

December 13, 2007

MINUTES

The December 13th meeting of the High Country Workforce Development Board (WDB) was called to order by Executive Committee member Scott Moncrief. Mr. Moncrief welcomed members and guests in attendance. Mr. Moncrief introduced new Board member Dwayne Howell, HR Director at Gates Corporation in Ashe County. Mr. Howell stood and recited the WDB Oath of Office with Mr. Moncrief. On behalf of the WDB Don Sherrill presented umbrella and coaster welcome gifts to Mr. Howell. Mr. Moncrief introduced himself as a Board member and Chair of the Quality Assurance Committee. Mr. Moncrief announced that since Chairman Doug Pratt and Vice-Chair Vanya Baker could not attend today's meeting he would act as Chair for the meeting. He stated that WDB Director Carole Coates was also not in attendance due to attending a US Department of Labor initiative in Chicago. Mr. Moncrief recognized special guests in attendance from the Division of Workforce Development in Raleigh: Virginia Brogden, Programmatic Monitor with the Field Services Division, and Mark Roberts, Workforce Development Planner with the Planning Unit. Mr. Moncrief stated that they both offer the Board a great deal of assistance with the Workforce Area particularly with the Board staff.

The following Workforce Development Board members and Youth Council members were present:

Barbara Barlow	Gwen Harris	Sam L. Ray
Anne Bowlin	Dwayne Howell	Sandy Reese
Maria Cunningham	Scott Moncrief	Earl Tipton
Marie Gwyn	Jayne Phipps-Boger	Tommy Williams (YC)
Jim Halsey		

The following Workforce Development staff members were present: Misty Bishop-Price, Rebecca Bloomquist, Ruby Greene, Andrea Morgan, and Don Sherrill.

Guests: Philip Billings, Mike Bloomquist, Mike Brisson, Virginia Brogden, Vassie Cooke, Joe Furman, Charles Hardin, Dan Meyer, Dr. Carol Pollard, Mark Roberts, Chilton Rogers, Ricky Roten, Ginger Shaffer, Charles Vines, and Dr. James Young.

Mr. Moncrief gave the Quality Assurance (QA) Committee report. Mr. Moncrief stated that the December Board Book (p. 15) has a copy of the QA Committee meeting notes from November 1. Mr. Moncrief reported that the Alleghany JobLink will not be pursuing rechartering due to lack of qualification based on staffing. Mr. Moncrief expects that Watauga JobLink will also be doing the same thing. Mr. Moncrief reported that a Workforce Investment Act (WIA) service provider meeting was held on October 5. WDB staff and providers shared best practices. The meeting was productive and generated enthusiasm. The QA Committee reviewed some qualitative services reports and received some other updates. Mr. Moncrief stated that there have been no other quality assurance developments since that meeting on November 1.

Mr. Moncrief called on Earl Tipton to give the Strategic Planning Workgroup report. Mr. Tipton reported that following the October WDB meeting when the Board reviewed and approved the Strategic Plan Update, the Board has been in the public comment phase of this process. Mr. Tipton stated that the plan update along with request for comments has been given to the WIA service providers in person, Regional Business Leadership Team in person on November 1, High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG) Executive Board in person on November 19, County Managers by email, and WDB Consortium by email. The HCCOG November 2007 ReCOgnition newsletter (p. 2) has the plan available for review and comment. The new WDB website has a link to the Strategic Plan Update for review and comment. The December Board Book (p. 12) also has the plan update. Mr. Tipton said that all comments so far have been positive with no suggested changes. Mr. Tipton stated that the public comment period will remain open through December 31, 2007. Mr. Tipton reported that WDB business cards have now been updated to include the Board's revised *Vision* along with the *Priorities* that spell out the *DREAM* acronym. Mr. Tipton said the updated business cards were currently being produced and would soon be given to Board members.

Mr. Moncrief gave the Executive Committee report. He stated that the committee met today at 2:00 p.m. Discussions included a summary of committee activities and meetings, financial report, recent awards and recognitions, and Board meeting evaluation. Mr. Moncrief reported that the previous WDB meeting evaluation indicated that members continued to prefer a meeting length of 1-1 ½ hours as has been the past goal. The Board will continue to keep that goal. The High Country WDB's business services approach was selected by the

National Workforce Association (NWA) for its 2007 Award of Excellence. The NWA is the workforce development affiliate of the National Association of Counties. The December Board Book (pp. 50-49: *the two pages were inadvertently reversed*) has a copy of the nomination. With regards to Carole Coates' absence today, previous WDB meetings included an announcement that the WDB is the fiscal agent for a Regional Collaboration Grant with Western Piedmont and Region C Workforce Development Boards along with AdvantageWest. This group was selected by the US Department of Labor to participate in a national initiative designed to re-envision the public workforce system in the context of regional and global economic development. The December Board Book (p. 32) has a copy of the invitation for participation. The kick-off event for this initiative is currently taking place in Chicago. Ms. Coates is there with a regional team of nine individuals. This initiative is an extension of the Board's own State of the Workforce Report that identified the importance of regionalism in workforce development and falls under two of the three goals in the Board's new Strategic Plan. Mr. Moncrief reported that Don Sherrill has prepared a brief overview of finances on the July through September quarter of the program year as a follow-up to the program at the August WDB meeting. Mr. Sherrill will present that information in his report.

