Workforce Development Board
SARATOGA | WARREN | WASHINGTON

Meeting Minutes
WEDNESDAY, September 23, 2026
Saratoga Eagle, Saratoga Springs, NY
8–10 AM

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT: Jonathan Ashdown, Scot Chamberlain, Scarlet Clement-Buffoline, Greg Connors, Gary Dake, Dan Dudley, Kyle Ferris, Doug Ford, Paige Foote, Scott McKenna, Christine McLear, Elizabeth Miller, Mike Munter, Laura Oswald, Turina Parker, Dominick Patrignani, Tracey Riley, Wendy Skawinski, Mary Ann Spiezio, Jeff Vukelic, Elaine Wilkie (21)

EXCUSED:, Nic Arnoff, Andrew Cook, Zack Moore, Mo O'Connell, Michael Prime, Tricia Rogers, John Wheatley, Susan Wynkoop (8)

GUESTS: Scott Brazie, *(ACCES-VR),* Emma Cohen *(NYSDOL),* Joleen Hanlon *(Junior Achievement of Northeastern NY-Education Manager)*, Christine Horne *(Junior Achievement of Northeastern NY-President)*, Jenniffer McCloskey (*Saratoga County Career Center),* Liza Ochsendorf (*Warren County Career Center),* Carol Piechnik *(ACCES-VR),* Matthew Rose (*Saratoga County Career Center*), Shelley Smith *(LEAP)*, Adrienne Snow *(Ballston Spa Central School & Youth Committee Member)*, Greg Voyzey *(Twin Rivers Council, Scouting America- Scout Executive/ Chief Executive Officer & Youth Committee Member)*, Brian Williams *(Capital Region Workforce Development Board)* (12)

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. **Junior Achievement of Northeastern New York Presentation by Christine Horne, President.**

Presentation Overview:

Chris Horn, President of Junior Achievement of Northeastern New York, provided an overview of the organization's mission and programming. JA is a 100-year-old global nonprofit focused on preparing youth for economic success through financial literacy, work and career readiness, and entrepreneurship. The local JA chapter serves 13 counties and reached more than 14,000 K–12 students last year, though participation in Saratoga, Warren, and Washington Counties remains limited.

JA programs combine curriculum with immersive, real-world learning experiences delivered by trained volunteers from business and industry. Examples include stock market simulations, CEO decision-making challenges, job shadow events, and classroom-based career speakers. JA noted strong outcomes among alumni, including higher rates of financial independence and alignment between career and educational pathways.
The organization is seeking expanded partnerships in the region's school districts and with employers to grow youth engagement, especially as state education requirements around financial literacy increase. JA offered to collaborate with the Workforce Development Board and invited board members and employers to consider volunteer involvement to support youth and strengthen workforce pipelines. Chris Horn provided handouts outlining JA programing.

Group Discussion & Comments on Presentation:

Gretchen noted that the Board is at an important crossroads where K-12 education, higher education, and the Career Centers systems intersect, each with its own mandates and restrictions. She emphasized that WIOA funding is highly limited in how it can be used, while Career Centers must meet very specific requirements for adults, dislocated workers, and youth.

She highlighted a unique opportunity for the Workforce Development Board, whose business-majority membership can mobilize employer expertise in ways Career Centers cannot. By leveraging that business leadership, the Board

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can meaningfully support youth career development through volunteering, mentoring, and participation in structured programs like Junior Achievement.

Gretchen stressed that JA's ready-made curriculum reduces the burden on volunteers and provides an accessible way for business professionals to contribute to building the next-generation workforce. She emphasized that the Board has recently laid strong groundwork and is well-positioned to advance youth-focused initiatives aligned with financial literacy, career readiness, and entrepreneurship.

Finally, she underscored the importance of context: aligning the Board's efforts with the goals of educators, higher education partners, and employers to help young people make informed decisions about their career pathways.

Doug added and emphasized the importance of improving youth readiness for employment and highlighted their need for financial literacy.

Scott McKenna asked about JA's presence in the North Country and Chris & Joleen from JA explained that their reach is limited in the North Country currently due to staffing capacity. JA also clarified that they do some work in Saratoga County and Washington County but are hoping to expand further north.

