

SC WORKS

UPPER SAVANNAH

**Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board Meeting
Via In Person, Virtual and Conference Call
Upper Savannah Council of Governments, 430 Helix Road, Greenwood
Monday, December 6, 2021
Meeting: 4:00 PM**

Members Present: Roy Lowe, Chad Ulmer, John Calhoun, Kassie Burton, Roberta Kinard, Taiese Kidd, Ann Blanton, Candy Lalonde, Matt Wiggins, Darron Wilson, Debbie Walling, Stephen Taylor

Members Absent: Scott Coleman, Theresa Stover, Shunna V. Jeter, Dale Callum, Betty Carol Jones, Camilla Haigler, Julie Bagwell and Kevin Crouch

Staff Present: Ann Skinner, Billy Morgan, Linda Lagroon, Amber Bearden

Guest: Katie Craven, GLEAMNS; and Melissa Rodgers, SC Department of Employment and Workforce, Dr. Hope Rivers, Piedmont Technical College

Welcome, Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Taiese Kidd welcomed members and guests. The meeting was called to order.

Approval of Minutes for August 2, 2021: <https://upperscworks.com/workforce-system/board-minutes/>

Ms. Kidd reminded members that minutes are emailed along with the meeting agenda. They are also archived online. She asked for a voice vote and the minutes were approved unanimously. She introduced the guest speaker, Dr. Hope Rivers and suggested that the roll call be conducted after the presentation.

Piedmont Technical College – Dr. Hope Rivers

Dr. Rivers said she had been president for almost one year. She came from the SC Technical College System where she worked with Dr. Brooks. She said she is a native of Whitmire and was glad to come back to the area.

Piedmont Technical College provides instruction for more than 10,000 students annually: 7,190 in college credit courses, 3,592 in continuing education and 872 in dual enrollment. It serves the same

seven counties as the Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board. PTC has campuses in each county.

Dr. Rivers shared information about in-demand majors and highlighted, cardiovascular technicians and registered nurses which both have average salaries above \$60,000 a year.

She shared that the college is tuition-free through at least the summer of 2022. South Carolina's technical colleges are braiding together: Pell Grants, lottery funding Covid relief funding and local assistance to lower the barrier to education. Students can start preparing for a career or they can complete foundational work towards a four-year degree.

Dr. River's shared that the college's affordability is what draws students, but they stay because they like small classes and caring faculty.

Roll Call – Ann Skinner

After the presentation, Ann asked those attending via phone or internet to identify themselves. Ann introduced a new COG staff member, Amber Bearden, who will be working with the Rural Health grant.

Reports – Ann Skinner

Ann explained that the agenda is full. She reminded members that the usual reports were emailed prior to the meeting and overall, the system is seeing more traffic. She went over the board's year-end report in detail, sharing that performance exceeded expectations. The year-end report is attached.

New Funding, Board Input Needed – Ann Skinner

Each year partner staff are surveyed to determine the support they need. The state workforce board has set aside \$300,000 to \$400,000 for local areas to make improvements to centers or programs. Based on input from others, Upper Savannah staff has ranked priorities. Security is the most important item. Individuals get mad about unemployment and can be abusive. Centers need furniture. The Greenwood center was established 15 years ago as a youth center. The traffic flow is different now and spreading customers out for social distancing requires flexibility. Most IT needs have been addressed with other grants, but the Greenwood center has an opportunity to update its server when they get a new fiber-optic line. Staff are advocating for outreach to get customers into the center. They need a sign visible from the street. Ann said she would explain the next item in more detail later in the agenda, but the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act program needs funding to provide comprehensive career services to those with significant barriers to employment such as those who are homeless or aging out of the foster care system. Lastly, Upper Savannah will incur costs in administering the funds. We can ask for staffing not to total 10% of the request. Altogether, Upper Savannah has identified \$380,000 in needs with security and intensive career services accounting for \$286,000.

Ann asked if members had additional items or questions about the proposal. There were no questions. Chairman Kidd asked if a vote was needed. Ann said that she could ask for the money on the board's behalf without a vote, but a vote would show that the request was the board's intention. Chairman Kidd called for a voice vote, and all voted in favor. There were no abstentions. (Note: Part of the request would directly benefit GLEAMNS Human Resources Commission by providing comprehensive career services. The GLEAMNS representative was not at the meeting.)

