be honored with the Distinguished Service Award. Debbie, the wife of the Congressman, will be there to accept the award as Dingell is recovering.
- Bosal is going to begin construction of phase one of the three-phase project in Ypsilanti Township. The project will cover about 500,000 square feet when all three phases are done. They will start with just over 300 employees and go up to over 1,000 when all of the phases are done.

- General Motors has gotten approval for its hydromantic facility and is moving forward on an exciting new expansion. GM received over half a million dollars in abatements to add a new transmission line.
- The City of Ypsilanti announced that they have selected a new company for the Water Street project. This is part of a very exciting package for the City. It is going to revitalize not only the thirty-nine acres of land on Water Street, but also the properties along the river and throughout the City.
- Peters reiterated that small businesses in the area are suffering. The Chamber started a program where banks and larger companies are adopting smaller business that want to be Chamber members but do not have the extra dollars.

iii. Labor Update – (Gulick)

- Road construction is in full swing.
- Between Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti, there are a number of projects are targeted for spring and fall.
- Labor is keeping a close eye on the manufacturing sector and the Visteon plant.
- The GM project looks promising and may translate into new jobs.
- They are working with the Mayor and City Council of Ann Arbor to move forward the projects in the City, which will not only create construction jobs, but follow-on jobs such as retail, research, and service sector jobs.
- Overall, the labor outlook is positive for Washtenaw County.

7. **Report of the Board of Commissioners’ Chief Elected Official** – (Prater)

A. Announcements and Updates

- Prater was pleased to announce that the millage for the communication system in the County is progressing. Turn out was low, but the support was great and there was no organized opposition in the County on this. The County is ready to move forth on a digital communication system that will be beneficial to everyone.
- The Toyota R&D facility in York Township is on track for its ground breaking before fall. The facility will eventually employ about 2000 people.

B. Comments from the County Administrator – (Guenzel)

- The County still has significant needs, especially in the area of public safety and justice. The Commissioners have taken a long look at the situation and have noted that the County continues to experience over crowding in its jails.
- Guenzel noted that the BOC is also looking at Human Services and the use of 555 Towner Building. The results of the discussions with the Commissioners regarding the space in Towner could affect ETCS. The County will take the summer to organize a series of community engagements to get input from partners including the WDB. The idea is to have a number of options to take to the BOC by fall and then perhaps a twenty-year space plan would be developed by the end of the year. There are significant needs, but there are some geographic and scale decisions that need to be made. This is taking quite a bit of time for both staff and for the Commissioners.

C. Comments from the Eastern Michigan University President – (Fallon)

- Peters invited Dr. Fallon to say a few words. Peters took the opportunity to state how hands-on Dr. Fallon is in the community and how much that is appreciated.
- Dr. Fallon noted that he is still in the learning mode of his new position at the University. Dr. Fallon talked about EMU and the importance of its partnerships and alliances. It is

essential for EMU to connect to the community and have strong ties with it. The University is always looking at ways to collaborate.

- Peters added that construction for the University's new student center is almost complete. The grand opening is expected to be in the fall.
- Weaver noted that, as the veterans' representative at the Michigan Works! Service Center, he refers many people to EMU right out of the military. Weaver stated that the University has always accepted so many GIs and their credential from the military, which is great.

8. Report of the Executive Director – (Rusher)

A. Announcements

- Each year Washtenaw County has an employee recognition ceremony. Rusher announced that Barbara Patterson, who coordinates the Foster Grandparent Program for ETCS, was honored with the employees of the year award.

B. Federal / State / Local Updates

Federal

- There is still no WIA reauthorization. We are still waiting for movement on that and we are still waiting to see whether the House will restore funding to 2005 levels.

State

- The big issue right now is with the state legislature and what is going to be done with reforming welfare and the JET pilots. There is a lot of political debate going on.

Local

- Rusher noted that the WDB is on target with its Report Card goals. We are really working with small businesses and the business sector overall. We are working with SPARK on the MEGA P, for example.
- Rusher distributed a report "Working Hard but Still Poor." The Community Action Board (CAB) leadership was in Lansing last week working with Byrnes, Kolb and Wheeler Smith. They were working on the welfare reform issues and trying to get Michigan to look at training and education first before sending people out into jobs.
- There was a very successful Legislative Day. Peters and Wolf met with legislatures along with staff. Rusher commented how great it is to have very responsive legislatures. She added that we also have a board with hard working members that are very committed. Rusher thanked everyone for their hard work and dedication.