3. Twin Rivers Council, Scouting America Presentation by Greg Voyzey, Scout Executive/ CEO

Presentation Overview

Greg, CEO of Twin Rivers Council, Scouting America, presented an overview of the organization's regional impact and its role in youth and workforce development. The Council serves more than 4,000 youth across 15 counties in upstate New York through the support of staff, volunteers, community partners, and three camp properties. Following challenges associated with the pandemic and national organizational changes, the Council is experiencing renewed growth and restoring programs in previously underserved communities.

The presentation emphasized that Scouting extends beyond traditional leadership and outdoor activities by providing career exploration, practical skills, financial literacy, and hands-on learning. Through merit badges and the Exploring program, the Council connects young people with employers and industry professionals in fields ranging from healthcare and public safety to skilled trades and technology. The CEO expressed interest in expanding partnerships with schools, businesses, apprenticeship programs, and community organizations to create stronger career pathways, use Council properties as training environments, and extend these opportunities to more young people.

Group Discussion & Comments on Presentation:

Gary asked about the extend to which girls have been included in Scouting America's programs. Greg first clarified that they are still legally the Boy Scouts of America with an updated DBA Scouting America and they serve all youth across the board. Additionally, Greg noted that the organization has been serving girls since 1973 with a verity of different programs, but it wasn't until 2017 that the organization included girls in the Scouting programs. The first female Eagle Scouts came into play in 2020, after joining in 2018. Currently, about 15% of their membership is female.

4. Approval of June 24, 2026, 2026, Meeting Minutes

***Item*:** **Motion to Approve:** Scarlet Clement-Buffoline - **Second**: Christine McLear
Discussion: None **Vote:** Approved unanimously.

5. PY26 WDB Budget Reauthorization

Gary and Gretchen explained that the PY26 WDB Budget approved at the June 24, 2026, meeting had an error of $19,733 in excess, which was discovered after the meeting. The error was with one of the cells in the spreadsheet and was shown in the document included in the board meeting materials. As result, the Executive Committee met on July 9th to discuss and decide direction. Executive Committee unanimously approved a motion to approve the budget as amended (decreasing expenditures by $19,733), and then to have the full WDB reauthorize the PY26 WDB Budget as an administrative item.

The corrected budget was presented and approved by the 3 counties, resolutions in your Board Package.

***Item*: Motion to Approve:** Greg Connors - **Second**: Mike Munter
Discussion: None **Vote:** Approved unanimously.

6. SWW LWDA Fiscal Reporting

Jenniffer McCloskey, Fiscal Agent, presented the Saratoga, Warren, Washington local workforce development area (LWDA) financial reports submitted to New York State Department of Labor as of August 31, 2026. Jen explained that the reports show a summary of PY25 and PY26 fund expenditures because we have multiple years to spend the money. Jen reported that PY 25 funds are almost spent out. Jen explained that WIOA requires LWDAs to expend and/obligate 80% of their funds in all funding streams the program year they receive their money and carry-over 20% of the funds into the next program year. Jen expressed concerns that Career Centers may have less than 20% carry-over at the start of PY27 due to SWW WDB WIOA allocation cuts in PY26 and possible continued WIOA funding cuts in years to come. Jen stressed the importance of monitoring the finances monthly at the Career Center Directors monthly meeting and stated that how things are done at Career Centers may need to change. Gary acknowledged that it was too early in the year to draw conclusions but emphasized that the Board would continue to monitor the situation closely.

7. SWW WDB PY26 Budget Reconciliation Discussion Revisited

Gretchen Steffan explained that this topic was discussed at the June WDB meeting but during the discussion we lost quorum and were unable to vote at that time. Gretchen reminded the group that, historically, SWW WDB expenses have been allocated proportionally among the three Career Centers based on each center's share of the total WIOA allocation for each funding stream. Under the current process, Saratoga County pays all SWW WDB expenses during the program year in which they are incurred. Warren and Washington Counties' shares are then charged against their allocations for the following program year. This arrangement places an immediate financial burden on Saratoga County and delays payment by Warren and Washington Counties.

