Meeting Minutes

WEDNESDAY, June 24, 2026
Saratoga Eagle, Saratoga Springs, NY
8–10 AM

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Nic Arnoff, Jonathan Ashdown, Scott Brazie, Scot Chamberlain, Scarlet Clement-Buffoline, Gary Dake, Dan Dudley, Paige Foote, Maureen Grabowski, Scott McKenna, Christine McLear, Elizabeth Miller, Mike Munter, Mo O'Connell, Laura Oswald, Turina Parker, Dominick Patrignani, Tracey Riley, Wendy Skawinski, Mary Ann Spiezio, John Wheatley, Susan Wynkoop (22)

EXCUSED: Greg Connors, Andrew Cook, Doug Ford, Zack Moore, Michael Prime, Tricia Rogers, Jeff Vukelic, Elaine Wilkie (8)

GUESTS: Jenniffer McCloskey (*Saratoga County Career Center),* Liza Ochsendorf (*Warren County Career Center),* Matthew Rose (*Saratoga County Career Center*), Shelley Smith *(LEAP)* Zoe Vandermeulen *(One Stop System Operator)* (5)

STAFF: Gretchen Steffan, Executive Director & Kassandra Purcell, Deputy Director (2)

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1. **Welcome …** Gary Dake, Chair welcomed WDB (*Workforce Development Board*) members and guests to the meeting.

2. **Approval of April 22, 2026, Meeting Minutes**
   ***Item*: Motion to Approve:** Scarlet Clement-Buffoline - **Second**: Mike Munter
   Discussion: None **Vote:** Approved unanimously.

3. **Approval of SWW Supportive Services Policy Amendment**
   ***Item*: Motion to Approve:** Mike Munter - **Second**: Turina Parker
   Discussion: None **Vote:** Approved unanimously.

4. **SWW WDB Consolidation Discussion**
   Gretchen Steffan introduced the WDB to Brian Williams, Executive Director of the Capital Region Workforce Development Board (CRWDB), as a precursor to the next agenda item, which is the Program Year 26 (PY26) WDB Budget. Gretchen announced that she is retiring at the end of the 1st quarter of PY26, and that the WDB's intention is for Brian to provide the WDB with strategic support. More specifically, to support the current Deputy Director, Kassandra (Kassie) Purcell, who is intended to become Acting Director of the WDB upon Gretchen's retirement.

   These changes are coming because of several factors, which include significant WIOA (*Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act*) funding cuts, previous WDB discussions about unsustainable overhead expenses, and considering WDB Consolidation as a SWW WDB possible future. Brian has been asked as the CRWDB leader, to provide consulting services to the SWW LWDA (*Local Workforce Development Area)* starting in the 2nd quarter of PY26, on October 1, 2026.

   Brian provided an overview of his depth of experience, which includes 30 years of workforce development. He has extensive experience with WIOA, and its predecessor JTPA (*Job Training & Partnership Act*). Years ago, while working for the Albany County Chamber of Commerce, Brian worked with the Private Industry Council, which was part of the workforce system doing business services, which was meeting with businesses and formulating on-the-job-training (OJT) contracts with them. He was once the Director of Youth Programs and then was promoted to the Commissioner of Employment & Training for Rensselaer County. Then he became the WDB Executive Director for the Capital Region, which encompasses Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer counties, and has been in that role for 6 years. The City of Albany is a small portion of their service area and metro areas traditionally have more support. The CRWDB focus is a lot on rural places like Hoosick Falls, Berlin, Petersburg etc. Brian feels strongly that workforce development is the cornerstone of Economic Development and everything that happens in a community. He has served as a Director of NYATEP (*New York Association of Training & Employment Professionals*) for 10 years, is he past President of the Rensselaer County Chamber Board

of Directors and currently serves as Board Chair for the Rensselaer County Community Action Program (*CEO-Commission on Economic Opportunity*), which runs the Head Start and an array of Community Action programs there.

Brian shared, the CRWDB is currently consolidating with the Columbia Greene WDB (CGWDB) by request, as they have been having a significant shift in their population commuting Northbound for work. The merger/consolidation is a shared services model that will allow the combined WDB to capitalize on economies of scale. He emphasized the importance of achieving alignment within the 2 entities, and that shared services will be key to success.

Gary highlighted that having conversations about long term possibilities is paramount as we endeavor to cut our expenses which are growing, while our total WIOA allocation is shrinking. As we look forward, we need to explore if it makes sense to potentially merge sometime in the future. In the next agenda item, the budget proposal looks at contracting for supportive services from Brian and the CRWDB staff, while we stay a separate organization. Very much like a dating or courtship process.

Brian added that the Consolidation process with USDOL is a long one, with a myriad of steps in the process and taking time to do it properly is a good approach.

