

**KENTUCKIANAWORKS BOARD MEETING AGENDA  
GREATER LOUISVILLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

**Thursday, April 22, 2021**

**8:30 A.M. – 10:00 A.M.**

**Zoom virtual meeting**

**Members Present:** Caitlin Blair, Cornelius Cotton, Harold Reynolds, Jennifer Carman, John Archer, Jonathan Westbrook, Dr. Marty Pollio, Mike Hesketh, Neil McElroy, Rebecca Fleischaker, Sarah Davasher-Wisdom, Sadiqa Reynolds, Sean O’Leary, Tom Quick, Tony Georges, Dr. Ty Handy, Rev. Vincent James, Willie Byrd

**Greeting and Welcome** – *Chairman Tony Georges*

The morning began with the announcement that Mr. Quick was retiring from GE Appliances and moving to Cincinnati in August. Many attendees congratulated Mr. Quick for the impact he has made in helping build a great talent development system for our region and wished him well.

**Vote Needed: Review and Approve February 2021 Board Meeting Minutes** – *Tony Georges*

A motion to approve the minutes as written was made by Ms. Fleischaker, with a second by Mr. Archer. The motion passed with no objections.

**Vote Needed: Review and Approve the Consent Agenda** – *Michael Gritton and Mike Hesketh*

The Program Oversight Committee recommended a number of contract renewals at their recent meeting. Mr. Hesketh said those providers whose contracts were up for renewal were performing quite well. A motion to approve the five items on the Consent Agenda was made by Mr. Westbrook and seconded by Mr. Quick. The motion passed with no objections.

**Presentation and Discussion: Racial Equity and the Latest Data on the Region’s**

**Construction Industry** – *Sarah Ehresman*

Ms. Ehresman told the Board they would be voting on the construction RFP next month. The Louisville area has 3,000+ construction establishments with 28,000+ jobs (5% of the region’s private sector jobs, though the job concentration here is 12% lower than the national average). Construction workers are 86% men (compared to the overall workforce of 51% men) and 12% POC (the overall workforce is 22% POC), and just 4% Black (there is, however, an overrepresentation of Hispanic workers). Construction laborers are on the higher end of entry-level earnings at \$18.25/hour. Higher up in the wages scale are carpenters, plumbers, and electricians, examples of “skilled trades,” which were defined by Ms. Ehresman as “construction, installation, and repair jobs that require an apprenticeship.” These skilled trades pay around \$50,000-\$60,000, well above the median-wage. Nationally, workers in unions earn a wage premium (local level data not available). A majority of individuals in the skilled trades have a high school degree, and only 6.5% or so have a bachelor’s degree. Some apprenticeships are two years or less. But, as with construction laborers, women and Black workers are underrepresented as skilled tradespeople, and it is often tough to get into the industries. Ms. Ehresman praised Kentuckiana Builds for its work in helping underrepresented workers break into the industry, acknowledging the regional scale is daunting. Ms. Ehresman pointed out Mr. Gritton and some members of the Board had been working on building more transparent pathways into unions. Mr. Gritton commended Mr. Westbrook, Mr. Cotton, and Mr. Reynolds for their assistance.

Mr. Cotton asked about the separation of “construction laborers” v. “skilled laborers,” wondering what the difference was. Mr. Cotton also explained his union was happy to help folks find work, they just need more jobs available. Ms. Ehresman replied she did not mean to diminish the skills of laborers; she was just using the terminology found in some of the literature. Mr. O’Leary asked how Louisville numbers compared to the national average in terms of underrepresentation; Ms. Ehresman said it was a problem nationally, but with the proposed infrastructure bill on the horizon and shift in national conversation, a lot of places are leaning in to fixing it. Ms. Blair asked about data on union v. non-union numbers for skilled trades jobs; Ms. Ehresman answered there was not a lot of local data, due in part to the closed-door nature of it. Ms. Blair added there had been a lot of conversation about increasing access of collective bargaining rights, and noted that a minority of skilled trade jobs are union. One way to fix this, she felt, was to create partnerships, but also to make sure people have access to collective bargaining rights in general.

