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## Meeting Minutes (approved)

**WDB Members Present:** Al Chaney, Paul Herold, Jeremy Higgins, Ronald Karl, Patty Noland, Amanda (Peterson) Weber, and Amy Yessa.

**WDB Members Present via Teams:** Janessa Brickner-Ress, Stephanie Downs, Dave Eckmann, Jodi Gruhn, Dan Kinsella, Anthony Negani, Tim Norlin, Matthew Rice, Mitch Rupp, Diane Sennholz, and Amber Stancher

**WDB Members Absent:** Kyle Alters, Bradley Berglund, Thad Brockman, and Casey Nye.

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

**Others Present:** Deputy Kristy Beathard (Wood County), Colt Nicklaus (FSC), Steve Maier (Langlade County), Karl Olsen via Teams (Lac du Flambeau), John Peterson (Schutte Metals/CWIMA), Jim Waldron via Teams (Wausau Tile/CWIMA), Jail Administrator, Susana Wagner (Wood County), and Brian Wolfe (FSC).

1. **Call to Order-** Chaney called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. There was quorum.
2. **Guest Speakers: Wood County Sherriff Demonstration** - To promote our law enforcement job fair coming up on April 30th at NTC, two K9 officers, Deputy Kristy Beathard and Jail Administrator Susana Wagner, along with their dogs Roscoe and Lola, highlighted some of the different ways that law enforcement use canines on the job. Roscoe primarily works at traffic stops, drug searches, tracking violent and nonviolent individuals, and lost items. Lola primarily works inside the jails as a therapy dog for officers and inmates. Golla explained that law enforcement field includes a way array of positions, including specialists in technology, weapons, and investigations. Canine specialists are among the newer opportunities growing within law enforcement.

**CWIMA** – New Board member, Amanda Weber, introduced her father, John Peterson and Jim Waldron, for an overview of the Central Wisconsin Manufacturers Alliance (CWIMA). Jim Waldron, President of Wausau Tile, serves as the President of the CWIMA Board of Directors. CWIMA is a group of manufacturers, education facilities, and partners who work with over fifty K-12 school systems in the region to promote manufacturing and make it more visible to students as a career option. CWIMA has provided over \$30,000 in student scholarships to tech schools in the last few years, and works directly with Nicolet, NTC, MSTC, and 12 area school districts. CWIMA currently has 48 manufacturing members, 44 affiliate members (schools/chambers of commerce), and 29 business partners (law firms, insurance companies, and banks). CWIMA will be hosting their annual summit on April 28-29, 2026, at the Central Wisconsin Expo Center on Market Street in Rothschild.

3. **Approval of Minutes from December 11, 2025** – Noland moved to approve the minutes from the December 11, 2025, meeting; seconded by Herold. Motion carried.
4. **Approval of Treasurer's Report** – Herold moved to approve the Treasurer's report; seconded by Noland. Motion carried.
5. **Approval of Annual Audit** – Postponed to June meeting.
6. **Announcements from the Chair** – Chaney and Gelhar highlighted the Talent Development Conference (**TDCON 2026**) on **April 21-22, in Green Bay**, requesting gift basket ideas/items that promote our region, for companies that have items they would like to showcase. Chaney **welcomed new Board members** Amanda (Peterson) Weber and Stephanie Downs, shared that a recent promotion for **Angie Close** has led to her **resignation from the Board**, and an immediate **need for two new Executive Committee members** from the Board.
7. **Announcements from the Chief Elected Officials** – CEO not present
8. **Announcements from the Executive Director**
  - Closure of the **Wisconsin Rapids Job Center** (WRJC) is almost complete. DET/Job Service staff offering in-person outreach hours at the McMillan Library in Rapids. Still working on creating a Job Pod model in Wisconsin Rapids. The new **Marathon County Job Center** (MCJC) will be at 11 Scott Street, one building north of the Marathon County Public Library and just down the street from the former Job Center. Projected opening is May 1. Kalish and Noland mentioned working with the Wausau Area Chamber on a grand opening event.
  - **Monitoring** by the State (DWD) should close out soon. No major findings.
  - **Rebranding Updates** – Now have name tags, branded t-shirts, polos, and jackets. We continue to update internal documents. Ginger is working with building owners on exterior interior signage replacement. Greenleaf and our intern Luke, leading the website redesign.
  - Kalish shared the **Committee assignments for Board members**. Staff will facilitate meetings; committees will choose a Chair. The **Nominations** and **LifeWork\$** Committees will schedule initial kick-off meetings this spring. Others may not meet until summer.
  - **June 25 Social Outing** for Board members and staff at a **Wausau Woodchucks game**. Have 50 tickets for a Thursday night game at 6:35pm. An informal gathering and opportunity to meet in a casual setting. We have a reserved section, the Leine's Party Area, with all-you-care- to eat brats, burgers, hot dogs, fries, chips, fountain soda, and water.
9. **Business Services Summary** - Gelhar provided an update on the Ahlstrom Mill closure in Mosinee, which issued a WARN notice that the Rapid Response Team received on February 27th. Although the company provided little information initially, communication with the employer has greatly improved and they are proactively putting together and scheduling events to help their workers far in advance of the first dislocation, scheduled for June 30<sup>th</sup>. John Peters with Forward Service is the main point of contact between Ahlstrom and the Rapid Response Team. Union will negotiate a total number of employee layoffs, between 125 and 200. The number of salaried employees to be laid off is around twenty (20). Closure is due to economic reasons, market pressures. Ron Karl of Forest County spoke of