Mike Munter asked about Brian's capacity to meet our needs, asking how much additional work he could handle before becoming overloaded. Brian responded that the current CGWDB Executive Director (ED) will be moving into a support role, which may be that of Regional Director. Further, CRWDB has added an Operations Director, fashioned after Kassie's role in SWW, which has taken a lot off his plate. In conferring with another WDB ED mid-state who is managing 2 WDB's, it is doable with the right support structures in place. Gretchen added that the Operations Management function is vital to ensure the integrity of OSOS data input by Career Center employment counselors, in our quest to meet WIOA primary indicators of performance benchmarks, which Kassie has been doing. Operations Management will remain vitally important as a Consolidation tool.

Maureen Grabowski asked if we would be saving money by having Kassie internally and a contractor/VP-type scenario? Gretchen responded that with her retirement on September 30th, and elevating Kassie to Acting Director, we would be saving $79,000 in the salary lines, along with an agreement for contracted services with the CRWDB. Gary added that the total for the budget year would save roughly $50,000. This is as opposed to our preliminary budget, which as discussed at previous meetings was increasing overhead expenses.

Wendy Skawinski asked Brian how do you increase the size of the Board (*referring to CRWDB & CGWDB*)? Brian said that it is going to be a large board to begin with, because it's important to ensure representation. He added, in the future, that will be a conversation the Boards will tackle in a joint executive governance committee.

Laura Oswald asked about Kassie's reporting relationship, and will Kassie report to Brian. Gary responded that Kassie would report to the SWW WDB. He continued that this budget is a transitional budget, and likened it to having one foot on the dock, and one foot on the canoe, which will give us until next year's budget cycle to figure out what we do in the next cycle. Will we work towards a merger, a shared Executive, or work toward our own Director. With time, we can really evaluate how this is working for us, and our comfort level with each other. Brian added that he thought that was a very good point, and in early discussions with Gretchen to ascertain interest, it was imperative that Kassie would handle administrative board aspects for compliance, and the community-building aspects would be shared. Gary supported the delegation of responsibility and authority, and stated, we will be learning a lot in the next year as we consider Consolidation. Gretchen emphasized the experience Kassie has gained over the 2 years in her Deputy Director role, and her depth-of-knowledge of WIOA and WIOA expectations of performance as measured by the primary indicators of performance.

Jonathan Ashdown *(a member of both SWW & Cap Region WDB's)* complemented Brian William's ability to collaborate across disparate communities and his community orientation. He also identified that working as a team is

important because in this situation Kassie knows the region, area, stakeholders and is a trusted collaborator and can work collaboratively with Brian. Jonathan also mentioned the opportunity for grant collaborations, which Brian expanded upon for funding diversification outside of WIOA that can supplement back-office salaries.

5. WDB PY26 Budget Discussion

Gretchen Steffan introduced the PY26 WDB Budget to the group, explained each line item, and asked for questions. The Budget as presented was color-coded to demonstrate what expenses could be eliminated in a potential Consolidation for economies of scale.

Gretchen reiterated that she would be retiring as of September 30th, and on October 1st the Deputy Director role would be repurposed into an Acting Director role. The Acting Director role is a common practice in civil service according to Scot Chamberlain, HR Director at Saratoga County, when a leader leaves and the role won't be filled right away. The Acting Director is tied to the Executive Director role in this case, with the same job specs. The Acting Director position is assigned a compensation structure, and this budget assigns the salary level to be at the minimum in the range.

This structure will be complimented and supported by a consulting relationship with Brian Williams, Executive Director of the CRWDB and his team for up to 20 hours per month. Consulting support for the SWW WDB will include attending WDB meetings, committee meetings, Career Center Director's meetings, as well as providing regular and ongoing advice, counsel and collaboration on WIOA compliance and NYSDOL oversite/deliverables on the WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance. Gretchen identified that there may be months when 20 hours isn't necessary, and some months when it will be absolutely needed.

Christine McLear asked Brian if he has the capacity for 20 hours of consulting support? Brian responded that he could accommodate 5 hours a week, especially since Kassie will be doing a lot of the work. Gretchen offered that Kassie has been working with the Career Center's on getting them to do more of their OSOS data management, so that will allow her additional capacity for other work. Gretchen also offered that we are selling Brian as he is the leader of CRWDB, however based upon our organization's need, he could utilize/dispatch his other staff members to assist us.

Mauren Grabowski stated that she is assuming that Kassie has been working on WDB projects since hire, so she is well aware of what's needed and can take over as necessary. Kassie responded that she shares an office with Gretchen, which was intentional for training and exposure. She continued, having Brian available for collaboration with his depth-of-experience is a safety net to ensure we remain on track. Gretchen offered that she is confident to recommend this structure, roles and responsibilities.