Ms. Reynolds felt it was important to think about when KentuckianaWorks runs training programs, to consider that participants are often asked to give up their existing jobs to get training. She said there was not nearly enough funding for wrap-around services. KentuckianaWorks does a good job with the funding they have, but the reality was there just was not enough. Mr. Westbrook echoed what Ms. Reynolds said, adding his company had partnered with the Urban League and had lots of success stories with them, but more of that was needed to get numbers to be where they needed to be. Regarding union/non-union issues, he felt there was a healthy relationship; his was a non-union company, but it worked well with unions. In competitive hiring markets, companies must provide top pay and benefits and he encouraged people to explore their options. Mr. Cotton thanked Mr. Westbrook for partnering with union contractors, adding to the sentiment that unions and non-unions often work together on projects.

Ms. Reynolds expressed a need for more Black-owned construction companies, citing that 2% of all businesses in Louisville were Black-owned. Mr. Westbrook agreed with her. Mr. Gritton referenced a task force MSD/LG&E had been co-chairing, adding they were determined to build up over time the number of Black-owned subcontractors. The Louisville region was expecting over \$5 billion of capital projects in the next five years. There will be work taking place, so now was a chance for the demand to train and place more Black and women workers. This was also why he had been talking to Ms. Fleischaker, Mayor Fischer, and others at Metro to get more ARP funding. Ms. Reynolds wanted to see Metro and JCPS commit to hiring underrepresented groups, saying it was important to understand what small businesses deal with. Mr. Reynolds said he had a fifth-year Black male apprentice who would be starting his own business this year, even though some of the hoops he had to jump through to be a certified minority-owned business were almost comical. Mr. Reynolds believed the process getting more people into apprenticeships could be streamlined, but when his organization had a registered apprenticeship, very specific guidelines to get in (math, reading comprehension, etc.) are not under local control but rather determined by national organizations, the Department of Labor, etc. Still, DOL had indicated they would be loosening some standards, and he had been working with Mr. Gritton behind the scenes with some of the other unions to review standards. He felt they were at least looking in the right direction. Ms. Fleischaker asked Mr. Reynolds about his apprentice’s certification; Mr. Reynolds said he was not too well-versed in the entire process, but Councilmember George’s husband was helping. Ms. Fleischaker would follow up with him.

Mr. Georges concluded by saying “Racial Equity” and “Jobs Jobs Jobs” were two strategic priorities, and this topic related to both. He appreciated Ms. Ehresman for her data and review.

**Vote Needed: Review and Discussion of Tech Training as One of our Strategic Priorities** –  
*Michael Gritton*

Mr. Gritton stated that by May, he expected to be quite firm in the metrics/scorecard component of the strategic priorities. Currently, he was trying to reorganize staff to make sure the organizational chart reflects the Board’s priorities. One thing that had become glaringly obvious – our staff was covering what the Board prioritized, but the one thing neglected in the document was a focus on tech training. From the Mayor’s standpoint, there clearly existed a huge push here; gaining hundreds of people with tech skills was a major priority. This was why they had helped with Code Louisville, Tech Louisville, Microsoft’s Future of Work, and so on. Mr. Gritton respectfully wanted to submit to the Board to add a seventh priority of tech training, and he asked for a vote to approve the revised version of the strategic priorities document. He also included a draft web version in the pre-read materials so people could see and understand them clearly.

Mr. Georges said he could not argue with any of the priorities, but noted some people had gone through training but then not sought employment; this was something he felt needed to be addressed. Mr. Gritton said ~850 people have gone through Code Louisville, with almost 600 job placements. Mr. Luerman and his team have tried to weed people out at the start, but occasionally people go through the program and then do not apply for open jobs. Staff had been trying to figure this out. Tech jobs can be daunting and intimidating. Mr. Westbrook cited a huge trend in jobs involving “gig work” and asked if there was any information on that; Mr. Luerman answered that participants are surveyed and staff research them on LinkedIn, but acknowledged gig work was not always easy to represent and survey response rates are generally low. Ms. Ehresman echoed what Mr. Luerman said. Mr. Georges cautioned that if the Board made this a seventh priority, that meant there could be more work to do. Ms. Davasher-Wisdom mentioned GLI has a TechFirst initiative, and Mr. Gritton had joined its guiding team; she hoped that by collaborating in an intentional way, the initiative would be productive in bridging connections.

