

# SC WORKS

## UPPER SAVANNAH

**Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board Meeting  
via Conference Call  
Monday, June 1, 2020  
Meeting: 4:00 PM**

**Members Present:** Ann Blanton, Scott Coleman, Theresa Stover, Shunna V. Jeter, Kassie Burton, Doris Watson, Debbie Walling, Roy Lowe, Julie Bagwell, Jesse Sibert, Betty Carol Jones, and Camilla Haigler

**Members Absent:** James Tisdale, Glenn Herlong, Houston Matthews, Taiese Kidd, Dale Callum, Scott Cain, Zebbie Goudeock, Darron Wilson, and Kevin Crouch

**Staff Present:** Ann Skinner, Billy Morgan, Ashley Shaffer, and Linda Lagroon

**Guest:** Melissa A. Rodgers, SC DEW; Katie Craven and Ursula McFadden, GLEAMNS; Chad Ulmer and Rawewan Ross, SC Vocational Rehabilitation; and Sam Leaman, USCOG

### **Welcome and Call to Order**

Chair Ann Blanton welcomed members and guests. The meeting was called to order.

The meeting conference call roll call was conducted by Linda Lagroon.

**Approval of Minutes for February 3, 2020:** <https://upperscworks.com/workforce-system/board-minutes/>

Ms. Blanton reminded members that minutes are emailed along with the meeting agenda. They are also archived on-line. The minutes were adopted unanimously as submitted.

### **Nominating Committee Report**

A motion was submitted from the Nominating Committee recommending Ms. Taiese Kidd to be Vice Chair of the Upper Savannah Workforce Development Board. The motion was seconded by Julie Bagwell and approved by the members.

## **Regular Reports**

The regular reports, which include the Usage, Contractor Enrollment, and 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Performance reports, were distributed as information and member review. There were no questions regarding the reports presented during the meeting.

## **Workforce Snapshot May 2020 – Billy Morgan**

Billy briefly discussed several charts / handouts:

- South Carolina employment by industry of which all the industries are affected by the virus. The highest affected was in the leisure and hospitality industry.
- South Carolina unemployment benefits paid weekly which shows the amount of weekly benefits paid during March and April 2020.
- Upper Savannah Initial Claims shows that 20,913 people have filed initial claims in the Upper Savannah area since March 2020. A significant percentage of these claimants will not be returning to their jobs because employers haven't rebounded.

## **Resources for laid off workers and employers – Billy Morgan**

Upper Savannah staff continue to deliver services to employers by email, telephone, conference calls, social media, etc. because most are working from home/office. Because many employers are not allowing visitors onsite, Upper Savannah staff have assisted with immediate recruiting needs by creating Facebook posts and adding hiring needs to Hot Jobs lists.

MEC in Greenwood County has announced it will close August 2020, which will affect 165 employees. The layoffs will occur in three waves: July 6, end of July, and August 15. Staff attended a rapid response meeting with the managers in early May 2020 to discuss services offered. A tentative rapid response has been scheduled for employees, which include group orientations, resume writing, and job fair. Any employers interested in participating in the job fair, please contact Billy Morgan.

Unemployment claimants earn regular UI benefits and an additional \$600 weekly until July 25, 2020. Individuals who have turned down offers of suitable work are not eligible to continue receiving UI benefits. If an employer has offered an individual a job and they refused, it is important for the employer to report the incident to the SC Department of Employment and Workforce through the Employer Self Service Portal.

## **Center Re-Opening Plans – Ursula McFadden**

SC Works Centers in Greenwood, Laurens, and Newberry are scheduled to re-open to the public beginning June 3, 2020. Because of possible issues with upset Unemployment Insurance applicants and news reports of situations arising when people are asked to wear a mask, security staff is needed to provide a safe work environment. Security guards will be hired and asked to check visitors in, direct those without appointments to the scheduling options, provide disposable face mask, etc. Public access to SC Works Centers is available by appointment only and can be scheduled online or by calling the local SC Works Center.

Additional space in Greenwood and Laurens centers has been secured to allow for social distancing to be enforced while servicing as many customers as possible. Otherwise, the ability to serve the public would be greatly limited.