9. Knowledge and Innovation Feature

Ann Arbor SPARK and WDC (Washtenaw Development Council) – (Finney)

- Rusher provided a brief background as to how the MEGA P was developed. Board members put together the Report Card with very specific goals. The WDB wanted to do meaningful work with specific industry sectors, including small businesses. The Board wanted to develop policy for such work that was trendsetting.
- Rusher distributed the State Council for Labor and Economic Growth (CLEG)'s "Compact for the 21st Century Workforce." The Compact contains the same types of ideas that the MEGA P has. The WDB is rolling these ideas with the MEGA P partners. This will be phase one of what we are trying to do with the MEGA P, while phase two will bring in other partners. The idea is to get the partnership rolling first before other partners are brought in.
- Rusher introduced Finney who gave a presentation on the work SPARK does. Finney thanked Rusher for the opportunity to come to the WDB meeting and be a part of the MEGA P.

- Finney provided some feedback on the services SPARK and the WDC received in utilizing services of ETCS and at the Michigan Works! Service Center (MWSC). Finney noted that, while the board meeting may not be the best place to provide first time feedback, it was in his nature to be frank and he wanted to provide honest feedback.
 - SPARK and WDB have three positions that need to be filled. Finney noted how difficult it can be to start a new job and a new organization and how difficult it is to find time to look for staff. Finney added that it is a struggle to find time to look for staff especially while doing the work of SPARK and WDC with big businesses such as Toyota and Bosal.
 - Finney noted that he wanted to test the Michigan Works!/ETCS organization so that he could get a better idea as to how we work before entering a partnership agreement. Needing to find staff provided the opportunity for SPARK and WDC to do just that.
 - Finney contacted the MWSC with his needs indicating his timeframe and stated that the results were fantastic. The interviews were completed yesterday. Finney added that the candidates were highly qualified and he knows that he will be able to fill the three positions based on the candidates that were interviewed.
 - As a result, Finney stated that he feels good about the ability of this partnership with ETCS to deliver. Finney went on to recognize Dorion Holbrook and Colleen Mallory, from the MWSC, for their involvement and their detailed work in the interview process of the candidates.
- Finney provided some background information on Ann Arbor SPARK and the WDC and the work they do.
- We are fortunate to live in a region that has unbelievable potential and great communities, people, Universities, and a great Community College. Unfortunately, there are also small gaps. Finney used the analogy of a strong chain and what would happen if a link were missing. SPARK and WDC are about filling some of the gaps that exist in the chain of economic development and entrepreneurial growth.
- Finney shared the new draft of the SPARK/WDC mission statement, noting that the organization may change its name when the transition is complete. The draft mission statement is “SPARK/WDC will be the driving force in establishing the Ann Arbor Region as a desired place for business expansion and location by identifying and meeting the needs of business at every stage, from those that are established to those working to successfully commercialize innovative technologies.”
- Keeley inquired about the Ann Arbor region in comparison to Washtenaw County. Finney replied that in all of SPARK/WDC’s materials, they sell the Ann Arbor region. Finney noted that there have been a number of heated discussions on this topic. He added that people outside of our region take notice of Ann Arbor and that it is a brand that does not have to be created. Many others have tried to go out and find a brand and spend lots of money trying to create one, and we already have one. It is already recognized internationally and we should take advantage of that brand to create opportunity for the entire region. Finney invited people to look at their work profile to see that their activity is spread across the entire County. Opportunities in areas like Saline, Chelsea, Manchester and York Township are being driven by the wonderful brand that we have. Finney added that they will be careful to use “region” every time.
- SPARK/WDC is operational. The initial push was successful. They are working to develop a long-term sustainable strategy that incorporates combined organization and partnerships.
- The key relationships that are being developed involve MEDC (Michigan Economic Development Corporation), ETCS, regional economic development partners, universities, and the business community.