A motion to approve was made by Ms. Reynolds, seconded by Mr. O’Leary; none opposed.

**Presentation and Discussion: GLI’s Racial Equity Work and The Racial Equity Pledge** –  
*Sarah Davasher-Wisdom*

GLI’s new racial equity pledge was announced earlier in the week. 148 companies had signed on by the time of the meeting. It was not going to do everything to solve equity, but GLI felt it was a good start. The idea behind it came from GLI’s Business Council to End Racism, specifically Conrad Daniels. He worked with several local CEOs to write the pledge, each with a commitment to equity action in their own companies. This showed the importance of inclusion to economic growth. Chambers have not typically been involved in this work, but the connection is there. The pledge had five principles: 1) Instituting Formal DEI policies; 2) Developing & empowering Black talent; 3) Supporting Black-Owned Businesses through equitable vendor spend; 4) Championing transparency; and 5) Building empathy through mentorship. GLI was working with GEDDI and Equity Vested to launch an industry-based inclusion index / scorecard that would roll out May 25. GLI has also included a toolkit and FAQs. As GLI went through

their process, they came across something the Atlanta chamber had done and reached out to them to learn about their process, rollout, progress, etc. For anyone wondering how they could participate, Ms. Davasher-Wisdom encouraged them to sign the pledge and to watch for the upcoming scorecard and toolkit. She added this was about looking for people in leadership to say their company would do this as a company commitment, rather than an individual commitment.

Mr. Quick applauded what Ms. Davasher-Wisdom and GLI are doing, saying there was a lot of activity that needed to happen and it was critical for GLI to step up in the business community. Mr. Gritton mentioned he had signed the pledge on behalf of KentuckianaWorks and called it an easy decision. He had been having discussions with leaders in Louisville's Black community about some sort of collective, collaborative effort (along the lines of 55,000 Degrees) and part of what he and Ms. Davasher-Wisdom were doing was making sure there was no conflict in what their respective organizations were trying to do. This was still in the exploratory phase, and there would be more to report to the Board in May. Mr. Georges echoed Mr. Quick's words to GLI. Ms. Reynolds referenced Mr. Gritton's comment on the 55K model; she said people must be careful to consider how they describe what they are creating, especially since 55K has since morphed into other things. The language used in describing concepts was important.

**Presentation and Discussion: The Return to In-Person School, Impact on Learning & Credential Attainment, the Plan Ahead** – *Dr. Marty Pollio*

Dr. Pollio started by saying it had been a challenging year in education across America, with multiple superintendents moving on; Los Angeles, New York, Houston, San Francisco were all now looking for superintendents. Unfortunately, education had been placed front and center in political debates. The two sides were so far apart on whether to be in school or not in school, and it was tough to be caught in the middle. Still, Dr. Pollio did not think he would have made any decisions differently. There was hope to be getting close to back to normal, but Dr. Pollio could have never predicted this would all last more than a year. He committed early on to following science and health guidelines established by the Kentucky Department of Education and the CDC. The larger the district, the more challenging it has been, and in addition to all the health challenges, many people would have been pleased to see JCPS fail. Dr. Pollio said he was lucky to have the school leaders that he had, that their energy and passion had been inspirational. He also praised students who also stepped up with wearing masks properly and following guidelines.

Dr. Pollio provided several updates to the Board about the current state of JCPS:

1. JCPS would be doing graduations and end-of-year celebrations. Schools might have to do three or four of them, but Dr. Pollio said students need to be celebrated and have fun.
2. The innovation JCPS teachers have done to continue offering certifications was inspiring. He mentioned he was in PRP's welding lab not too long ago, and called it awesome.
3. He had presented a plan to the JCPS board stating research was clear: the more time spent on learning, the more students learn, and the better the outcomes. He believed the school year and hours should be increased; particularly, changing start times for middle and high schools would improve attendance. Students need summer learning, after school learning, weekend learning. He was proud of the partnership with Evolve 502 and community learning hubs; JCPS had set a goal of having teachers available 13 hours a day, with free music lessons and career & technical education. A challenge will be staffing, not funding.