Mr. Moncrief called on Marie Gwyn to give the Youth Council report. Ms. Gwyn reported that the December Board Book (pp. 18-27) has detailed information regarding the Youth Council report. Ms. Gwyn reported that the Youth Council is now receiving monthly reports from service providers that include numbers served, areas served, activities, barriers, and other beneficial information. The service providers made presentations on their programs at the November Youth Council meeting. Ms. Gwyn reported that the Youth Council voted and approved to revise the Workforce Area policy for Youth with documented learning disabilities to set their goal to increase a half grade level rather than a full grade level. Ms. Gwyn reported that the Youth Council continues to look at and address program barriers that are encountered by providers and Youth. Ms. Gwyn reported that the Youth Council is sponsoring a Community Forum for the Southern Growth Policies Board to be held January 10, 2008 at High Country Council of Governments. Lunch will be provided then the forum will begin around 1:00 p.m. This event will be partnering with Chilton Rogers from the Appalachian Regional Development Institute of Appalachian State University. Around 70 invitations have been sent out to the Youth Council, school superintendents, and other people in the counties. Ms. Gwyn encouraged those who receive invitations to please notify WDB staff and come to the event. Ms. Gwyn stated that Jennie Harpold of the Youth Council will be the forum moderator.

Mr. Moncrief reported that the program today included a high-demand industry presentation on Information Technology (IT). Mr. Moncrief said the two presenters include Mike Bloomquist and Dr. James Young. Mr. Moncrief asked Rebecca Bloomquist to make the introductions. Ms. Bloomquist provided some trivia regarding the rapid changes in technology and computer storage devices. Ms. Bloomquist reported that the US is 20th in the world in broadband penetration. Luxemburg just passed the US in getting DSL services and high-speed Internet. One out of every eight couples married in 2005 met online. As of September 2006 there were over 160 million registered users of www.MySpace.com. If that website was a country, it would be the 11th largest in the world in between Japan and Mexico. The average MySpace page is visited 30 times a day. There are over 2.7 billion searches done every month on Google. The number of text messages sent and received every day exceeds the population of the planet. The amount of new technology information is doubling every two years. For a student entering a four-year field of study in IT, half of what they learn in their first year of study will be outdated by their third year of study. The third generation of optical fibers is underground and used for telephone and Internet. This new technology was recently tested and found to transmit at 10 trillion bits per second down one fiber strand. This is the equivalent of sending 1,900 CDs or 150 million simultaneous phone calls every second down one fiber strand. This technology is currently tripling in its development every six months and is expected to do so for at least the next 20 years. The fiber is already in the ground, so cost to upgrade is marginal for companies because only the equipment on the end must be upgraded. By 2013 it is expected that a supercomputer will be built that will be able to exceed the computation capabilities of the human brain. That same supercomputer in 2023 will be like the \$1,000 computer now available at Dell. By 2049 that same \$1,000 computer will have the capability to exceed the computational capabilities of the human brain. Ms. Bloomquist reported on the differences in the terms *Information Technology* and *Computer Science*. Ms. Bloomquist reported that www.dictionary.com defines *Information Technology* (taken from the *Online Dictionary of Computing*) as follows: "Complied computer systems, both hardware and software, and often including networking and telecommunications usually in the context of a business or other enterprise; often the name of the part of the enterprise that deals with all things electronic." *Computer Science* refers to the more theoretical and academic studies of computers. Ms. Bloomquist reported that between 2002 and 2012 (and it is already almost 2008) the IT sector of the workforce is expected to have a 68% increase just in that 10-year period. Ms. Bloomquist reported that 92% of all IT workers do not work for an IT company such as Apple, Microsoft, IBM, or Google. These people work in businesses, hospitals, government, and other places. Ms. Bloomquist said 80%

of that 92% are small companies. Those people have training in whatever field they are in like manufacturing, finance, or healthcare.

