

HIGH COUNTRY WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

June 14, 2007

MINUTES

The June 14th meeting of the High Country Workforce Development Board was called to order by Chairman Doug Pratt.

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

Vanya Baker	Maria Cunningham	Scott Moncrief
Barbara Barlow	Steve English	Carol Peters
Connie Barnette	Marie Gwyn	Jayne Phipps-Boger
Anne Bowlin	Jennie Harpold (YC)	Doug Pratt
Carol Coulter	Gwen Harris	Sandra Reese

The following Workforce Development staff members were present: Misty Bishop-Price, Carole Coates, Ken Cone (contractual), Andrea Morgan, and Don Sherrill.

Guests: Rebecca Bloomquist, Sandra Buchanan, Calvin Dull, John L. Greene, Rick Herndon, Elaine Lockhart, Patrick McKemie, Dr. Patricia Mitchell, Chris Robinson, Chilton Rogers, Dr. Ivan Roten, Julia Rowland, Ginger Shaffer, Azalee Simandle, Melody Tippins, and Pam Wilson.

Mr. Pratt asked for consideration of the April 12, 2007 minutes. Members voted unanimously with no abstentions to approve the minutes as written.

Mr. Pratt presented the Executive Committee report starting with the WDB/COG Agreement. Members were given an updated agreement handout. Carole Coates reviewed changes made by the COG attorney, Executive Director, and COG Advisory Committee. Numbers 2-4 were combined. Numbers 6-7 were deleted. Number 5 under the last set of numbers was added. Ms. Coates discussed number 5 regarding liability issues due to potential errors of the WDB. Mr. Pratt stated that the WDB needs to get clarification on this section since other existing agreements designate liability to the Consortium. Scott Moncrief made a motion that clarification be sought regarding legal implications of this section and that the WDB Chairman be given authority to sign a modified agreement pending review and approval of Executive Committee. Marie Gwyn seconded. Motion unanimously approved with no abstentions.

Mr. Pratt reported that Caldwell Community College is opting out of its contract to provide Workforce Investment Act (WIA) adult/dislocated worker services and business services for Watauga County as of June 30, 2007. Mr. Pratt presented Elaine Lockhart from Caldwell to make comments. Ms. Lockhart stated that they regret having to opt out, but administratively they cannot carry the load and do the job as well as they would like. After providing services for the last several months, the college believes they can serve the High Country and WIA better by getting back to their core mission of education and training. Mr. Pratt thanked Caldwell for their work for the past few months. Potential options were distributed to Board members to ensure uninterrupted services for Watauga. Ms. Coates stated that current WIA A/DW service providers (Mayland and Wilkes Community Colleges) were contacted by WDB staff to determine an interest in serving Watauga County. Both expressed initial interest and are currently exploring this option. Discussion followed regarding a potential Watauga County service provider and the procurement process (Reese, Pratt, Coates, Harris, Barnette, Lockhart, Coulter, Gwyn, Baker, Moncrief, Barlow, Simandle, Sherrill, Dull, and Wilson).

Carol Coulter made a motion that (1) if both Mayland and Wilkes express a desire to provide services to initiate a competitive bid for those two entities only; (2) if only one current provider indicates a firm interest, to use the Board's sole source option due to the urgency to ensure uninterrupted service; (3) if neither option (1) or (2) succeeds to provide services in-house (COG) for the fiscal year. Coulter's motion also included the stipulation that an evaluation be conducted four months before the end of the fiscal year; if the process is working well, then the WDB will award the contract for the second year without further competition, thus putting Watauga County on the same bid cycle as other counties. Marie Gwyn seconded. Discussion continued (Moncrief, Gwyn, Pratt, Coates, and Coulter). Ms. Coulter amended her motion regarding the first option to the following: (1) if both MCC and WCC are willing to provide services in Watauga County that an open competitive bid process be implemented using criteria outlined on the handout. Further discussion followed (Coulter, Coates, Pratt, Cunningham, Tippins, and Moncrief). Mr. Moncrief requested a further amendment to include an automatic competitive bid process next year instead of pending results of an evaluation. Discussion followed (Coulter, Moncrief, Coates, Pratt, and Sherrill). Ms. Coulter declined Mr. Moncrief's additional amendment to her amended motion. Marie Gwyn seconded the standing amended motion. Motion passed with one abstention (Phipps-Boger).