the many Mill closures over the last thirty years and the increasingly limited number of places for lumber companies to sell the wood. Forest County no longer has any sawmills and a minimum drive of 40 miles to sell lumber. The transportation costs and competition are high. Gelhar mentioned the economic overview for the nine-county WDA6 area as summarized on webpage, <https://advancewi.org/economy>, with a link to the full report and complete economic outlook data provided by Lightcast.

## 10. Workgroup/Program Summaries

- **Executive Committee** – Approved the 401K match for 2025, the OSO Firewall Policy, and a draft of the procurement process and timeline for the RFP. Chaney and Herold volunteered to be a part of the RFP Evaluation Team. A budget of \$2500 was also approved for a Board social outing to a Wausau Woodchucks game. The committee also approved a local policy for the Wisconsin Pathways Home 6 grant, outlining eligibility requirements pre and post release. And finally, a new Board Member, Amanda Weber was approved.
- **Q2 Performance** – Heidmann discussed the [WDA6 Dashboard](#), developed with Cokl, which highlights Program Year 2025 Q2 performance and provides a visual overview of successful areas, where our WDA6 is meeting or exceeding the statewide average. Heidmann also highlighted the webpage with the current RFP information, <https://advancewi.org/rfp>.
- **WAI/FORWD Updates** – Hoppa highlighted a solar energy cohort training with Midwest Renewable Energy Association. Ten **WAI 2.0 grant** participants completed the training, three have interviews this week. Both the Massage Therapy certification program with the Wellness School in Stevens Point and the Auto Collision partnership with WATEA will wrap up in May. Staff have exceeded the program goal of 85 participants with 136 enrolled so far. Remaining funds will be invested in CDL training for several grant recipients. The **FORWD grant**: Fostering Opioid Recovery through Workforce Development is subcontracted under WDA7. Currently serving 23 students with a goal of 24 participants. Of the 97 enrollments for the **WPH4 grant only 26** remain in follow-up status, where they are contacted monthly to offer support for job retention. Some of the higher wage successes with that grant include employment with Veritas Steel, Sparhawk Truck and Trailer, Graphic Packaging, Trillium Construction, Domtar Paper, Gordon Aluminum, and a management position with Family Dollar.
- **Forward Service Corporation (FSC)** – Nicklaus shared data and highlights from the WIOA Quarterly Report (October – December 2025). Within that period FSC enrolled 31 new participants, for a total of 79 new participants this fiscal year. They have served 254 people within the youth, adult, and dislocated worker programs. FSC is on track to meet target enrollment goals for the WIOA Youth and DW programs and have exceeded the adult target by 111%. Of 167 individuals in training, 58 have already received their credentials. Healthcare continues to be the top training sector.

## 11. Partner Reports

- **CWIMA** – Presentation at start of meeting
- **WATEA** - Yessa reported completion of their Industry 4.0 training for technicians, serving 140 individuals with a goal of 100. WATEA requested state funding to train entry level technicians with a decision expected by end of March. Wheels to Work has been funded again for 2026. WATEA has entered the public phase of their Children’s Imaginarium fundraising campaign.
- **OSO** – Moving forward, Keymer will provide updates for the **One Stop Operator**, a role which facilitates communication and collaboration between the Job Center partners. The annual **Job Center Partner Meeting held on March 5, 2026**, with managers/directors from each of

the agencies at the Wausau and Rhinelander Job Centers. The meeting included presentations from Heidi Luft of Thriving Wisconsin and Mitchell Rupp, Regional Economist, who provided a labor market update for our region. Bulk of the meeting was a **discussion on data collection; how our agencies collect data and how we can use it to improve outcomes for job center customers**, with support for moving away from customer satisfaction surveys once or twice a year to collecting feedback on an ongoing basis via a shared customer feedback questionnaire, sent automatically after virtual or in person appointments. Also discussed the **MOU (Memorandum of Understanding)** a service agreement that unites the job partners. The decertification of the Rapids Job Center is considered a major change that requires a full revision of our MOU. **One goal is to improve the referral process**, clarifying the key program contacts, the expected response time post referral, etc. The **OSO will continue to meet four times a year**, every three months. Next meeting in June. Between those quarterly meetings, the managers get together eight times a year to discuss things as needed, identify problems, and solutions.

12. **Adjournment** - Herold made a motion to adjourn; it was seconded by Higgins. Meeting adjourned at 11:35 a.m.