Ms. Bloomquist reported that two professional guests were present to provide insight about workforce issues regarding Information Technology. Mike Bloomquist will present an employer perspective. Mr. Bloomquist is the IT Director for US Buildings in Boone and US Chemical Storage in Wilkesboro. He will address what IT means for those non-IT companies, what IT does, and how IT affects their business. Dr. James Young from Appalachian State University (ASU) will present an educational perspective. Dr. Young is Chair of the Geography and Planning Department at ASU. He will explain Geospatial Technology which is not just a GPS unit taken on a hike or put in a car. Ms. Bloomquist gave the floor over to the presenters.

Mike Bloomquist reported that his job description as IT Director includes upgrading and repairing PCs, designing and implementing new networks, and troubleshooting and repair. If it plugs into the wall, his job duty is to fix it. With many small companies that describes an IT person—the fix-all for almost all the electronic systems. Mr. Bloomquist stated that 11 years ago when he began work with his company they had only one computer. The accountant used that computer which weighed 80 lbs. and ran only one program. At present the company has over 120 employees who each have their own individual computer. This does not count additional computers used for data transfer or servers. They now have more computers than they do employees. That trend will do nothing but continue to grow. The telemarketing industry and sales people employed to sell their product each have their own workstations. They now have the ability from their desk to send out information to customers and clients through FedEx, email, and fax without having to leave their chairs. This trend where everything is done from a central location will continue to grow. This situation allows workers access to Internet, email, network services, company documentation, and company information. Things are tied together more now than they have ever been. Some of the statistics Ms. Bloomquist mentioned earlier will only continue to grow at an exponential rate according to Mr. Bloomquist. The admin people who do data entry for the company have access to a database containing company information, clients, and orders. This same database is connected through an Internet connection to their sister office located in Florida. That location has access to the exact same information at the exact same time allowing for complete synchronization of all information without the need for faxing. Another technology they use for communication is instant messaging. This allows people to instantly communicate from anywhere via the computer without having to pick up the phone, send a fax, or drop off a sticky note. Mr. Bloomquist said their transportation department ships all over the country. This department uses customized software that allows trucking dispatchers to plot routes based on delivery locations, road conditions, road widths, and restrictions without having to actually pull out a map. The system plots the best course based on the information it has. Yearly updates are received due to road construction, so their trucking routes are continually updated. US Buildings has an almost fully automated factory. They can now produce one of their buildings in approximately 30 minutes. About five years ago they purchased a computerized row pulling machine which allows one employee to produce virtually all of their parts very quickly. This employee has no computer training. The computer program was written in French, she is French, and the error messages are in French. This is a language barrier not only based on what language is spoken but the knowledge of the person working on the machines as well. Their factory workers are required to have some computer skills in order to be able to do the work. US Chemical Storage manufacturing is completely opposite and all done manually. The machinery cannot be designed to produce the building because the building is custom. That being said, a worker begins a shift by punching in through a computer. The computer tells the worker exactly what to work on that day, tools needed, and parts needed from the stock room. When done with the project, the worker returns to that same touch-screen, clocks out of the job allowing the company to do time studies, labor tracking, payroll, and automatic ordering for anything used that day. If a certain part has fallen below a limit during that day, an email is sent to a supplier ordering that part for shipment as soon as possible. This is all done through touch-screen. They have structural engineers who have completely different computer problems. Rather than a factory employee that may need to be taught what it means to “click” with the mouse, an engineer with a video card may have a problem that requires ½ hour of troubleshooting. These widespread differences in worker knowledge are becoming more common in the workplace, especially with the next generation coming through the school system. Students are now learning more about computers by the fifth grade than most of their parents ever learned. Some college classes Mr. Bloomquist took are now being taught in high school. Students are getting more and more advanced. Mr. Bloomquist stated that the workforce needs to do the same. As IT Director Mr. Bloomquist deals with daily issues like inability to login due to a worker's caps lock being on, troubleshooting 8,000 lines of code at the factory because one piece coming out is 32/inch off, addressing the security system due to a security break-in, copy machine breakdowns, fax machine trouble, or the company owner having a cell phone problem. This is the big gap in IT work. Mr. Bloomquist said questions involved include: when does a company need an IT person; how big do they have to be; can a consulting firm work? For the most part a consulting firm will work until the company grows large enough. At that point they need an IT