In PY26, the SWW WDB received a substantial funding reduction despite NYSDOL's expectation of level funding, requiring the Board to adjust its operations and budget. Because additional WIOA funding reductions are anticipated in the coming year, Gretchen proposed reconciling SWW WDB expenses quarterly. This approach would ensure that each county's share is paid during the period in which the expenses are incurred, improving the timeliness of payments and reducing the financial burden on Saratoga County.

The proposed process to reconcile the WDB expenses in PY26.

- PY26 allocations were already calculated with a PY25 $300K WDB debit proportionally across the 3 Career Center's.
- We need to have the Center's paying for PY26 WDB expenses in the current PY, which will improve cashflow for Saratoga's Career Center (*as they currently front all WDB Expenses)*:

1. PY26 1st quarter expenses for July/Aug./Sept. will be reconciled and debited by month-end **October 2026**.
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./Jun. will be reconciled and debited by month-end **July 2027**

***Item*:** **Motion to Approve:** Greg Connors- **Second**: Jeff Vukelic
Discussion: None **Vote:** Approved unanimously.

8. PY26 Career Center's Budget Update

Gretchen reported the Centers' Budgets were amended after receiving the PY26 funding cut notification from NYSDOL. However, they could not make forward progress until the WDB had voted on how the PY 2026 SWW WDB expenses would be reconciled. Now that it has passed, the budget planning to move forward; however, further review is needed to evaluate available carryover, administrative overhead, spending projections, and overall financial sustainability.

The Counties and the Capital Region Workforce Development Board will provide additional review and expertise over the coming weeks. The Centers are also developing Program Year 2026 performance goals aligned with the system's WIOA primary performance indicators negotiated with the New York State Department of Labor. This work remains in progress and will help connect Center activities, expenditures, and services to measurable outcomes.

Gretchen emphasized the importance of maintaining flexibility because this may be the final year of the Saratoga-Warren Workforce Development Area's current structure. Potential organizational changes and proposed federal cost-principle revisions from the Office of Management and Budget could affect future operations and allowable expenses. The amended budgets are expected to be finalized during October and presented for review at the November 4 Board meeting.

Gary asked Kassie and Brian to explore opportunities to increase funding for the SWW WDB as part of its long-term planning.

9. SWW LWDA WIOA Performance…

OSOS Report

Kassie reviewed PY25 year-end OSOS data through June 30, noting that overall results remained largely consistent with those presented at the June meeting. The review reinforced the continuing need to increase participant enrollments and the delivery of Career Center services.

Kassie shared that Career Center goals for PY26 are being developed to ensure that activities and resources are more directly connected to measurable outcomes. As new funding opportunities become available, the focus will be on strengthening existing programs, expanding services, and identifying appropriate opportunities for co-enrollment to improve participant outcomes and overall system performance.

PY25 Q4 NYSDOL Primary Indicators of Performance Report Review

Kassie reviewed the PY 2025 Q4 Performance Indicator Report, noting that 13 of 16 measures were being met. The three measures below target included: youth credential attainment, youth employment in the fourth quarter

after exit, and adult priority of service. These measures are continuing areas of concern, with the Youth measures already subject to a performance improvement plan and corrective action plan. Kassie reminded the group that the report reflects historical outcomes and may include participants who exited in an earlier reporting period.

Group discussion focused on improving outcomes for youth who earn a GED but do not subsequently enter or retain employment, pursue postsecondary education, or enroll in occupational skills training, as required for positive WIOA credential attainment when attaining a GED. Kassie emphasized that earning a GED should be one component of a broader workforce-readiness pathway that includes technical training, career exploration, work experience, mentoring, financial literacy, and continued support after program completion. Kassie additionally noted that the Resource and Development Committee will help Career Centers connect with other Board committees, employers, vocational training providers, and community organizations to support these goals.

