

**Workforce Development Board (WDB)  
Merced County DWI  
Hilmar Cheese  
9001 N Lander Ave-Visitor's Center  
Hilmar, CA 95324  
March 23, 2022, 3:00 p.m.**



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**Members Present:**

Jorge De Nava	Greg Vincelet	Steve Tietjen	Joe R. Perez
Leslie Abasta-Cummings	Mark Hendrickson	Michelle Skoor	Tim Robertson
Daron McDaniel	Joshua Lepper	Jeff Segars	David Ness
	Amie Marchini	Chris Vitelli	Chris Winek

**Members Absent:**

Tim O'Neill	Steve Hobbs	
Michael Altomare	Chudy Nnebe	Vinton Thengvall
Jack Mobley	Satvir Arias	

**Others Present:**

Raul Mendez, David Mirrione, Erick Serrato, Reyna Espinoza, Mario Pena, Valente Huitron, Martha Torres, Holly Newlon, Mark Shelton, Scout Fuentez, Patricia Hinson, Stephanie Vue

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- 1. Call to Order/ Roll Call: The Chair,** Mrs. Leslie Abasta-Cummings, called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm. She thanked Hilmar Cheese for hosting the meeting.
  - 2. Host Welcome:** Canceled
  - 3. Public Opportunity to Speak:** None
  - 4. Customer Impact Comments:** Customer Testimonial:

Mark Shelton- Adult Program: Shared with members that he went to the Worknet office for services because he was struggling to find a full-time job due to some barriers from his past. He was assigned to a case manager who was able to place him with an OJT and due to his lack of commitment, the OJT was unsuccessful. Later he talked to his Worknet case manager, and he was able to start in a trucking class after attending the Worknet's Truck Fest in October 2021. He now has a good paying job working as a truck driver. He thanked the WDB for having the services available to him, and will forever be grateful to Worknet.

Scout Fuentez-Youth Program: Shared with members that he recently was a High School graduate and was not sure what career he wanted to pursue. He signed up with Merced County Office of Education Empower Program and was assigned to his case manager. After a detailed and thorough evaluation with his case manager, he decided that welding training would be what he wanted to do. He was signed up to attend the

welding classes at Modesto Technical School and was able to successfully finish the welding training. He now has a good job, and is very grateful to WDB members for supporting the Empower program.

5. **Approval of Minutes (December 8, 2021):** *Vitelli/Hendrickson* approved the meeting minutes as published.

**Abstain:** Chris Winek

6. **Open Announcements:** McDaniel shared with members that Merced County Board of Supervisors just signed a deal with Patriot Rail out at Castle that will be working towards our inland port project with the Port of LA. This has opened a lot more opportunities with ports from all across the nation that are interested now. This will benefit all industries as well as the AG Industry. They are currently recruiting and hiring people.

Erick thanked Mark for his leadership on the development of Patriot Rail. He noted that he is currently working together with Chris-Merced College to assist in the pipeline development in regards to the jobs for Patriot Rail. So far, they met with Patriot staff twice and will meet again on Friday.

7. **Chair Comments:** Leslie shared with members that at the last WDB meeting she was re-elected to be the WDB Chair. She is grateful to be reelected and thanked members for their support. She welcomed the new board members, Chris Winek, from F&M Bank, Michelle Skoor, from Bitwise Industries, David Ness, from MERCOCREDIT Credit Union, and Joe R. Perez appointed to be the new representative for CA State Dept. of Rehabilitation. She thanked them for attending the meeting and is looking forward to working with them.

8. **Director's Comments:** Erick thanked everybody for being present at the meeting. He shared with members' synopsis of Meeting Agenda, comment on non-Agenda items, legislative updates, and other areas of interest.

9. **Merced County Mission, Vision, Values Award Program:** In recognition for its outstanding work over the past year, the Merced County Workforce Development Board has been recognized as a recipient of the MVV Award for the 2021. The winner is selected by a committee comprised of the Board Chair, Vice-Chair, and three community volunteers.

CEO Raul Mendez attended the WDB meeting and presented the award to WDB Chair Leslie Abasta-Cummings who received the award on behalf of the WDB members.

10. **Board Appointments:** Updated on approval by the Merced County Board of Supervisors. Nomination and re-election of Board Members with terms ending June 30, 2022.

The following new candidates were appointed by the Board of Supervisors at the March 22, 2022 meeting:

Chris Winek, Farmers & Merchant Bank

David W. Ness, Merced County Credit Union

Michelle Skoor, Bitwise Industries

Joe R. Perez- Appointed to be the new representative for CA State Dept. of Rehabilitation.

Nomination and re-election of the following Board Members with terms ending June 30, 2022.

Request for a motion to nominate and re-elect members to a new four-year term to the Workforce Development Board, O'Neill, Thengvall, Altomare, Hendrickson, Vincelet, and De Nava to a new four-year term to the Workforce Development Board.