person. The company must determine if the IT person needs to be on call, when a computer problem is hindering business, and if a dollar value can be assigned to the amount of time lost when computers are down. If this is the case, it might be worthwhile to have somebody on call. At some point companies will need a staff of IT workers. Most small companies can deal with one or two people. Large companies need specialists trained in areas of network security, Internet routing, computer repairs, and software design. Small companies generally need a person to take care of office electronic equipment. Computers are machines just like cars are machines. Just as mechanics are specially trained to take care of vehicles, IT people are trained to take care of different types of computer equipment. One thing IT people have in common is they are all problem solvers. Most of them took their toys or household appliances apart as children. They have a common trait of being able to look at a problem and trace it back to its root. Every technology problem that IT workers will run into cannot be taught because there are too many. How to solve problems can be taught. If a person can solve problems, then they can be effective no matter what they are repairing. Mr. Bloomquist had a couple of college interns who had excelled academically with honors, but they could not open a computer and solve a problem. That was an issue. They had no knowledge they could directly apply to what they were doing even though they were trained in the field. Mr. Bloomquist said if he had the choice he would rather hire someone who likes to take things apart and tinker because they know how to trace problems back to the root and solve them. This is something harder to teach. Mr. Bloomquist said all the technology out there that is changing all the time is still easier to teach.

Mr. Bloomquist answered questions. Gwen Harris asked what the college major would be of someone who wanted a job like Mr. Bloomquist had. Mr. Bloomquist answered that the CS field is heavy in mathematics. The CIS field is more business related. The choice would depend on the personality of the person. Soft skills are very important for people in the IT field. Even though they work with computers all day, the computers are run by people. IT people must be able to talk to employees to explain why things are not working without making anyone feel inferior. CIS would be the best choice if a person wanted to go into business. Excellent certification programs exist through many different outlets. Dr. Carol Pollard stated that she teaches in the CIS Department at ASU. She said that department teaches a number of certifications including project management, security, infrastructure, networks. They do not certify within their courses, but they do teach to the certification programs that are out there. They provide a service to students through different associations by providing enrollment fee discounts for those courses. She said the CIS program prepares students to be liaisons between Computer Science and the business. They prepare problem solvers, systems analysts, business analysts, project managers, security specialist, network specialist, and others. They teach some of the higher programming languages in that department as well. They are on the business end of things with a technical and managerial bent as compared to Computer Science where systems are built or software is produced. Mr. Bloomquist added that most people have heard of a Chief Operating Officer (COO). This position is similar to an IT Director or Chief Information Officer (CIO). IT people are usually involved in every aspect of company processes in some form. They work with virtually every application or computer system the company owns. Very few other departments have that kind of integration without being high level management. Joe Furman asked Mr. Bloomquist what computer skills his company is looking for in its other employees. Mr. Bloomquist responded that his company has a lot of custom-written software, but most software is now standardized with file and cut-and-paste functions. He said employees must be able to use a word processor—like Microsoft Word or Microsoft Works, Excel, and the Internet. Many programs now are Internet based, and some people still do not have skills to use the Internet. Ms. Bloomquist then gave the floor over to the second presenter.

Dr. James Young thanked the Board for the opportunity to speak about geography and technology. He said like many other university disciplines and departments, the Department of Geography and Planning has become very dependent upon technology to do its work. Many tasks formerly done using old-fashioned printed maps are now completed using sophisticated computer systems. The acronym GIS (Geographic Information Systems) is part of a broad geospatial and technological approach to dealing with many problems in society. The geography community got excited about 3-5 years ago when the US Department of Labor identified what it considered to be the top three emerging and evolving fields in terms of labor needs. The first and second fields identified were nanotechnology and biotechnology which many people have heard about and understand. The third field identified was geotechnology which generally elicits blank stares in terms of what it means and what it involves. Dr. Young said technology is an important tool for carrying out the geographic analysis. Being able to use those tools in an effective manner is an important objective of what they teach in his department. Examples of how geospatial technologies affect people every day include using GIS in terms of routing the trucks at Mr. Bloomquist's place of business. People are familiar with Garmin and Tom Tom as systems related to GPS for finding the way. Google Earth is also available. The evening news gives a sense of this as well when they zoom in to satellite imagery or a map to show what is happening in a particular place. There is a big "wow" factor involved with those applications of geospatial technology. To some degree that is changing people's images about what it is geographers do, what planners do, and what some of the technologies available now can do to

