

**KENTUCKIANAWORKS BOARD MEETING  
GREATER LOUISVILLE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD**

**Thursday, June 25, 2020**

**8:30 A.M. – 10:00 A.M.**

**Cisco Webex online meeting**

**Board Members Present:** Caitlin Blair; David Bizianes; Eric Friggle; Firas Hamza; Jackie Beard; Jennifer Carman; Jenny Lampton; Jonathan Westbrook; Kristin Wingfeld (proxy for Dr. Marty Pollio); Mary Ellen Wiederwohl; Mike Hesketh; Roger Cude; Sadiqa Reynolds; Sarah Davasher-Wisdom; Tami Hatfield; Tom Quick; Tony Georges; Dr. Ty Handy; Willie Byrd; Vincent James

**Welcome and Greeting** – *Tony Georges*

Mr. Georges mentioned this was a different agenda than most, with only four items. However, today's meeting was a really important one, citing the phrase "never let a crisis go to waste." The first night of protests in Louisville came on the day of the last board meeting, May 28. Mr. Georges encouraged a very open, real, candid conversation during today's meeting.

Mr. Georges welcomed today's special guests: Ms. Alice Houston and Mr. Anthony Smith.

**Vote Needed: Review and Approve Minutes from May 2020** – *Tony Georges*

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Quick, and seconded by Ms. Davasher-Wisdom. The motion passed with no objection.

**Vote Needed: Yearly Budget for KentuckianaWorks for FY21** – *Michael Gritton*

Ms. Read confirmed the one-stop operator's continuation for FY21 was voted on and approved in the May Board meeting's consent agenda.

Mr. Gritton mentioned the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires the Board and Chief Local Elected Officials to approve two things each year: 1) the annual budget and 2) the selection of One-Stop Operator contractor. The CLEOs met last week and approved the proposed budget for next year.

Mr. Gritton cited a couple of changes, all of them good news. Thanks to the efforts of the Mayor, this year's SummerWorks funding was more than doubled (\$1.1m to \$2.4m) in just ten days after recent donations from the One Louisville Fund, the James Graham Brown Foundation, and the Gheens Foundation. Another new update: the state received some additional money to help people who had been laid off go back to work to do some emergency services. With this, KentuckianaWorks has started to work with the non-profit Center for Employment Opportunities, who specialize in working with re-entry workers who are coming back from incarceration. The specific details were still being worked out, but the plan is to have two separate van crews work with Dare to Care to distribute food.

A motion to approve the budget was made by Ms. Reynolds and seconded by Ms. Lampton. The motion passed with no objection.

**Consideration and Discussion: In Light of COVID-19 and Recent Protests Around the U.S., What, If Any, Changes Should Be Made to the Strategic Plan?** – *Michael Gritton*

Mr. Georges began by quoting Mike Tyson: “Everyone has a plan until you get punched in the mouth.” KentuckianaWorks has a Strategic Plan, but given the changes over the past month, it needs to be re-evaluated. “We’ve got good intentions, we’ve got good results,” he said, but more work still needs to be done. Mr. Georges mentioned the “Path Forward for Louisville” letter and invited some of the letter’s authors to give their thoughts, followed by a high-level discussion.