Gretchen provided the budget with color-coded identifiers, so the WDB could see which expenses could be eliminated through Consolidation. As she went through the budget line items, WDB members asked about utilization of line items, affordability and ROI (*return-on-investment*).

Laura Oswald asked about the Career Center budgets, and the impact of passing the WDB budget on them. Gretchen said that is a later agenda item, but she reported that she met with the Center Directors and their fiscal staff last month (*June 10th*). Based on the allocation cuts, that we do not have USDOL/NYSDOL official notice of our allocations, that the NYS Budget has amendments to the Tier 6 NYS Retirement structure, and that Warren and Saratoga counties will be going through their calendar year 2027 budget process in August, it would be wise for us to postpone the Center's budget approvals till our September 23rd WDB meeting so we can have more concrete data and solidified information. Laura wanted to be sure we were okay with NYSDOL, and Brian Williams offered that is a by-laws issue, and that NYSDOL needs only the WDB budget approved.

Gary stated…we now have an amended budget request instead of $292,896, we now have a $282,396 budget (*which was eliminating the Engage-By-Cell line item of $10,500) …* Do I have a motion to accept this budget to present to the three counties?"

***Item*: Motion to Approve:** Mike Munter- **Second**: Laura Oswald
Discussion: Some **Vote:** Approved - Wendy Skawinski, NYSDOL - Abstained

6. SWW Allocation Phasing Discussion PY26 & Beyond

Gretchen shared that the WDB needs to address 2 issues regarding Allocations at this juncture:

1. How long will it take to phase our reallocation process into the new process?
2. How will we handle reconciliation of the WDB Budget going forward?

Reallocation Phasing

On January 28th the WDB had discussed reallocation phasing. It was decided to amend the results of requested reallocation for PY26 to transition to the new reallocation formulated by NYSDOL, so the Warren County Career Center could adjust to the cut in funding. However, based upon significant PY26 WIOA system allocation cuts, the WDB revisited multi-year phasing. There was discussion about how the old formula used for many years resulted in overpayment to Warren County, so course-correction is warranted. Further, the WDB has adopted the practice of having NYSDOL run the numbers annually for each SWW County, to ensure fairness based upon community compositional data analysis, data, and statistics.

The WDB asked for clarity on program years. It was clarified that effective July 1, 2026 (PY26) we would be using January 28, 2026, adopted percentages, which were: 48.5 (*Saratoga*), 30% (*Warren*), and 21.5% (*Washington*).

Gretchen offered, that at this juncture the WDB needs to definitively decide when to phase into the NYSDOL formulated allocations, because of budget cuts, the uncertainty of future funding, and that it is unwise to have too many assumptions in our budget that have to be managed every time we talk about money. The NYSDOL allocation the WDB discussed and decided upon is the same calculation that follows through the system to manage internal allocations. The WDB has substantially cut the amount of money in its operating budget as presented, and now that money will flow to the Centers. We will see the Center's budgets at the September WDB meeting.

Gretchen confirmed the complexity of the allocation process to the WDB. She suggested that a 1-year phasing would be more appropriate for the reallocation phasing, because the PY26 transition was a flawed decision. When the WDB decided to have a transition year in PY26, which starts on July 1, 2026, instead of Warren having the lower allocation as prescribed by the NYSDOL formula, we changed it to 30% across the board (from 24%). She continued, why I'm recommending that we only do 30% across the board for one year only, is because that's 30% allocation on each funding stream. Our intent through this reallocation process, was to ensure funding streams (Adult, Dislocated Worker, Youth) are calculated using NYSDOL allocation formula's, therefore it would be appropriate for us to use the NYSDOL formulas so that each Center gets the percentage of allocation that is appropriate based upon the adult, the dislocated worker, and the youth categories because those numbers are valid based upon USDOL/NYSDOL formulas. It should not be 30% for Warren across-the-board but should be the correct (*and varying*) percentages for Warren Adults, Warren Dislocated Workers, and Warren Youth. That's why a one-year transition would be appropriate.

***Item 1*: Allocation Phasing for the NEW Allocation Formula**

Motion to Approve a 1-year transitional year in PY26, with PY27utilizing the NEW Formula with annual rebasing...