help people live better lives and make better decisions in different parts of the world. Recent news items include the Association of American Geographers (AAG) Newsletter with the headline *Geographers Fight California Wildfires*. Geographers were not out there with hoses actually fighting wildfires, but in response to those widespread and devastating fires in California a group of San Diego State University geographers formed an emergency GIS task force. They performed on-time, immediate analysis of fires and where things were problematic. They developed on-the-fly emergency evacuation routes and performed many kinds of immediate work using satellite imagery and other sources of geotechnology information now available. Dr. Young reported that one department graduate in the aftermath of September 11th worked for a company that formed an emergency GIS response team in New York. The team performed on-the-fly real-time analysis of what was happening and assisted emergency forces in rescue and later recovery-types of operations. The ability to look at information in real-time using various geospatial technology tools in order to complete online, on-time, and real-time analysis have now become very important in our daily lives. Dr. Young said an article was published in a number of papers that described work being done around Asheville to calculate the full value of state's farmland. That area is facing many of the same issues that the High Country is facing. One issue is loss of farmland and how to put a value on the farmland. Dr. Young said perhaps there is more value to farmland than what a developer is willing to pay. There is value associated with how people feel about the land and esthetic value with scenery and landscape. The question is how to account for those things. The article focuses on the economist leading the study and sociologist who has done some of the work. Dr. Young's attention was drawn to one statement buried down in the story: *The study will put new mapping software tools into the hands of policy makers, environmentalists, developers, and others to see how fast farmland is being swallowed by development.* This statement refers to a complement of the project which ASU faculty member Dr. Art Rex is currently working on with a graduate student. Dr. Rex is developing a GIS for this particular area and project to develop models of how to account for things other than just monetary value put on a piece of land. These are recent examples with applications of geospatial technology. This technology includes a wide variety of components. Mr. Bloomquist mentioned some of those components. Also included are GPS (Global Positioning Satellite) systems which are the foundation for all the devices that determine one's location or direct one where to go. The components includes remote sensing, satellite imagery, aerial photography, and many kinds of sensors now available to collect this information (radar and lazars in the form of lidar systems). There are many ways to collect information from satellites ranging from vans that drive down the street to photogrammetry, surveying, mapping, and GIS. Those are all terms and acronyms a part of geospatial technology. All of this revolves around the idea that *place matters*. Geographers are interested in what is happening in particular places, why things happen some places and not others, and what makes a place unique compared to another. They want to know what particular aspects of the location and people who live in these places are important so there will not be blanket policy decisions made with the expectation that it will apply equally everywhere. Geospatial technologies are tools to help understand what is happening in particular places. A GIS is essentially a giant database with hundreds or thousands of pieces of information about a place. That information can be analyzed in order to answer many simple and complicated questions about a particular place. For example, Dr. Young's department had a meeting a few weeks ago with a Blue Ridge Parkway representative responsible for all GIS on the Parkway. The man began his career as a landscape architect but by default became the GIS expert for the Parkway. He shared with Dr. Young's group the projects that needed to be done on the Parkway to find out if he could get the help he needed. His needs included simple inventories for some 14,000 signs along the Parkway to determine what was out there. They needed to know where each sign was located, what kind of sign it was, and what condition it was in. The Parkway is obviously very concerned about all the development going on around them. They are interested in doing view shed analysis to determine how certain developments done in certain locations will affect the views that tourists come to see at particular waysides. Tourists do not want to see factories or houses but rather trees, lakes, and deer. GIS is a way to help understand and analyze what possible things are coming with certain changes. GIS and other components of geospatial technologies tie information together by place or location. This takes a simple or complicated spreadsheet making it geographic as it is tied to locations and the information analyzed within the context of those locations. Dr. Young shared a couple of copies of an article in the *Journal of Nature* dealing with mapping and geospatial technologies, what the future holds for that, and information on careers in geography. GIS is now one of those very important careers within the discipline of geography. Over the last decade the students in Dr. Young's department concentrating in GIS has gone up considerably due to abundant job opportunities. Dr. Young stated that they knew of no student graduating from their department who had not been able to obtain a job in geospatial technology if they wanted one. An internship is a requirement for completion of a GIS concentration geography degree. The department receives many requests for interns and people looking for jobs in geography, planning, and other related disciplines. In terms of training individuals for these jobs, understanding technology is an important part. They are not training people to maintain the computers. They discovered a long time ago that keeping track of the 100-plus computers, maintaining them, and keeping everything going was more than what individual faculty members could handle. They were able to get an IT

position in their department where that is her primary responsibility—even though she got her degree in geography. She has done a lot of on-the-job learning in terms of technology. That is the sort of experience Mr. Bloomquist referred to as being important to IT positions. Dr. Young's department is interested in training people to think like geographers then be able to use the tools of geography to be able to understand spatial problems. The types of abilities that Mr. Bloomquist talked about—the ability to think, to be flexible in thinking, to be able to problem-solve—are very important for students to have going into this field. Dr. Young pointed out the map hanging on the wall behind him in the Board Room. He said it was produced by Highland Mapping, a private company in the High Country, all of whom are graduates of his department. Dr. Young said geospatial technology has become important in geography and in many other disciplines. They have large numbers of biology students, geology students, and students from other disciplines coming to their department to do GIS because they are all interested in issues with a spatial component. Few disciplines do not play out over space over the earth's surface. Dr. Young said that is what geography and geospatial technologies are all about.