New Policies Needed to Offer Comprehensive Services – Ann Skinner

Generally, job seekers meet with staff every other week. With that level of service, case managers can manage a roster of 60 clients. With the strong economy, there are few individuals out of work and those who frequently need help from multiple agencies. The individuals who need the most assistance are those who are homeless and/or those who have been or are currently in foster care. To meet those needs we need to:

1. Have income support for those most in need who are participating in short-term training. Homeless individuals are often trapped. They urgently need money for basic needs and thus need to work, but the wages they earn without training are not sufficient to allow them self-sufficiency. WIOA allows boards to authorize a needs-related stipend for trainees. There are risks. Stipends are costly and are often an audit magnet. Ann proposed a \$240 a week stipend based on the following requirements: (a.) be documented as homeless, (b.) in short-term training full-time that is 17 weeks or less, (c.) participate in multi-agency case management to address needs.
2. Agree to enroll students still in high school. Traditionally we have served high school graduates or dropouts. Serving foster children will require we start working with them before they are 18. Most will still be in high school. We also need to be able to service those outside of our geographical area with the new money requested. Connie Maxwell enrolls students from all over the state.
3. Allow GLEAMNS to count those in the comprehensive case management as two clients for the purpose of caseload utilization goals.

Ann said that a board vote is needed to amend supportive services policies to allow for the Needs Related Payments. The other policies do not require a vote, but since they are established, a vote would clarify the board's intent. Chairman Kidd called for a voice vote, and all voted in favor with no abstentions. (Note: Part of the request would directly benefit GLEAMNS Human Resources Commission. The GLEAMNS board member was not at the meeting.)

Contract Extension Recommendation - Billy Morgan

The contract held by GLEAMNS Human Resources Commission for Adult, Youth and Dislocated Worker Career services and for SC Works operator expires June 30, 2022. It takes at least four months to competitively procure a new contract. The original request for proposals has criteria for contract extension which include: no major monitoring findings, successful performance, adequate enrollment, and satisfactory survey results from partners. Upper Savannah has done monthly and quarterly reviews of GLEAMNS. Roberta Kinard forwarded a survey to SC Works partners. Based on the reviews and the survey results, Upper Savannah staff agree that GLEAMNS has met the criteria for contract approval. Chairman Kidd asked if there were any questions and there were none. She said the vote for the item would be combined with the next item.

GLEAMNS Request for Staff Bonus – Ann Skinner

Employers across the country are having trouble hiring and retaining staff. GLEAMNS is under the same pressures. Other GLEAMNS divisions have offered incentive bonuses. Workforce development has not. The proposal includes stipulations that GLEAMNS meet caseload requirements by June 30, 2023, have no major monitoring findings, and implement the state-mandated client financial tracking system. After

reviewing the proposal, we feel it is in the area's self-interest. If GLEAMNS increases the number of clients served and pays a \$1,000 per employee bonus, the cost per client will be lower because staff costs will be spread across more clients. Ann asked if there were any questions. There were none. Chairman Kidd called for a voice vote on the contract extension and bonus proposal, and all voted in favor. (Note: The GLEAMNS board member was not at the meeting.)

Committee Assignments and Designation of Business Services Lead – Taiese Kidd

Our board meets once a quarter. To keep things going between meetings and to allow us to focus on priority areas, we need committees. I would like to appoint the following committee chairs and invite others to serve in their area of interest: Kassie Burton, youth; Chad Ulmer, nontraditional workers; Roberta Kinard, operations. We are also required to have a board-designed business services lead. That person has been Billy Morgan. I am sorry to let you know that Bill is moving to a job with Greenwood County in economic development. I would like to thank Billy. I would like to pencil in Ann Skinner as the business services lead until a replacement is found.

Adjourn

Chair Taiese Kidd called the meeting to conclusion. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is set for February 7, 2022.

Respectfully submitted by



Ann Skinner
Workforce Development Director