Ms. Reynolds appreciated the Board’s flexibility and willingness to adjust. About fifty organizations came together to write the letter. All the organizations were pretty much aligned on the same issues: jobs, justice, education, health, and housing. This is how outcomes can be changed in Black communities. It is important to talk about ills and oppressions that have been the Black community’s to suffer, such as Jim Crow and red-lining. Normally, policies to mitigate these have been Band-Aid approaches: there is investment in programs, but no one cries out for systems change. How do long-term trajectories change? The letter is something people who do the work every day created. It says “if we can scale this, we can make a tremendous difference.” Ms. Reynolds clarified the authors believe in Louisville, they just feel it can (and should) do better. The key question is: how do we change the achievement gap? Smaller classroom sizes, 1:1 technology, incentivizing teachers in order to lower turnover rates? Yes. The authors identified some low-hanging fruit, particularly around housing. The city has title to some vacant properties; why not work out a pathway to Black homeownership? It is not enough to revitalize the community if the people who have been suffering there do not have access to what developers want to create. As for questions of funding, Black leaders just watched the country mail stimulus checks to places like Ruth’s Chris Steakhouse, Harvard University, and other places that are not struggling nearly as much; “government finds money for things it wants to find money for,” and the authors are saying it is time for Black people to be a priority, for the government to have an intentional response. Ms. Reynolds acknowledged the protests have been difficult, but America does not seem to respond to anything other than violence. The chief does not get fired until shop windows are broken. Ms. Reynolds does not condone it, but she understands the righteous rage from people who are exhausted from being silenced and ignored for generations. There are people who want the world to be just, but they are not willing to put in the work to get it. Colin Kaepernick knelt quietly on the football field, but there was an outcry of disrespect and disruption, and his career was ripped from him. Most people were silent. If you were not vocal in support then, you lost the right to tell black people how to protest. The systems do not change. Ms. Reynolds said “please understand the trauma we are dealing with,” referencing the Rodney King video, COVID-19 disparities, and the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd. “We are exhausted,” she said, “we are traumatized, and we are demanding change.” She concluded by saying she appreciated the Board’s conversation.

Ms. Houston thanked Ms. Reynolds for her bold leadership. She said a lot of people have been reaching out to her and her fellow authors; what they want is for their organizations to have access to funds so they can be better able to do the work they already know how to do. The leaders want those who are engaged and involved with intentionality and focus to apply the principles and strategies specifically to Black Americans. For example, the issue of access to education with JCPS will need a collaborative solution including public/private internet partnerships. Hot spots, Google Chromebooks, etc. will help, but every single resident of

Jefferson County will need internet access. Needles will not be moved until policies are guided by principles. Half of Jefferson County's economy moves perfectly well, and the other half does not. "We will never be the country we need to be," she said, until these equity issues are resolved. Missions and values statements are not always internalized or believed; she is glad that KentuckianaWorks is looking carefully at theirs and the specific role of workforce development. Mr. Georges thanked Ms. Houston, agreeing the Board might need to narrow its focus.

Mr. Georges asked Mr. Smith if there was anything he would like to share. Mr. Smith began by saying he appreciated Ms. Houston's and Ms. Reynolds' leadership, they have always pushed for changes on the frontline. He also thanked the Board for taking time to have this conversation. Like Ms. Reynolds, he referenced Band-Aid approaches to structural problems. He has been around KentuckianaWorks for about 20 years, dating back to the LYON (Louisville Youth Opportunity Network) program and the start of the Kentucky Youth Career Center. It has been good work, but not good enough. The city has missed many opportunities to get things right; as Ms. Reynolds talked about, there is a need to move from charity to justice. Mr. Smith grew up in Shawnee, and he remembers the KKK and similar groups not wanting his sister to be bused to PRP for school. To Ms. Reynolds' point, there is not enough housing, people are still being housed in places and neighborhoods that do not have the resources they need. The problem is bigger than what KentuckianaWorks does, but he encouraged Board members to have these conversations in their own companies, looking at what they are doing to build equity and justice. If you are an all-white organization giving money to Black communities, you are missing the boat. There are plenty of Black folks willing to serve on boards; the boards just have to find them. Some of the people on the KentuckianaWorks Board are going to have to suffer some discomfort, asking themselves: am I contributing to the problem? How can I do it differently? Are our RFPs accessible to everybody who can do the work? Again, it is not just KentuckianaWorks who needs to be different, it needs to be each of us. He encouraged the Board to speak up publicly when and where they can. He also encouraged more empathy and to see things through the lens of Black people; for example, armed police in schools causing more fear for Black students rather than safety. "You all feel protected and served," he said, "we feel contained and under siege."

Mr. Georges said "you can't change yesterday, but you can change tomorrow." He said the KentuckianaWorks Board needs to address its makeup if members know any good, specifically Black, leaders who could fill a role that is something that needs to be addressed.