Dr. Young then took questions. Scott Moncrief asked about typical preparation course students would take prior to entering Dr. Young's field. Dr. Young answered that in terms of training there are a wide variety of opportunities. Central Piedmont Community College is in the process of developing a geospatial technology program with a variety of certificates along with an associate degree to allow people to do some basic data gathering, analysis, and procedures. The coursework there and at more advanced university levels include a foundation in geography. GIS is in the Geography Department at ASU. Geospatial technologies are typically located in geography departments in many places in the county. Geospatial technologies may be found in other places. For example, Haywood Community College has a GIS program in their forestry program. Students with a geography foundation should be able to think like geographers. They should be able to think spatially—to determine how things play out on the surface of the earth and determine what factors are involved in why something is here but not there. Students obtain a geography degree and take many basic geography courses. The Central Piedmont Community College associate program also gives students basic introductory geography courses. Beyond that students will begin specializing in various aspects of GIS. They obtain much hands-on experience with software, especially with the industry leader Arc GIS. Students also study theory regarding why they are doing what they are doing. In order to have well-trained people who can think and problem-solve there must be more than just pushing certain buttons in a certain sequence. This involves thinking about what is going on and determining what the important variables are. Courses take a certain sequence including computer mapping, GIS, and remote sensing. The courses are all geared toward pulling information together from a variety of sources, thinking about how that information comes together, and then using the tools by pushing the buttons in ways that get the appropriate information. People can work in the discipline with certificates, 2-year degrees, 4-year degrees, and up to PhDs. Dr. Young said there is a variety of job opportunities in the discipline of geospatial technologies that require a wide range of expertise and skills.

Ms. Bloomquist asked Dr. Carol Pollard from ASU to talk about her new program to help small businesses. Dr. Pollard reported that they have developed a new service focusing more around students rather than faculty research. The service is being offered particularly to small firms that are not able to deal with their own technology issues. Her program comes out of the Computer Information Systems Department where they are a liaison between business and new technology. They are raising the problem-solving in the business and information systems or information technology area. The name of the institute is CARET (Center for Applied Research in Emerging or Enabling Technologies). They would like to offer small firms a student project that can answer their questions and help in areas like web development, business processes, analyzing information systems, implementing or installing systems, evaluating software and hardware, determining if they need to purchase or move in new directions, assessing security issues around business and technology, developing databases, and conducting training. They can go the whole gamut from needing technology or thinking they need technology, looking at processes, evaluating choices, bringing that in, doing their training, updating or maintaining information systems already in place, and even assessing how well it is helping their business. The idea is for the institute to match the problems of that particular firm with good students in their department who would be particularly skilled in answering those kinds of questions and solving those kinds of problems. Faculty advisors would put together a team of students for larger problems. The institute would charge for the service but not anywhere near consulting costs in order to make it easier for small firms. They would charge a little more than the students are actually worth in order to set up some competitive scholarships to entice more students into that field. Dr. Pollard stated that they are in the process of setting up this service. She is co-Executive Director of the institute along with Dr. Scott Schneberger. This is a brand new institute at the university with the model in the formation stages. Dr. Pollard said they welcome any input from those in attendance. They are excited about making a difference in this area particularly for small firms. They do have backing of some large firms including IBM, Lowe's, Wachovia, and Bank of America. Dr. Pollard then took questions. Don Sherrill asked how the service will be marketed. Dr. Pollard answered that she is going around

to groups such as the WDB. They are working with an advisory board which advises their department as a whole. She said word of mouth is the best way to get this out right now. Dr. Pollard encouraged everyone to mention the opportunity to other people. She said they will also be putting together marketing brochures for distribution in the future.

The guest panelists were given WDB umbrellas and coasters as tokens of appreciation from the Board.

