



Marathon County Public Library
Wausau Community Room, 2nd Floor
300 N. First Street, Wausau, WI

Board Minutes (approved)

WDB Members Present: Al Chaney, Dave Eckmann, Ronald Karl, Tim Norlin, and Amy Yessa.

WDB Members Present via Teams: Bradley Berglund, Janessa Brickner-Ress, Angie Close, Angela Eberhardt, Paula Erickson, Paul Herold, Jeremy Higgins, Dan Kinsella, Patty Noland (11:23 a.m.) Casey Nye (10:10 a.m.), Kristine Porter, Mitch Rupp, and Amber Stancher

WDB Members Absent: Kyle Alters, Thad Brockman, Conney Edmondson, Jodi Gruhn, Anthony Negani, Eva Scheppa, and Diane Sennholz.

WDB Staff Present: John Cokl, Justin Fraser, Peter Gelhar, Rob Golla, Libby Heidmann, Amy Hoppa, Brian Kalish, Ginger Keymer, and Stephany Tatro.

Others Present: Colt Nicklaus (FSC), Karl Olsen via Teams (Lac du Flambeau), Kate Owens (Bay Area Workforce Development Board), Brian Wolfe (FSC), and Danielle Zeamer (Brown County Public Library)

1. **Call to Order-** Chaney called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. There was quorum.
2. **Guest Speakers: Kate Owens & Danielle Zeamer on Job Pod Initiative –**
3. **Approval of Minutes from September 11, 2025 –** Eckmann moved to approve the minutes from the September 11, 2025 meeting; seconded by Brickner-Ress. Motion carried.
4. **Approval of Treasurer’s Report –** Eckmann moved to approve the Treasurer’s report; seconded by Erickson. Motion carried.
5. **Announcements from the Chair –** Chaney recognized Paula Erickson for her many years of service on the Board and thanked Amy Yessa for stepping up to a role on the Executive Committee. Chaney noted the creation of subcommittees on the Board, with each Board member asked to participate in one.
6. **Announcements from the Chief Elected Officials –** CEO not present
7. **Announcements from the Executive Director**
 - Kalish recognized **Kris Porter & Paula Erickson** for their decades of service and their dedication to the Board. Porter will retire from DWD on 1/5/26 and Erickson will end her tenure as a Board Member 12/31/25.
 - Beginning Jan 1st, Ginger Keymer will be serve as the **One Stop Operator/OSO** for WDA6.

- A difficult decision was made to decertify and close the **Wisconsin Rapids Job Center** (WRJC) as of Dec 31. The WRJC partners are in active discussion with McMillan Library in Wisconsin Rapids to continue in-person services at the library, within the Job Pod or similar model. The building that houses the **Marathon County Job Center** (MCJC) has been sold and tenants have until Mar 1st to vacate. DWD facilities is the process of finding a new location for the MCJC and determining which partners will be housed at the new location.
- **Monitoring** by the State (DWD) began mid-November and went well with just a few minor findings. The final report should be distributed around mid-January.
- The **Awards of Excellence** were held at the Commons Non-Profit Center on Nov 11th where a dozen or so grant recipients were recognized for their outstanding efforts and success.
- Kalish reported the **successful award of two grants** totaling \$15,000 to be used **towards** staff time and initial **startup costs of the LifeWork\$** program: \$5,000 from the North Central Community Foundation and \$10,000 from the Wausau Impact Grant. LifeWork\$ is a summer program in place prior to 2020. NCWWDB partnered with DVR, to provide classroom and work experience to teenagers with disabilities. The goal is to get this program up and running by June 2026.
- **Rebranding Updates** – Name and logo complete, now finalizing design of letterhead, business cards, and social media files. Phase two will be the creation of a new website.
- Kalish explained the creation of **five Workgroups/Committees** that will support the AWE Board. Each committee will have roughly five Board members and at least one staff member to facilitate meetings. Committees are as follows: (1) Education, (2) Nominations, (3) JAS Awards of Excellence planning, (4) Marketing, and (5) LifeWork\$.

8. **Approval of Resolution Renaming Awards of Excellence in Jane A. Spencer’s Honor** – motion made by Eckmann; it was seconded by Higgins. Motion carried.

9. **Business Services Summary** - Gelhar shares the economic overview for the nine-county WDA6 area as summarized on the Quarter 4 webpage at <https://advancewi.org/Q4> with a link to the full report and complete economic outlook data provided by Lightcast. This will be updated monthly.

10. **Workgroup/Program Summaries**

- **PY24 Final Performance** – Heidmann discussed the [WDA6 Dashboard](#), developed with Cokl, which highlights PY24 performance and provides a visual overview of successful areas, where our WDA6 is meeting or exceeding the statewide average.
- **WAI/FORWD Updates** – Hoppa noted that the QUEST grant ended Sept 30, 2025, with a total of 96 participants served. Of those, 14 enrolled in disaster relief employment. Thirteen QUEST recipients transitioned into the WIOA and WAI 2.0 grant programs to continue their childcare degrees. Several cohort trainings under the **WAI 2.0 grant** are underway and complete including: Serv Safe training with MSTC by 8 Wood County Jail inmates, class of 13 in Massage Therapy certification program with the Wellness School in Stevens Point, partnership with WATEA to train 9 students in the Auto Collision program, as well as solar energy training with Midwest Renewable Energy Association. Staff have exceeded the program goal of 85 participants with 104 enrolled so far, and seven months still remain. The **FORWD grant**: Fostering Opioid Recovery through Workforce Development is subcontracted under WDA7, with a goal of 24 participants. Already at 19 or 20 with more recruits coming in every day.

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- **Forward Service Corporation** – Nicklaus reported that FSC has enrolled 59 participants from July 1 – Dec 1 of this year. They have served 249 people within the youth, adult, and dislocated worker programs. FSC has already exceeded its target enrollment for the WIOA Adult program, and on target for the WIOA Youth and DW. Of 156 individuals in training, 28 have already received their credentials. Healthcare continues to be the top training sector.

11. Partner Reports

- **CWIMA** – Representative not present
- **WATEA** - Yessa reported that industry training for technicians will continue through March 2026. A team is actively working to find funding options and training providers beyond March, as there is a great need for technician training in the area, specifically for technicians already working in the field. To date, WATEA has trained 129 unique individuals, with a state goal of 100. WATEA is again applying for a WETAP grant for 2026. Will know by end of January. Also hosting a strategic planning session next Wednesday. Yessa and Brickner Ress announced that WATEA is in the quiet phase of a campaign to raise funds for a transportation and automotive exhibit at the Children’s Imaginarium in Wausau. Currently they are raising initial funds to start the design phase of the process.

12. **Adjournment** - Brickner-Ress made a motion to adjourn; it was seconded by Eckmann. Meeting adjourned at 10:49 a.m.