Bringing it back to the context of equity, Mr. Georges said "we can't fix it all, but we can fix workforce" and he opened the floor for other discussion. Mr. James thanked Ms. Reynolds, Mr. Smith, and Ms. Houston for their community leadership. Mr. James cited a need for bold imagination to make long-lasting changes on the persistent, systemic oppression and disparities faced by Black people. There has to be intentional investment of significant dollars, not just empty words or Band-Aid fixes. The people closest to the pain are the people closest to the solution. Programs developed outside the Black community are often meant to bring positive change, but they often do not work. The word "reparations" scares a lot of people because they do not know how to define it. There is a legacy that generations of wealth have been acquired at the expense of free Black labor, and this will not be resolved overnight. It is a moral issue, not just an economic one. What is being seen in the community and the streets is a social justice

movement to move people AND to move institutions. That revolution is needed. Again, the people who are closest to the pain are the best people to listen to for the solution. He advised the Board to listen to these voices, to see what they need and what they are asking for. Significant investment in jobs, education, and business opportunities to this community that has been separated for centuries is needed. The Black community needs resources and continued support. Developers are often legacy businesses; accelerate the growth of small companies! You have to have the will to be able to change. Mr. James is encouraged by what he hears, but he is also looking to see specific examples of what the Board does.

Ms. Reynolds said KentuckianaWorks does a good job, but she was curious about the JCPS Academies and the data on what students are getting in. What does the Board need to do to help JCPS change? “Do not be overwhelmed by the amount of work,” she told the Board; “We don’t need any more studies, we don’t need any more statements. We need concrete actions.” Ms. Wingfeld said there are fifteen schools in the JCPS Academies, and JCPS officials are watching the pathways to see if their enrollments match school enrollment. She also cited work on the transition phase for when students move on from JCPS to their next pathway, whether workforce or college. Ms. Reynolds claimed there is “a tendency to shine up the sh\*\*.” She encouraged JCPS to tell us the numbers, which have not been good, and to immediately fix any corrections that need to be made. “As much as I fight and raise hell about things,” Ms. Reynolds said, “I don’t always want to be the squeaky wheel,” she wants other people to fight the battle, as well. There are easy fixes, but certain people have not been willing to fix it. Ms. Houston had similar concerns about the JCPS Academies, that they need to help the kids who need help prior to transition. Mr. Smith added that young people want to learn, young people want to work; folks on the Board need to hire them. Ms. Rogers mentioned JCPS was establishing and trying to build programs for improvement and assured Ms. Reynolds the data will be provided transparently. JCPS officials met for over an hour at Shawnee recently and according to Ms. Rogers “it’s not pretty.” However, JCPS referenced a partnership with UofL healthcare that can help, adding “we’re here, we’re fighting, we’re not where we want to be,” but they are working to fix it. Ms. Rogers also cited a recent \$300,000 investment in the culinary program at Iroquois High and assured Ms. Reynolds they are listening. Ms. Reynolds asked her to just fix what is wrong. She does not have the answer, but she has been frustrated for some time. “We shouldn’t study it to death,” she said. Everyone says they do not want to go past Ninth Street, but “if it’s good enough, everyone takes it from us,” referencing Brandeis Elementary School.

Dr. Handy said his concern is that the work that needs to be done is going to take years, but there is an immediacy that also needs to be addressed. JCTC, for example, serves 13,000 students, about 3,000 of whom are students of color. White student enrollment for the fall is down 1%, black enrollment for the fall is down 70%. JCTC has been pulling out all the stops to try to address this problem, which will create an even bigger crisis if it does not change. Technical education is probably the quickest, safest way out of poverty, and this enrollment discrepancy is an immediacy that needs to be recognized. Dr. Handy said the University of Louisville’s Black enrollment has not seen a similar drop, and he theorized this could relate to the socioeconomic levels of the students who select JCTC for their education. Ms. Houston mentioned the scholarships for next year that Dr. Handy and JCTC have started to offer for this fall. It is a one-year commitment, but it is a start for 2021. Dr. Handy said he did not know if he had a solution in place, but even if JCTC spends their reserves for financial support for Black students, JCTC

needs to make sure those students still have access. If they do not have enough federal student aid, JCTC will cover the rest. This program was announced a week ago, but it has not had tremendous response yet. That is JCTC's pledge to spur students to stay socially engaged while also working on improving their future.