Don Sherrill presented Workforce Briefings, during which he reported that the handouts on the tables included a brief financial report for the first quarter of the program year. The August WDB meeting had included a presentation on Workforce Investment Act (WIA) financial information. The Board at that time requested it be provided some type of periodic financial reporting. The handout represented the first attempt to honor that request for information. Mr. Sherrill said the report had program funds broken down by Adult/Dislocated Worker and Youth services because two separate RFPs are sent out for these services. The report included funds for WIA service providers and High Country Council of Governments Youth services. The report included fund amounts available, year-to-date expenditures, balance at 10/1/2007, and percent expended. Mr. Sherrill stated that some challenges with the first quarter were unique. The funding from the US Department of Labor includes a little less than a quarter of Adult/Dislocated Worker funding in July. Those funds are expected to last through September. Another funding allocation is received in October that is expected to carry through June. The fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30. The second unique part is that the funding should be received early in July, but the state usually does not receive the allocation until the third week of July. The state is good about turning that around fairly quickly, and the same happens in October. There is a little gap in anticipating the funds and actually receiving them. That makes the first quarter a little slower in expenditures because providers are a little hesitant to spend money that they really do not have. Mr. Sherrill stated that there are certain levels of program management that occur in-house at High Country Council of Governments (HCCOG. The HCCOG currently picks up some of the overhead costs for the Wilkes JobLink Center. The report included the Incumbent Worker grants which are statewide activity projects. Those are unique because they are funded project by project based on the business applying. Other grants are applied for on behalf of the Board and received for other kinds of functions. Those are included next in the report as statewide activity projects such as WDB business services, one-stop enhancement activities, accountability functions relative to the client management system (producing reports, ensuring information is accurately keyed into the system, and data validation processes), WDB capacity building (enhancing the Board's effectiveness in setting policy and getting at workforce issues in the region), and performance incentive activities. The next report component included purely financial and administrative functions that occur at High Country Council of Governments as the fiscal agent for these funds. Mr. Sherrill stated that the expenditures are somewhat all over the board due to timing when the funding came in during the quarter. The Board is probably a little low this year at the end of the first quarter. This is not unique to this particular year. One reason is due to the loss of a considerable amount of formula dollars from last year to this year. About \$232,000 in Dislocated Worker formula funding was lost. Some Adult funding as well as a little Youth funding was also lost. Board staff did not know how much carryover was going to exist, so the year started off a little slow. Some additional emergency Dislocated Worker funds were obtained. The region has experienced some layoffs and closures to support those requests. Mr. Sherrill asked Board members for feedback as to whether this was the kind of report they would like to see in the future or with more or less detail. He stated he would be glad to answer any questions that members had regarding the report. Board members (Halsey, Moncrief, Harris, and Gwyn) discussed and agreed that this financial report consists of the level of detail they would like to see in the future. Mr. Sherrill stated that Board staff would continue with this quarterly report format and adjust it as needed in the future in order to keep the Board up to date. Mr. Sherrill reported that members had handouts in front of them on the tables of US Department of Commerce economic distress Tier rankings for counties. The region has three counties in what is considered the 40-most distressed counties economically as a Tier 1 ranking: Alleghany, Mitchell, and Yancey Counties. The remaining four counties are in a Tier 2 ranking: Ashe, Avery, Watauga, and Wilkes. Mr. Sherrill this information was recently released by State Commerce Secretary Jim Fain. Mr. Sherrill reported that the Workforce Area met its performance measures for Program Year 2006 consisting of 17 federal measures. The December Board Book has the letter from the state (p. 36) and the performance report (p. 37). The Board received a financial award for that performance (p. 38). Mr. Sherrill reported that Steve Forrest from Brushy Mountain Bee Farm spoke at the last WDB meeting regarding the Incumbent Worker grant his company received. They received a Safety Award for exemplary workplace practices from the NC Department of Labor. North Carolina Commissioner of Labor Cherie Berry was present to present the award. Only 63 North Carolina companies out of over 280,000 businesses have received this designation. There were several WDB members in attendance at the awards luncheon including Anne Bowlin, Jayne Phipps-Boger, and Earl Tipton. Mr. Sherrill introduced Mr. Tipton to comment on his impression of the awards luncheon.

Mr. Tipton reported that those present at Mr. Forrest's presentation to the Board would remember how enthusiastic he was. That remained the same at his place of business. Mr. Tipton said he was greatly impressed by Mr. Forrest and privileged to go on the tour of the business. Mr. Tipton said nobody has ever used a grant for any better services. He said Mr. Forrest has put it to good use and is very appreciative of it. The bee farm has many mini industries within his major industry. There is woodworking, sewing, warehousing, shipping, and order taking. Mr. Forrest had said he was the largest user of UPS in Wilkes County with two shipments going out per day shipping all over the world. Mr. Tipton urged all members to call Mr. Forrest and tour the Brushy Mountain Bee Farm because it is a good operation. Mr. Forrest is very knowledgeable in his field, is enthusiastic, and visitors will learn a great deal. Honey can be purchased in a retail outlet. Mr. Tipton said those on the tour were given samples of sourwood honey. He was very impressed with the tour and found it to be a rewarding experience. Board members attending were glad to see the grant money being put to good use. Mr. Tipton stated that some of the woodworking tools had been purchased at a fraction of the cost from some of the closed furniture factories. The Department of Labor has helped him organize his production line into a safe and efficient line. Mr. Tipton said Mr. Forrest was enthusiastic. The tour, presentation, and open house were very good. Mr. Tipton stated that he was very glad to be a part of the event.