Mr. Pratt stated that the Youth Council and Quality Assurance Committee reports will be skipped at today's meeting due to time. Mr. Pratt called on Gwyn Harris to give the Nominating Committee report. Ms. Harris stated that Mr. Pratt agreed to continue to serve as WDB Chairman and Vanya Baker agreed to continue serving as WDB Vice-Chair. Ms. Harris made a motion that Doug Pratt continue as WDB Chair and Vanya Baker continue as WDB Vice-Chair. Sandra Reese seconded; there was no discussion. Motion passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Mr. Pratt introduced Dr. Ivan Roten from the Appalachian State University's Department of Finance, Banking, and Insurance to present the high-growth industry focus program on financial services. Dr. Roten distributed handouts to members and provided personal background information. He stated that financial planning is his passion and education is the answer--*all* education--including skills, vocations, and knowledge in general. Removing ignorance will answer all problems, according to Roten. Some high school students are not completing their education because they are unaware of the results. Creating opportunities for American workers involves reforming America's high schools where basic skills are developed, having an initiative to train high-skilled workers for the 21st century, tax reform, and focusing on opportunity zones to encourage public and private investment. Things are not the way they used to be. American families must now be helped by promoting comp-time and flex-time, cracking down in schools with security and otherwise, helping with home ownership, working on social security for everyone, and helping small businesses. Education is the future. Financial services in the High Country are plentiful but all need to work closer with those institutions to take advantage of available opportunities. There are going to be areas in banking and financial services that will have tremendous growth. Securities/commodities should be managed more here in the High Country. Tremendous growth will occur in life and health insurance (long-term care and disability) due to the baby boomers. Issues to deal with in each industry area involve how much education is needed to enter the field. Financial planning is the fastest growing area in financial services with a 30-40% growth. Work will come for people who are educated. Experience is needed and comes with motivation. Opportunities exist in areas of financial literacy, professional education, and market changes. High school students need to see earning charts showing how much more workers earn with advanced education. Dr. Roten stated that financial literacy courses in high school will help students see the importance of education. For people ages 35-64, approximately 40% of those have a degree. As generations get younger, the proportion of people obtaining college and advanced degrees decreases. The U.S. was at one time no. 2 in the world for graduation rates. The U.S. is currently 17th in the world. Dr. Roten supports required financial education in high schools and colleges. If people get trained they will create the jobs that are needed. Dr. Roten announced that there will be an education forum open to the public called 2007 Financial Literacy and Asset Building Conference in Chapel Hill at the Friday Center on October 8-9, 2007 to deal with these issues. Dr. Roten said once the basic education is taken care of then professional education (licenses and certifications) should be addressed. Dr. Roten discussed market changes for the current generations. This region has a large aging population, and there will be a need for everything that goes with that population. Dr. Roten believes that wages need to be made higher and workers more skilled so that housing and other things are affordable. An actuarial fact is that the longer you live the longer you are expected to live. This is a profound fact that will effect what is needed for the future. In-sourcing careers needs to be done in this area. This is where experts wanting to stay in the area are trained locally and jobs are created for them. In conclusion Dr. Roten stated that education is the key. Job markets always have risks, so all avenues must be examined continuously. The two things needed in people are *willingness* (an individual's perception) and *ability* (actual education and skills an individual has).

Mr. Pratt introduced Dr. Pat Mitchell, Ashe County Economic Development Director, to report on the Ashe County Workforce Development Task Force recommendations for developing Ashe County's workforce for the 21st century. Dr. Mitchell reported that in January 2006 Board staff member Don Sherrill presented the High Country State of the Workforce Report 2005 to the Ashe County Economic Development Commission. Carol Coulter is a member of that commission. The report generated considerable conversation among EDC members. As a result of that conversation, a local workforce development taskforce was formed to study the aspect of the report dealing with educational attainment, emerging workforce, and career awareness. Dr. Mitchell and Chris Robinson, Chair of the Ashe Economic Development Authority and Director of the Ashe Campus of Wilkes Community College, made presentations to the Board of Commissioners and Board of Education asking them to appoint representatives to this local taskforce. Dr. Mitchell and Mr. Robinson also approached industry and small business to serve on the taskforce. The taskforce met regularly over the past year and produced a report last month that included action items and 11 recommendations.