In addition to disposable masks being provided to customers entering the centers, washable/reusable face masks will be provided for all staff to wear when in common areas or in contact with visitors. Reusable gloves will be provided for staff conducting cleaning. Gloves will also be available for visitor use. Disposable keyboard and mouse covers will be utilized to aid in sanitization. Hand sanitizer and disinfecting cleaners have been secured. Centers will close from 12:00 PM to 1:30 PM each day to allow for staff lunches and mid-day cleaning of high touch surfaces.

Software has been installed on customer computers to allow for staff to provide oversight and assistance while safety distanced from customers.

Ann Skinner added there are plans to open all seven centers by end of June. Openings will be phased in as staff work out any problems. Ann said that the board is responsible for certifying centers are meeting local needs and she asked that the board approve the re-opening plans as part of the certification process.

Camilla Haigler motioned to accept the center re-opening plans, which was seconded by Debbie Walling, and passed by Board members.

#### **2020 Budget – Ann Skinner**

There are three target groups for which the area receives funding: adults (low income), dislocated workers (laid off), youth (low income, at risk of not going to work). The Upper Savannah area receives funds each year to serve each fund stream. Unspent funds can be carried over into the next program year but must be spent within two years. Based on the cash flow projection distributed with the meeting agenda, funds are going to be tight but will work out; will carryover about half million dollars into the year starting July 1, 2020.

In July, Upper Savannah will receive about 15% of allotted funds and will receive remainder of funds by November. The proposed budget is based on operating expenses of a normal environment, but we are currently not operating in a normal environment. Staff have not received notice as to what the final fund allocation will be, so Upper Savannah may be facing a significant funding cut. Workforce Development did not receive additional funds from the CARES Act.

Ann Skinner authorized the Operating Manager to spend funds on security through July. Upper Savannah has not had any issues so far. Security staff costs about \$30/hour, which will be expensive. With the proposed budget, staff think security can be funded for August as well, which would equal about \$6,000 for Upper Savannah's share. The extra \$600 weekly unemployment compensation ends in July. The first week in August, claimants would receive lower unemployment checks. Staff are letting people know that the extra weekly unemployment income will not last forever.

Staff will plan to review the annual budget at the August Board meeting. If additional funding is not received, may have to freeze training, and cut staff.

Recommendation: Staff requested that the board authorize funds to continue funding security for the month of August, rent additional space in SC Works Centers, and to continue contract with GLEAMNS.

Julie Bagwell made a motion to accept the recommendation. Jessie Sibert seconded the motion. The members approved the motion. Shunna Jeter abstained from the vote.

**Area Reemployment Strategy – Ann Skinner**

Ann said that the strategy is to connect employers and job seekers to communicate opportunities. The system is trying to get people to be proactive. Ann said that small businesses have been hardest hit and need assistance the most.

People are encouraged to work on their GED now because during a recession, employers can be selective when hiring. Arrangements have been made with adult education to allow people to study for GED online. About a month ago, board members responded to an emergency email vote request. The Board approved lending laptops and providing funding for temporary internet access for clients to continue their studies over the summer. So far six people have requested this assistance.

A key strategy will be offering employers funding to train new workers. With On-the-Job training, employers can be reimbursed for providing the training listed in a pre-approved training plan. At this time, the cap is 50% of wages during the first 12 weeks. During the last recession, we offered up to 90% reimbursement based on company size. Since small businesses have been affected by the pandemic, increasing the reimbursement would help them survive. Ann proposed the following scale (as long as it is allowable under state guidelines):

- Under 50 employees – 90%
- 51 to 250 employees – 75%
- Greater than 250 - 50%

Ann said that the area received a \$100,000 grant for additional On-the-Job Training slots and a board vote to adopt the reimbursement scale would help Upper Savannah reach its goals. Scott Coleman made a motion to accept the recommendation, which was seconded by Jessie Sibert. The motion was approved by the members.

**Adjourn**

Chair Blanton acknowledged and welcomed Jessie Sibert back. She also congratulated Doris Watson on her upcoming retirement and announced that this would be Ms. Watson’s last Workforce Board meeting attendance.

Chair Blanton called the meeting to conclusion and reminded members that the next scheduled meeting will be Monday, August 3, 2020 at 4:00 pm, at Upper Savannah, 430 Helix Road.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted by



Ann Skinner  
Workforce Development Director