Mr. Sherrill added that Mr. Forrest was so enthusiastic that attendees came out of the tour thinking they should probably have some bees whether they needed them or not. Mr. Sherrill said it was no wonder Mr. Forrest is a success because of how he puts his love and energy into his business. Mr. Sherrill reported that Carole Coates applied for an award with the National Workforce Association. This Association is a part of the National Association of Counties. The focus of the nomination was centered on the Board's innovative approach to business services around this region. Even though former Board Business Services Representative Ken Cone has moved on, the Board plans at some point to fill his position and also have business services representatives out in the actual One-Stop Centers. Ms. Coates turned in the nomination, and Board staff found out about a week ago that the WDB was selected to receive that award. The award was presented in Florida, but Board staff were unable to attend the presentation in person due to notification of only half a day before the event. Mr. Sherrill said the December Board Book (pp. 50-49: *the two pages were inadvertently reversed*) has the nomination. Mr. Sherrill reported that Board staff have been informed that a new company coming to Wilkes County called Industrial Process Solutions, Inc. will be located in the old Carolina Mirror facility on Highway 268E in North Wilkesboro. They plan to hire 91 employees over the next year and will be using new technology to manufacture portable units that tire manufacturers or landfills can extract byproducts with then use to create synthetic diesel fuel. Mr. Sherrill said there is a wide range of jobs they will be filling. Mr. Sherrill reported that statewide news included the announcement that Craven Community College President Dr. Scott Ralls has been selected to serve as the new President of the North Carolina Community College System when Martin Lancaster retires. Mr. Sherrill reported that the Division of Workforce Development has put out its annual reports. One report focuses on performance and another on success stories for all Workforce Areas around the state. Mr. Sherrill said copies of both reports were available on the side table in the Board Room for Board members who were interested. Misty Bishop-Price added that one of the pictures on the front was of a youth from the High Country region.

Mr. Moncrief addressed Other Member Business by reporting that on September 7th the WDB bestowed on him an award he did not expect or feel he deserved. Mr. Moncrief held up the award that he brought with him and thanked the Board. He said he did not feel he did anything outstanding as the award describes, but he believed all Board members take what they do seriously. Mr. Moncrief thanked all members and expressed his sincere appreciation for the award.

Mr. Moncrief asked for public comments. Barbara Barlow said that Don Sherrill had mentioned that Brushy Mountain Bee Farm was one of only 63 North Carolina companies to receive a Safety Award. She reported that last week in Ashe County AEV (American Emergency Vehicles) received their Star Safety Award from the Department of Labor as a part of a three-year endeavor. Mr. Sherrill stated that was a great achievement and Board staff will try to cover that in the next Board Book. Ms. Barlow stated she could provide contact information for that. Ms. Barlow reported that United Chemi-Con's Rising Star application has been accepted and they are working toward that. Mr. Sherrill added that Board staff will try to publicize that information as well because they are both local achievements people need to know about. Mr. Sherrill reported that as special thanks for their hard work and dedication to the local workforce system all Board members were being given a gift bag containing an autographed copy of the book *The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree* by Avery County author Gloria Houston. Ms. Houston has given over the rights for her book. There is now a catalog where books can be ordered along with local products created to go along the theme of the book. This project has turned into quite a business. Jim Halsey commented that it was an interesting concept. Tommy Williams reported that training for

that was provided by Mayland Community College. Ruby Greene reminded members to complete their evaluations. With no other comments given, the meeting was adjourned.

The next Board meeting will be Thursday, February 14, 2008 at 3:00 p.m. at the High Country Council of Governments in Boone.

**High Country Workforce Development Board
Attendance Sheet
December 13, 2007**

%	Name	Dec 06	Feb 07	April 07	June 07	Aug 07	Oct 07	Dec 07
43%	Jim Halsey							
71%	Scott Moncrief (eff 3/06)							
71%	Jayne Phipps-Boger						after start	
86%	Barbara Barlow (eff 9/28/06)							
100%	Dwayne Howell (eff 11/20/07)							
86%	Carol Coulter						after start	
86%	Sam Ray							
29%	Susan Pittman							
100%	Marie Gwyn							
100%	Vacant (Mitchell Private)							
50%	Steve English (eff 2/5/07)							
57%	Connie Barnette					after start		
71%	Doug Pratt							
57%	Sandra Reese							after start
43%	Ben Shoemake (eff 12/06)							
71%	Vanya Baker							
86%	Maria Cunningham (eff 12/06)							
100%	Anne Bowlin							
100%	Gwen Harris						after start	
20%	Vacant (Yancey Private)							
100%	Earl Tipton (eff 8/07)							
0%	Vacant (At Large CBO)							
0%	Vacant (At Large Labor)							
		80%	75%	60%	74%	70%	61%	63%

PRESENT
ABSENT
VACANCY

Youth Council Members Present

Tommy Williams