Motion to Approve: Mike Munter- **Second**: Turina Parker **Discussion:** Some **Vote:** Approved

Four (4) NO Votes:

1. Dan Dudley, IBEW
2. Laura Oswald, Washington County
3. Wendy Skawinski, NYSDOL
4. John Wheatley, Warren County EDC

WDB Budget Reconciliation-Going Forward

Jen McCloskey, Fiscal Agent explained past practice is that at the end of the program year, WDB expenses are reconciled and taken out of the following years allocation and taken off the top. We would like to transition to a new system that will improve cash flow, by reconciling the WDB expenses quarterly. More specifically:

1. PY26 1st quarter expenses for July/Aug./Sept. will be reconciled and debited by month-end **October**.
2. PY26 2nd quarter expenses for Oct./Nov./Dec. will be reconciled and debited by month-end **Jan. 2027**.
3. PY26 3rd quarter expenses for Jan./Feb./Mar. will be reconciled and debited by month-end **Apr. 2027**.
4. PY26 4thquarter expenses for Apr./May/June. will be reconciled and debited by month-end **July 2027.**

This methodology would improve cash flow for the Saratoga County Career Center as they front all of the money for the WDB expenses. It would also follow the current allocation percentages by funding stream. So, in PY26, WDB shares would be:

Saratoga=48.5%, Warren=30%, & Washington=21.5%

And at the conclusion of PY26, WDB expenses would be satisfied. In the case of LEAP that pays for some of the WDB expenses up front, they would be credited in the quarter they pay those expenses.

Since we lost our quorum during this conversation, this item will be reintroduced at the September 23rd meeting.

***Item #2:* WDB Budget Reconciliation-Going Forward**
Motion to reconcile the SWW WDB PY26 Budget expenses quarterly,
assess each Career Center's share, and debit that share from their allocation, effective PY26.
Motion to Approve: NONE- **Second**: NONE
Discussion: Some **Vote:** Did not have quorum at that time…
Will revisit at September 24, 2026 meeting.

7. SWW Career Center OSOS Quarterly Rpt.

Kassie Purcell provided a summary memorandum in the WDB Board Book as a supplement to this presentation. Kassie showed the WDB the current OSOS Data Dashboard, which identified how the Career Center services provided will count toward our WIOA Primary Indicators of Performance (PIP) report card. Kassie said that the OSOS Management Reports provide us with information on new enrollments, active customers, exiters and the specific services provided. She explained the differences between Career Center services and those of the NYSDOL staff, who are meeting primarily with dislocated workers on unemployment, and do a lot more data entry than do the Centers. Key takeaways for the Career Centers are that we definitely need to see more people, and to make sure that for those clients seen, proper case management is essential. We are failing one PIP and one Corrective Action Plan (CAP) measure, and financial sanctions are possible. The Centers have been provided written feedback, and all the information they need to make adjustments, which is why both performance and case management is important.

8. PY24 Subrecipient Monitoring Report Update *(Skipped agenda item due to time constraints…)*

Fiscal and Program summary memos were presented in the WDB Board Book.

9. SWW LWDA 3rd Qtr. Financial Report

Jenniffer McCloskey, as the LWDA Fiscal Agent, reported we may have to request the 80% Obligation Waiver. Gretchen said that it is imperative that our Centers have 20% Carryover as recommended, so that we have a cushion, as we have no idea how much federal funding we will receive.

10. PY26 Career Center's Preliminary Budgets

Gretchen reported that she met with the Center Directors and their fiscal staff last month (*June 10th*). Based on the allocation cuts, that we do not have USDOL/NYSDOL official notice of our allocations, that the NYS Budget has amendments to the Tier 6 NYS Retirement structure, and that Warren and Saratoga counties will be going through their calendar year 2027 budget process in August, it would be wise for us to postpone the Center's budget approvals till our September 23rd WDB meeting so we can have more concrete data and solidified information.

11. Additional Opportunity for Board Member Announcements / Comments

- **Gary** acknowledged Maureen Grabowski & thanked her for her service, as today was her last WDB meeting.
- From **Doug Ford**: the Northeast Construction Trades Workforce Coalition is recruiting for their Girl's Summer camp for 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th grade girls, which will be happening the last week in July, with an advanced camp for returning girls the 1st week in August. 9th grade girls are newly added this year.
- **Mo O'Connell** noted a Veterans hiring event tonight at the VFW in Saratoga Springs.
- **Gary** noted difficulty in hiring staff in the Adirondacks and exploring Visa options to fill gaps.
- **Scott McKenna** introduced the group to an initiative trademarked "Industrial Athlete," to pursue high school and college athletes and introduce them to career opportunities in the trades. They have connected with a group called "Wrestlers in Business," and noted that wrestling is a growing sport in our country both for men and women.

12. Meeting Reminders for September/November/December

Gary reminded the group that meeting location changes are happening in September and December.

- Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026 - WSWHE BOCES – Ballard Road – Wilton
- Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2026 -Saratoga Eagle - Saratoga Springs, NY
- Wednesday, Dec. 9, 2026 – SUNY Adirondack -Northwest Bay Conf. Center, Queensbury

13. Adjournment

Gary closed the meeting, thanking all for attending and for a very productive meeting.

Next SWW WDB Meeting
Wednesday, Sept. 23, 2026 - WSWHE BOCES – Ballard Road – Wilton

DRAFT