- The SPARK Business Accelerator is “open for business.” It is focused on the start up aspect of businesses in the community. Overall, though, they are still in the start-up mode in terms of functionality. Finney pointed out that traditional business opportunities and projects demonstrate the potential for significant economic impact in 2006.
- Finney showed a flowchart of the activities that the WDC is historically charged with doing and a flowchart of what SPARK is set up to do. Finney moved on to show what SPARK and WDC will do as a merged organization. He demonstrated how the merged organization will work together and how it will be connected. Finney noted that the organization really needs to have a solid impact on talent enhancement. He added that SPARK/WDC decided that the best place for them to participate is at the high-end of the talent piece.
- Guenzel thanked Finney for his presentation and mentioned how fortunate we are to have him in our community. By coming together, we demonstrate how we are leaders in cooperation and in intersectoral collaboration. This will truly be a first step.
- Peters invited the signers to take part in the signing ceremony. The signatures include:
 - Keith Peters, President, Ypsilanti Area Chamber of Commerce
 - Sabrina Keeley, President, Ann Arbor Area Chamber of Commerce
 - Michael Finney, President and CEO, Ann Arbor SPARK and WDC
 - Dr. John Fallon, President, Eastern Michigan University
 - Roger Palay for Larry Whitworth, President, Washtenaw Community College
 - Wesley Prater, Chair, Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners
 - Robert E. Guenzel, Administrator, Washtenaw County
 - Trena Rusher, Director, Washtenaw County ETCS/WDB

DISCUSSION

- Mahler asked if Finney was able to put together some benchmark data or trends as to what kind of businesses and workers county’s of this size are able to attract to their area and what the WDB could do to help. Finney replied that there is a need for labor market information for areas larger than just the County. We need to look at data beyond the County and develop surveys and reports that will help us. Finney added that we need to first figure out what the right technology sectors are that we need to focus on and hopefully those will align with ones that the State has already identified. Next, we can do some analytical approaches to figure out where to go and look for companies that do this work. It takes time to do all of this.
- Frenza asked how much of the SPARK/WDB operating revenue stream is going to depend on membership support as opposed to grants. Finney replied that it is going to be very important. Finney noted that many of the grants come with strings attached and frankly, they need as much discretionary operational income that they can get. Finney added that he would like to spend a large amount of their money on marketing.
- Dr. Miller asked what would be done to focus on retaining graduates in the region. Finney replied that although this was not a high priority of SPARK/WDC only because they might not have a huge impact on it, it was something that is on their radar screen. SPARK hosts about a dozen MBA students and engineers working in their office through the University’s Tech Transfer Offer. They use the opportunity to expose students to the workplace.
- Rusher walked everyone through the MEGA P, its purpose, and what the agreement hopes to accomplish. She added that the commitment from the partners will make the MEGA P more than just a document. Rusher listed each of the partners and what each will bring to the collaboration.
- Rusher added that staff is committed to doing whatever it takes to keep business in the area. For example, in the future, employers will use the latest technology to interview employees by way of virtual and video interview at their convenience. This will save employers time and money.

- Dr. Miller expressed the importance of working with the education sector and how it relates to employment. Rusher agreed and noted that the next steps would include the ISD and k-12. She added that Dr. Miller made a great point in that we really need to look at pre-k20 and where the EAG fits in here. Peters added that the Chamber is involved with the State's Great Start Program to get businesses fully involved in the process of helping to keep students from falling behind. Rusher mentioned the Ann Arbor Youth Leadership Program that the WDB helped fund. This program funded six area high school students giving them the opportunity to enroll in the Ann Arbor Area Chamber of Commerce's Leadership Program. The students participated in activities along side the adults in the program. Last year was the pilot for the program and it was such a success that the WDB agreed at its last meeting to again fund the program this year. Peters also expressed interest at the meeting to introduce the same program at the Ypsilanti Area Chamber. One notable outcome of the program is that the youth participants said they would stay in Michigan. Rusher noted that the community is very pleased with this project.
- Frenza asked for an explanation of the acronym "MEGA P." Rusher replied that MEGA stood for the enormity of the project and that the P stood for partnership.
- Bade noted the drain on employers and controlling the cost that employers are experiencing because of the aging work force. Rusher noted that the subject might come under the commitment of the WDB in addressing the needs of industry clusters.
- Graber asked why the CVBs (Convention and Visitors Bureaus) are not included in the MEGA P. There was mention of other partners (such as the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, the Washtenaw Contractors Association, Livingston County, Jackson County, and Oakland County) that are not included in the MEGA P. Rusher replied that while we recognize other partners and their involvement, we need to make sure that we begin to do some of the work now and not delay the work of the project by trying to include too many partners at this stage. Rusher added that we figured the next phase of the MEGA P would be to include more of the partners that we work with including those we work with in the entire region.
- Wolf commented that he sees the MEGA P as an open-ended agreement. Wolf gave credit to those who worked so hard to put the agreement together. To get the eight people together and to get the eight organizations together to agree to this is great. Wolf commended Rusher for being the driving force behind the MEGA P. He reiterated that the MEGA P was an open agreement and that there is room to add to it.
- Commissioner Ouimet agreed with Graber in that there are some organizations that are missing from the agreement that are key players. He added that we have more people coming into our County to work than are leaving our County to work. Commissioner Ouimet also agreed with Dr. Miller that we are losing some our best and brightest that are choosing not to stay here and we have to figure out a way to retain that kind of energy in our State.
- Bade recommended that we collaborate with Keeley as she moves into her new position. If we can help partner with organizations in Detroit we might be able to have a greater impact. Rusher noted that ETCS regularly meets with its partners in Southeast Michigan and that Mary Kerr is part of the steering committee.
- Peters noted that he would like to see the labor sector be one of the first partners we work with in the next phases. Rusher asked what appropriate labor council we should approach. Gulick replied that it would be the Huron Valley Central Labor Council.