Ms. Davasher-Wisdom shifted to the Strategic Plan. When she read it, she did not notice verbiage about barriers to work. She asked if this could be added to the plan. GLI has partnered with a number of organizations to address barriers to work, and this "think tank" has now transformed into an "action tank" with two specific services: 1) a success navigator, which she has talked to Mr. Gritton about; and 2) a career acceleration network, headed by GLI employee Jessie Schook, which involves a cohort of employers creating career pathways. Mr. Georges said the Board talked last month about transportation being a key barrier; over the last few months, though, it is clear a lot of work can be done remotely. Regarding the cohort idea, Mr. Georges referenced how UPS has the night shift tuition plan and are now working closely with Norton Healthcare. There are partnership opportunities like that all over the place, we just have to take action.

Mr. Cude really appreciated this conversation, saying the wheels started spinning on different solutions. Humana is certainly committed to the cause. He was thinking about this short-term/long-term issue, declaring we have to do things now. In the short-term, to Dr. Handy's point, the key is access and affordability. Longer-term, there needs to be a discussion on the sector focus. What Humana has found, and other companies have found, is that people can be educated across a broad spectrum of skills; companies do not need to be so sector-focused. Humana has found a lot of really great IT people are coming from liberal arts backgrounds. Companies should broaden it to where we need to make the most impact.

Mr. Smith said as we think about marketing campaigns, we need feet on the street; as Mr. Gritton knows, Mr. Smith said, LYON was successful largely because of its outreach team. KentuckianaWorks needs to make sure people know about all the great programs it offers.

Regarding barriers to work, Ms. Blair referred to how it was discussed at the last in-person Board meeting that there was an absence of workers' perspectives. COVID has revealed these low-wage jobs are essential, and we need to re-imagine the quality of those jobs. She challenged the Board to keep this in mind moving forward.

Ms. Wiederwohl said she is doing a lot of listening right now. She went back to the Path Forward letter and the need to invest. Decades of oppression got society to where we are today, and we have to think about how to remedy it whether we are in government, the private sector, or philanthropy. There was a proposal with Metro Council this year for Evolve502 funding via bonded funds, but it was, unfortunately, not passed. We need to keep up that battle; we fund roads and bridges and other things that last a long time, a college education also lasts a long time. This is an unusual budget year for Metro, to be sure, but it is a good-looking budget for where we are. It will probably not be the last budget for FY21, as Metro is still waiting on federal government action (hopefully in July). She said she would continue to push for money for Opportunity Youth initiatives, for Evolve502, for investments in built environments and capacity-building. Traditionally we have not been putting our money where our mouths are.

Ms. Houston was looking at the mission and vision statement of KentuckianaWorks in light of the conversations the Board has had. She said there has always been an emphasis for workforce development to align itself with the employers, the business community; but, maybe this goes back to whether education is utilitarian or liberal arts. There is a need to expand our vision, as we should also speak to the needs of employees and the community. Mr. Cude agreed that the Board has been too focused on employers, and needs to start looking at the needs of employees, as well.

**Wrap-Up and Short Executive Director's Report** – *Michael Gritton and Tony Georges*

Mr. Gritton closed with some good news, mentioning the new SummerWorks Tech Academy. This initiative offers paid incentives to youth who learn tech skills this summer. Marketing efforts have been being targeted in West and South Louisville. The program goes live next week.

Mr. Georges gave everyone his email address and encouraged attendees to reach out to him and/or Mr. Gritton. He looked forward to more frequent conversations and challenges like the ones that were discussed today. He closed by saying he appreciated everyone's comments, and again thanked Ms. Houston and Mr. Smith specifically for their attendance today.

The meeting adjourned at 10:00 A.M.

**KentuckianaWorks Staff:**

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**Special Guests:**

Alice Houston  
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