Motion by Steve Tietjen, second by Joshua Lepper to nominate and re-elect members to a new four-year term to the Workforce Development Board, O'Neill, Thengvall, Altomare, Hendrickson, Vincelet and De Nava; carried by unanimous roll call vote.

**Abstain:** Daron McDaniel

- 11. WIOA Policies:** Staff is requesting review and approval of the following three WIOA Policies: Incumbent Worker Training, Unlikely to Return to a Previous Industry of Occupation, and Allocation of One-Stop Costs.

Motion by Steve Tietjen, second by Mark Hendrickson the review and approval of three WIOA Policies: Incumbent Worker Training, Unlikely to Return to a Previous Industry of Occupation, and Allocation of One-Stop Costs policies; carried by unanimous roll call vote.

- 12. AJCC Facility Needs:** Staff provided an update on facility needs at Merced County AJCC, and potential opportunity to relocate services, if needed. Staff is requesting a motion to authorize Board staff to continue to explore options and report to the Executive Committee.

Motion by Jorge de Nava, second by Daron McDaniel to authorize Board staff to continue to explore options and report to the Executive Committee; carried by unanimous roll call vote.

- 13. Customer Personas:** WDB staff has developed its first draft of Merced County Workforce Development Personas, a representation of Merced County Worknet customers. Staff will use these personas in the development of workforce programs to ensure all solutions are oriented toward real customers. Erick presented colored copies of real customers as an example of what the project will look like using real customer data and qualitative information about customer needs and motivations.

- 14. Priority Sectors:** Board staff continues to review labor market information to determine whether the seven aforementioned sectors are as relevant today to the County workforce strategies as they were when first identified in 2017. Staff encourages the Board to consider the following changes: Removal of "Water Technology" as a priority sector, based on the limited number of available jobs in this sector; further exploration of workforces' opportunities in "Energy" to pin-point sector focus and possible redefine/rename the sector of focus; and addition of Early Childhood Education (ECE), due to the number of workforce changes occurring in the ECE space, and the Board's interest to childcare issues, and available employment opportunities.

Staff will be hosting (2) Sectors Work Groups inviting WDB members, the dates are, Wednesday, April 20<sup>th</sup> and a follow-up meeting on Wednesday, May 11<sup>th</sup>. Both meetings will be held via zoom at 1PM. A zoom meeting invite will be sent to all WDB members. A final account of sectors will be presented at the next WDB meeting in June.

- 15. Micro-Business Grant:** The DWI and WDB plan to launch the Merced County Microbusiness COVID-19 Relief Grant on Monday, April 18<sup>th</sup>. The grant program will focus on two specific populations in Merced County.

Childcare providers and swap meet vendors. The grant will remain open to all businesses that meet the required criteria. Merced County applied for and was awarded approximately \$359,000 to dispense 115 \$2,500 grants to organizations that meet basic eligibility criteria, mainly have less than five employees, and have made less than \$50,000 in revenue in 2019, and have started their business December 2019 or earlier. The department will partner with five community-based organizations to assist in the process related to the grant program. They are, CVOC, Merced County Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Los Banos Chamber of Commerce, Merced Loa Family, and the Fresno Area Hispanic Foundation. The community partner will coordinate with staff to host application clinic sessions at each organization that will aim to each business member in need of assistance. The application to this grant will closed on August 18<sup>th</sup> or until funds have been exhausted.

**16. Business Services:** Staff provided a brief update on business service activities, recruitment and job fairs.

**17. Adult, Dislocated Worker & Youth Performance Reports:** WDB Staff gave an overview of WIOA Programmatic Performance to include program base outcomes, and other key performance metrics. Currently, the Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs continue to struggle with rural community enrollments. DWI's goal was to reach rural communities and extend services beyond the largest cities' boundaries, helping with employment related databases and extending the reach of Workforce Investment services.

**18. Youth Committee Report:** The Youth Committee held its first meeting on Thursday, March 10, 2022 at the Roundtable Pizza in Merced. Some of the discussion items for the meeting included, Review and revision of the Youth Committee Purpose Statement- Members reviewed and made some suggestions. Staff will make the changes and forward back to Youth Committee members. Review of Program Year 2021-2022 Performance Outcomes for youth programs, Youth work experience projects, and a copy of the 2022 calendar of events and meetings was provided to Youth members.

**19. Youth Work Experience Projects:** Youth Committee Staff presented to the members an update and the following programs in youth Work Experience:

City of Merced youth work experience investment of \$1.025M to support youth in two summer employment programs;

Redesign of Human Services Agency contract to redirect approximately \$250,000 in wages toward youth in public-assistance dependent households;

Recent \$3.815M award from the CaliforniaForAll program to provide 111 youth adults ages 16-30 with meaningful part-time and full-time employment with area non-profits.

Staff noted that collectively, these new grants total more than \$5M in youth employment funds, the largest such investment in Merced County for youth programs.

**20. Future Agenda & Meetings:** Next WDB meeting is scheduled on June 22, 2022. Location TBD.

**21. Adjournment:**

The Chair, Mrs. Leslie Abasta-Cummings, adjourned the meeting at 4:32 p.m.