Chris Robinson distributed handouts of the taskforce recommendations along with an executive summary of the report. He stated that traditional production jobs in Ashe County, like in other parts of the country, are gone. The charge to the taskforce was to make recommendations for initiatives and policies that will develop the current, and most importantly, the future workforce. He stated that only 10% of the jobs in the new economy are available to high school dropouts; 22% to those with a high school diploma; 36% to those with some post secondary education; 31% to those with bachelor's degrees. He noted that one third of the people in Ashe County do not have a high school diploma. Mr. Robinson said taskforce sector representatives included manufacturing, health care, telecommunications, agriculture,

education, financial, and County Commission. The taskforce established the following five goals:

Goal 1: *Examining current best practices within the community and externally.*

Goal 2: *Enhancing the dialogue between business, industry, local government, policy makers, and educational agencies.*

Goal 3: *Proposing initiatives that positively impact current and future employees.*

Goal 4: *Identifying ongoing support for ongoing private/public collaboration.*

Goal 5: *Developing emerging ideas from the taskforce.*

The taskforce developed the following 11 recommendations:

Recommendation 1: *Continue to promote business/industry/education collaborations through development of an ongoing leadership roundtable to keep the lines of communication open.*

Recommendation 2: *Develop an advisory committee to work with Wilkes Community College (WCC) and Ashe County High School (ACHS) to increase apprenticeship and internship opportunities. The college, high school, and the advisory committee would also work with prospective employers to develop formal apprenticeship programs through the North Carolina Department of Labor. (**Relevancy** and **rigor** are important key words in education today.)*

Recommendation 3: *Improve the community's understanding of the Ashe JobLink Career Center and market its unique one-stop service model to job seekers and employers.*

Recommendation 4: *Develop a "last dollar" scholarship program for Ashe County students so that all students can financially afford to attend a North Carolina community college.*

Recommendation 5: *Encourage ongoing collaboration between WCC and ACHS to increase dual enrollment opportunities for high school students.*

Recommendation 6: *Develop an expert level Speakers Bureau comprised of a wide range of business and industry members that is focused on high skilled professions. Further, provide training to the speakers on reaching the appropriate audience. Finally, promote the bureau to teachers at all levels in order to have experts available to speak to appropriate classes on real-world job issues.*

Recommendation 7: *Provide teachers and college instructors the opportunity to visit and maintain ongoing communications with various workplaces to better understand the needs of local employers and to provide relevancy in the classroom.*

Recommendation 8: *Offer a local career fair for Ashe County Middle School and Ashe County High School students that focuses on career opportunities, especially those that are available in Ashe County. When possible, combine the career fair with a traditional job fair for adults, bringing parents into the school setting.*

Recommendation 9: *Develop an Ashe Leadership Challenge-type program specifically for teachers/educators.*

Recommendation 10: *Develop an advisory group of industry personnel, college instructors, and school personnel to maintain an ongoing dialogue on workforce development issues.*

Recommendation 11: *Expand summer and after-school enrichment opportunities (e.g., Med Camp and Entrepreneur Camp) to offer students of all ages the opportunity for career exploration.*

Mr. Robinson stated that the EDC is encouraging organizations to be the implementation arm for the taskforce report. The report will be presented to many groups in Ashe County over the summer. Those groups include Ashe EDC, Wilkes Community College, Ashe County High School, Ashe County Middle School, Ashe Board of Education, Ashe Board of Commissioners, Ashe JobLink Career Center, Business Service Representatives, business & industry community, and NCDOL. Mr. Robinson concluded by stating that the workforce development community must be problem solvers who can think in abstractions, analyze, and synthesize a wide range of information in order to develop programs and systems which ensure that every Ashe County citizen has the opportunity to gain the skills necessary to be competitive in the job market. Mr. Robinson said local problems must be solved at the local level, and this is the approach they are taking.

Dr. Mitchell stated that a teacher visitation program came out of the taskforce efforts. Very few teachers had ever been in industrial plants, and many had eye-opening experiences regarding the needed skills for such work. She commended Ashe County High School for their help with the program. They are also looking at starting a student visitation program and plan to market local careers in advanced manufacturing in order to train and recruit for Ashe County industries. This will assist with meeting industry needs and industry growth. In addition, they plan to build the youth programs to assist in developing industry-needed skills at early levels. Dr. Mitchell commended Don Sherrill for coming to Ashe County with the State of the Workforce Report 2005 and helping to generate excitement in the county.

Mr. Pratt introduced Carole Coates to present the Workforce Briefings. Ms. Coates thanked members for completing the Board self-evaluation for the NC Commission on Workforce Development's High-Performing Board Standards process. She reported that eleven responses were received from members. Ms. Coates distributed a compilation of responses that also included her own responses shown as a comparison. The handout depicts where the Board is in the strategic planning and State of the Workforce process. This helps the Board prepare for the upcoming state Board standards and determine what needs to be done. She noted that members were fairly consistent in their responses and that in general her responses matched those of members. In response to the question regarding whether the

Board has measures, timetables, and updates of the plan, Ms. Coates stated that the WDB does not. This did not come out of the SOW Report and is one of the things that the Board still needs to work on. The one real exception to consistency of responses was in identifying the labor market area and whether it extends beyond the 7 counties. Responses depended on where Board members live. She stated that as shown in the SOW report, the High Country area has 3 sub-regions. The Board will have some future discussion regarding this.

