



Tompkins County Workforce Development

Disabilities Workforce Committee

Unity House
36 Fish Road, Ithaca, NY 14850

Meeting Minutes - Tuesday, June 10, 2025

Present: A. Tunison, B. Flaherty, J. Gondek, J. Slade, A. McManus

Excused: J. Lynch, K. Rachetta, B. Seekins

Staff: C. Sponn, A. Jacot, J. Starley

Call To Order:

Mr. Tunison, Disabilities Workforce Committee Chair called the meeting to order at 8:12 a.m.

Approval of Minutes: April 8, 2025

It was moved by Ms. Slade, seconded by Ms. McManus, and unanimously adopted by voice vote of members present to approve the minutes of April 8, 2025.

Discussion

Highlights

Mr. Sponn welcomed and introduced the newest Disabilities Workforce Committee member, Ms. Jennifer Gondek. Ms. Gondek was recently named TST Director of Exceptional Education.

Ms. Mcmanus, Program Director of Unity Employment Services and Disabilities Workforce Committee member, graciously hosted this meeting at the new Unity House location on 36 Fish Road in Ithaca. The CSVT Food Service cohort cooked and served a full breakfast, consisting of eggs, toast, fruit, sausage, bacon, orange juice, which was their culminating project. The Disabilities Workforce Committee was able to see firsthand their goals becoming reality in our community.

Adaptive Technology Funding Update

Mr. Sponn reported that a request for additional New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network (NY SCION) was granted, and Workforce Development received the funds, \$61,000, last week. The extra funding will cover the cost of the new adaptive technology that was discussed in the last Disabilities Workforce Committee meeting. Mr. Sponn reported that the grant will also fund training and

workshops. Mr. Sponn would also like to have someone come to the Career Center to train the staff on how to use the new adaptive technology once it is received. He said that the Tompkins County Legislature needs to approve the resolution to purchase the equipment prior to ordering. However, he anticipates a quick turn around once ordered.

Business Training Brainstorm

Mr. Sponn asked the members for ideas on workshops or training opportunities Workforce Development can facilitate that the community could benefit from. Many great ideas were given, and all will be taken into consideration. Mr. Sponn also reported that the Tompkins County Chamber will be sending out the Disabilities Workforce Survey. He hopes to receive many more responses and will update the members at the next meeting.

New Disability Resource Coordinator (DRC)

Mr. Sponn introduced the newest member of Tompkins County Workforce Development, Mr. Joel Starley, DRC. Mr. Starley told the members his background, qualifications and goals. Mr. Starley said he is very excited about his new position as the DRC. Helping people lost in the shuffle, maximize the usefulness of their tools and achieve their goals is his mission in life. Mr. Starley has been employed in various positions that do just that for over 25 years.

Director's Report

Center of Government Updates

Mr. Sponn reported that Workforce Development was not able to fit into the projected Center of Government building. Tompkins County Administration has proposed placing Workforce Development and New York State Department of Labor (NYSDOL) in the Old Jail building. Mr. Sponn reported that the building will be renovated and constructed to meet the needs of Workforce Development and NYSDOL.

Mr. Sponn reported that Tompkins County Administration is currently exploring alternate locations for the Career Center. Mr. Sponn explained there are many issues with the current location. An Ancillary agreement has not been agreed upon and the upkeep of the space has been little to none, while raising the rent.

Career Center Updates

Mr. Sponn reported that the Tompkins County Workforce Development Board has decided on revising the current logos. Since the Workforce Development Board and Career Center merged, the goal is to connect the two logos and make them more identifiable. Mr. Sponn reported that his uncle, a professional graphic designer, has

offered to donate his services and design the logos. Mr. Sponn reported that he intends to compose and send a survey to staff, employers and committees for input. His goal is to make it easier for the community to understand who we are and what we do.

Adjournment:

Mr. Tunison thanked everyone for joining.

Mr. Tunison adjourned the meeting at 9:26 a.m.