The group discussed possible solutions to improve the credential attainment measure and employment outcomes, specifically:

- Doug Ford also proposed connecting youth participants with the many entry-level job opportunities available at businesses represented on the Board.
- Brian Williams suggested that Career Centers enroll eligible high school seniors at WSWHE BOCES as in school youth and gain the positive credential attainment for the high school diploma and the CTE certification because many of those students directly enter the workforce after graduation.
- It was also recognized that our LWDA is not the only one in NYS struggling to meet Youth Credential Attainment measure.
- Gary Dake added the importance of integrating financial literacy related to compensation and benefits and other job-readiness services that address workplace expectations and long-term employment stability.
- Carol Piechnik, ACCES-VR, added that many youth participants face significant barriers that may require individualized assistance and suggested greater coordination with ACCES-VR and other specialized partners could help identify disabilities, provide appropriate accommodations, and connect participants with targeted services.

10. Committee Updates

Kassie provided committee updates for Youth, Business Needs and Resource & Development. Kassie also noted that going forward all the Committee meeting summaries will be included in the board materials to support communication across committees because there is often limited meeting time to provide an update.

Resource & Development Committee:

The Committee did not meet because the Career Centers goals are still being developed.

Business Needs Committee:

The Committee is focused on how to strengthen connections between employers and Career Centers to improve recruitment pathways and ensure that services remain responsive to workforce needs. Proposed activities include business site visits for employment counselors and informational sessions connecting Career Center staff with human resources professionals. The committee will also coordinate with the Resource and Development Committee to promote information sharing and reduce organizational silos.

Youth Committee:

The Committee identified three goals: Services & Program Development, Labor Market Awareness, and Partnerships. Potential initiatives include a spring-break career exploration camp focused initially on the skilled trades, developed with Scouting America and Junior Achievement, as well as short-term instruction addressing

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foundational workplace skills identified by employers. The committee will also work to improve awareness among youth and parents of in-demand occupations, local industries, and available career pathways. Subcommittees will be formed around each goal, and Board members were invited to participate or recommend additional community partners.

11. Executive Director Transition…

Gretchen reported her final day of work will be Tuesday, September 29, with the office lease expiring on September 30. Effective October 1, Kassie will assume the role of Acting Executive Director. Saratoga County has approved both her position and the contract with the Capital Region Workforce Development Board (CRWDB) and Brian's group, with final acceptance now pending from the Grant Recipient, Rensselaer County.

Operational changes are underway in preparation for leadership transition. OSOS Management Report Center Director training is scheduled for September 29, enabling Center Directors to take ownership of their management reporting. Brian and his group will support Kassie in both program and fiscal performance work as the organization strives to strengthen WIOA outcomes. NYSDOL has been informed of the organizational changes, and Kassie, Brian, and the CRWDB team will collaborate closely on system deliverables and best practices. Kassie and Gary will serve as gatekeepers for all CRWDB consulting support provided to SWW.
Gretchen and Kassie are working to secure future work and meeting space in partnership with collaborating organizations.

Gary expressed appreciation for Gretchen's service and leadership over the past six years, highlighting her significant role in stabilizing and advancing the organization.

12. Additional Opportunity for Board Member Announcements / Comments

- **Scott McKenna** briefly outlined the initiative "Industrial Athletes" to connect athletes, especially wrestlers, with career opportunities, particularly in the trades, through partnerships such as Wrestlers in Business. A job fair for outgoing college wrestlers will be held October 1, with a broader virtual job fair for all athletes planned for winter and another event expected in spring. The goal is to link schools, families, and athletes with meaningful, challenging career paths, addressing both workforce needs and mental-health concerns faced by former high-level athletes seeking purpose after sports. Scott is currently building national partnerships and intends to support local athletes in the Section 2 area.
- **Doug Ford** added that the Northeast Construction Trades Workforce Coalition (NCTWC) will also be supporting the Industrial Athletes initiative. Also, Doug announced that the Annual NCTWC Mixer will be on November 18, 2026, and welcome people to join.
- **Dr. Turina Parker** announced the CTE Works event will take place at the Saratoga City Center on December 17, 2026 and asked members to participate in the event if they were able.

13. Adjournment

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

Next SWW WDB Meeting
Wednesday, November 4, 2026 – Saratoga Eagle

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