Ms. Coates reported that the National Business Learning Partnership mentor site visit occurred at the end of May. Mentors helped Board staff identify and address issues needing attention, especially in terms of updating the strategic plan and the need to narrow the focus. Ms. Coates said the planned agenda for today's meeting included discussion of the strategic plan. Due to time, the Chairman has said he will appoint a committee that will work with staff to update and fine tune the strategic plan. Following that, a folded document can be produced for distribution which identifies measures and specific timeframes corresponding to self-assessment measures. Ms. Coates reported that the NC Commission on Workforce Development is distributing a series of small grant opportunities that pertain to regional planning called Regional Skills Planning Grants. The first one is for regional collaboration that requires participation from three Boards and at least one economic development organization. The WDB has already completed and submitted this grant application, and Chairman Pratt signed it on the Board's behalf. Other boards included are Western Piedmont (Hickory and surrounding area), and Isothermal (Rutherford, McDowell, Cleveland, and Polk Counties.) The idea behind the grant is to develop a plan to implement ongoing opportunities for regional collaboration beyond each board's existing boundaries in order to provide a more standardized response to business and other workforce development needs. The High Country WDB will serve as the applicant for that grant on behalf of all partners. Other grants presently open include a regional allied health care workforce development planning grant. Those same workforce board areas anticipate being part of an application for that grant. An organization other than a workforce board will most likely be designated as the applicant. One of the three boards would serve as the fiscal agent for that grant. Ms. Coates reported that the Disabilities Navigator Position Grant discussed several months ago has finally been awarded to the Division of Employment and Training by USDOL. The Division expects to publicize that applicant shortly. This will also be a multi-regional grant and can be subcontracted to another organization, following established procurement procedures. Several boards will be looking at this grant and discussing the designation of a possible applicant. These two grants will be due in July, but the WDB does not have the RFPs for either one yet.

Mr. Pratt announced in Other Board Member Business that the July committee meetings will be changed from July 12th to August immediately before the August WDB meeting.

Mr. Pratt asked for public comments. Patrick McKemie stated that the next round of occupational industrial projections is now out. Mr. McKemie distributed new pamphlets on Long Term Occupational Projections 2004-2014 produced by the LMI Division of the ESC. Mr. McKemie said the data is very good, and they hope to have a corresponding poster out soon. Pamphlets are available from Ken Cone and have been distributed to area JobLink Career Centers. Additional pamphlets are available from Mr. McKemie.

Ms. Coates reported that the August WDB meeting will focus on the fiscal aspect of operations of the Workforce Investment Act which many Board members have expressed interest in.

There being no other public comments, the meeting was adjourned.

The next Board meeting will be Thursday, August 9, 2007 at 3 PM at the High Country Council of Governments in Boone.

**High Country Workforce Development Board
Attendance Sheet
June 14, 2007**

%	Name	June 06	July 06	Aug 06	Sep 14 06	Sep 28 06	Nov 06	Dec 06	Feb 07	April 07	June 07
60%	Jim Halsey										
80%	Scott Moncrief (eff 3/06)										
70%	Jayne Phipps-Boger										
100%	Barbara Barlow (eff 9/28/06)										
83%	Carol Peters (eff 9/28/06)										
80%	Carol Coulter					:46 after start					
70%	Sam Ray						after start				
60%	Susan Pittman										
100%	Marie Gwyn										
86%	Vacant (Mitchell Private)										
100%	Steve English (eff 2/5/07)										
60%	Connie Barnette										
100%	Doug Pratt										
80%	Sandra Reese										
50%	Ben Shoemake (eff 12/06)										
70%	Vanya Baker										
75%	Maria Cunningham (eff 12/06)										
90%	Anne Bowlin										
90%	Gwen Harris										
50%	Wendell Wilson										
0%	Vacant (Yancey Private)										
11%	Vacant (At Large CBO)			Maternity Leave	Maternity Leave	via phone					
0%	Vacant (At Large Labor)										
		67%	56%	88%	71%	89%	78%	80%	75%	60%	74%

PRESENT
ABSENT
VACANCY

Youth Council Members Present

Jennie Harpold