4. In 2021-22, JCPS will be back full-time, no hybrid. JCPS was adding a virtual academy (some families thrived in that environment), but it would be different than this year. The only things that could change these plans were an executive order or a legislative action.
5. JCPS has been blessed with a great deal of CARES Act funding to be spent by 2024. He called for making a generational difference; 20 years from now, he wanted people to ask how these changes and investments came about, so he had been working on big plans.
6. The Academies of Louisville had been challenged during the pandemic, as the toughest classes to teach have been the hands-on ones kids love the most. But, JCPS has still moved forward, and Dr. Pollio believed JCPS was truly getting to a grade 6-16 model of the Academies. Evolve 502 got a large grant from the James Graham Brown Foundation, guaranteeing a two-year scholarship to JCTC or Simmons College (and conditionally UofL); also, higher-need kids will get an opportunity grant of \$1,000/semester for books or anything else they might need.
7. JCPS was planning on hiring 100+ SummerWorks students to work in Community Hubs.

Mr. Georges said he truly appreciated the leadership Dr. Pollio provided at JCPS, that he had the full support of KentuckianaWorks. Alignment and the Academies were big deals for the Board, and Mr. Georges had been talking to some JCPS staff about these topics. JCPS has had some major improvements on focusing on at-risk students, and he believed in authentic accountability related to valuing transition readiness, college credit, and employability skills. Mr. Gritton highlighted the way KentuckianaWorks staff have worked with JCPS on integrated data platforms, and how they have also worked with some of the regional schools. Mr. Quick felt it was important to hit the school year with a running start, to have principals connected with business partners. Mr. Gritton said they had been working to add more partners into the pipeline.

#### **Executive Director's Report** – *Michael Gritton*

Mr. Gritton gave the Board one big heads-up with more information to come later: the staff have been putting together proposed budgets, and KentuckianaWorks' core funding stream (WIOA) looks like it will be getting a half a million-dollar cut (on a base of \$5,000,000). Back in FY16, KentuckianaWorks got \$6,500,000 in WIOA funding; by next year, it looks like that will be \$4,500,000 for all three streams (adult, dislocated workers, and youth). It will be very tough to spread all that out. The big impact is that almost no job training money will be available for traditional scholarships (truck driving, nursing, welding, etc.) unless additional funding comes in. There have been some big conversations going on in Washington that may bring additional funding, but none of it was a done deal yet. KentuckianaWorks has been in conversations with Ms. Fleischaker and the Mayor for some American Rescue Plan funding, but that was not a done deal yet, either. At the moment, because new money is not guaranteed, KentuckianaWorks staff are making plans for a very frugal budget (though also making conditional plans for additional funding available, too!). Of note: KentuckianaWorks has asked for \$20,000,000 from the city.

Mr. Gritton said he or Mr. Williamson were likely to send the Board a brief survey on their opinion or guidance about in-person meetings; with vaccines, this might be a possibility for June or for the annual meeting.

Mr. Georges closed the meeting by telling the Board he appreciated them taking the time to participate in and prepare for these meetings. The meeting adjourned at 9:54 A.M.

**KentuckianaWorks Staff:**

Aleece Smith  
Angella Wilson  
Bailey Preston  
Barbara Ferrell  
Brian Luerman  
Christopher Locke  
Cindy Read  
Jaime Disney  
Joi McAtee  
Katie Elliott  
Lori Hiser  
Mary Rosenthal  
Michael Gritton  
Patrick Garvey  
Regina Phillips  
Sarah Ehresman  
Stacy Roderick  
Tobin Williamson  
Zakiyyah Raymore

**Contractors and Guests:**

Angela Wells-Vereb  
Ashley Janicki  
Brenda Pirtle  
Charlotte Kerns  
Christine Tarquinio  
Joshua McKee  
Kristin Wingfeld  
Lisa Thompson  
Marsha Berry  
Monica Collins  
Rena Sharpe  
Renee Walters  
Sara Dodeci  
Shatrece Johnson  
Violet Skinner