Wolf moved to adopt he signed agreement. McKnight-Morton supported. Motion passes.

10. Report of the Committees

A. Education Advisory Group (EAG) – (Miller)

- The last EAG meeting was in April. The Group is focusing on high school career and technical educational programming.
- Rusher added that staff met with Denise Dalrymple from the County's Children's Services Department. Bivens is working to get the website up and running with the County. We are pushing for a July 1 launch. The website is specifically targeted for youth careers. There is some discussion as to whether the website would be connected to the already existing Michigan Talent Bank or a stand-alone site. Some coordination will be required to make this work.
- The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, October 18 at the Washtenaw Intermediate School District at 3:00 PM.

B. Employers Committee – (Rusher for Harrison)

- The Committee met with Finney where he gave a similar presentation on SPARK.
- The Employers Committee put together its work plan, which will include tracking the activities and progress of the MEGA P. The suggestions and comments made today on the MEGA P will be taken to the Committee.
- Peters added that he attended the Employers Committee meeting and that Finney noted at that meeting that ETCS had the best records. Rusher gave kudos to the State, since they provide many of our records.

11. Report of the Community Action Board (CAB)

- Wolf reported that Foster Grandparent Program (FGP) Recognition was a success. There were over 200 people that attended, including Senator Brater, Representative Byrnes, Commissioner Sizemore and County Administrator Bob Guenzel. Wolf noted how pleased he was to see how successful the program and the event were.
- The next CAB meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 22, 2006. Wolf invited WDB members to attend any one of the CAB meetings.

12. Other Business

- Wolf announced that the State of Florida put out a request for 30,000 new teachers. They will pay moving fees and provide signing bonuses. They will also provide training and certification through the American Board of Certification of Teacher Excellence. Wyoming does a lot in coal mining, natural gas and power production. They put on a job fair just outside of Flint, which attracted over 1,200 workers. Employees who cannot find work in Michigan are moving out of the State to find jobs. This makes our work even more important.
- Rusher invited Marcia Black-Watson from the State to make comments. Black-Watson noted that the State Council for Labor and Economic Growth (CLEG) has been busy developing a compact for the 21st century workforce, which was distributed to WDB members. The compact contains principals that need to be transpired in such initiatives as the MEGA P. Black-Watson invited WDB members to attend any of their meetings. Rusher announced that CLEG was going to meet at the Michigan Works! Conference in September. Rusher encouraged WDB members to take part in the Conference. She encouraged members to get their business in order and let staff know now because the Conference fills up quickly.

Graber motioned that the WDB recognize the ETCS employee of the year. Gulick supported. Motion passes. It was suggested that Rusher order flowers in appreciation when the employee is honored.

- Rusher requested that ETCS apply for the State's \$50,000 planning grant on behalf of the WDB. The money received would be to cover MEGA P activities. Rusher noted that we would also apply for the grant as part of the seven workforce boards in the Southeast Michigan region. The total amount for the region would amount to \$350,000.

McKnight-Morton moved that the WDB accept the request to apply for the grant. Fortson supported. Motion passes.

13. Next General Session

The next general session is set for Thursday, July 6, 2006.

14. Adjourn

Peters adjourned the meeting at 10:10 AM.