

**State of Indiana
Governor's Workforce Cabinet**

Thursday, April 25, 2024

Meeting Minutes – Merrillville/Region 1

I. Call to Order

The Governor's Workforce Cabinet met in regular session starting at 10:00 a.m. ET (9:00 a.m. CT) at International Union of Operating Engineers – Local 150 Union Hall, 2193 West 84th Place, Merrillville, IN 46410, with Chairman Ryan Kitchell presiding.

Member Introduction & Roll Call

Members Present: Jacqueline Barton, Rep. Bob Behning (virtual), Robert Coons, Tony Denhart, Molly Dodge (for Dr. Sue Ellspermann), Megan Glover, Joyce Irwin (virtual), Dr. Chuck Johnson (virtual), Sherm Johnson, Mark Kara, Paul Ketcham (virtual), Ryan Kitchell, Theresa Koleszar, Chris LaMothe (virtual), Chris Lowery, Rebecca McCuaig, Richard Paulk, Fred Payne (virtual), Courtney Penn, Dan Peterson, Marilyn Pitzulo, Dr. Steve Rogers (virtual), Steve Schreckengast, Rebecca Schroeder, Dave Shane (virtual), Micah Vincent

Regrets: David Adams, Dr. Sue Ellspermann, Jody French, Dr. Katie Jenner, Loren King, Sen. Jeff Raatz, Todd Richardson, Amish Shah, Tony Vespa

GWC Executive Staff: Whitney Ertel, Fran Valentine

II. Consideration of the minutes

Chairman Kitchell asked for a motion to approve the GWC meeting minutes from February 16, 2024, in Region 3/Fort Wayne. The minutes were unanimously approved by the Cabinet.

III. Opening Comments

Chairman Kitchell provided welcoming remarks and introduced the newest Cabinet Member, Micah Vincent. Micah introduced himself and provided information on his background. Cabinet Members went around the room introducing themselves and their affiliation. Chairman Kitchell provided an overview of the meeting and thanked the IUOE Local 150 for hosting. He turned the comments over to David Fagan, Financial Secretary, IUOE Local 150, to welcome guests to the facility. Chairman Kitchell then announced the first presenters: Rick Wajda and Chris Price.

IV. Construction Workforce & Indiana Housing Overview

Rick Wajda, CEO of Indiana Builder's Association (IBA) and Chris Price, President of Indiana Construction Roundtable Foundation (ICRF) introduced themselves. Chris provided an overview of the presentation and the mission of the ICRF: "to encourage, empower and inform individuals to pursue careers within the construction industry." He outlined the challenges and opportunities currently facing the ICRF and its mission. Rick provided insight into how the IBA can alleviate some of the challenges. He shared statistics on the benefits of home building in Indiana and the importance of attracting workers to the construction industry.

V. Building Homes, Growing Communities

Chairman Kitchell welcomed Dan Peterson with Cook Medical Group to present next. Dan shared a brief overview of Cook Medical Group and its mission, along with the biggest challenge they are facing with

recruiting talent: housing. To help address the issue, they implemented a program to build houses for their employees to fit their wants and needs. The program has seen success during the first phase, and they have sold 24 out of 25 of the houses that have been built thus far. They are learning how to improve the program for future phases and are encouraging other companies to consider developing similar programs to help recruit future talent and support current employees.

VI. Civil Construction Partnerships

Kathy Neary, Chief Strategy & Business Engagement Officer with Center of Workforce Innovations, opened the final presentation alongside her colleagues, Audra Peterson (Director, Porter County Career & Technical Education Center) and Kevin Comerford (Director of Professional Development, Construction Advancement Foundation). The three organizations have had a long-standing partnership and in recent discussions found that they are all facing a similar problem: job openings and the construction labor shortage.

Kevin outlined the mission of the Construction Advancement Foundation (CAF) does and how it contributes to creating solutions. Their biggest initiative is workforce development and thanks to recent legislation and funding there are more opportunities to help curb some of the issues that the state and region are facing. He worked alongside Kathy and Audra to determine employer needs and opportunities to build bridges. They then developed the Civil Construction Program. They selected a host site, Duneland School Corporation, for the first phase and Audra led the Porter County Career & Technical Education Center (CTE) side by developing curriculum and a career pathway for students. They now have over 30 community partnerships with the program and offer scholarships for students, as well. They have several large upcoming projects and plans for students to gain work-based learning opportunities in the field.

VII. Final Remarks

Cabinet Member and meeting host, Mark Kara, thanked speakers for their contributions and highlighted the importance of all the topics discussed. Chairman Kitchell opened the floor for questions and comments. He reminded Cabinet Members that the next meeting will be held in Region 5/Greenwood. He thanked the speakers for their presentations and the hosts for the space provided.

VIII. Adjournment – 12:00 p.m. ET (11:00 a.m. CT)