

**Northeast Michigan Consortium  
Administrative Board  
Gaylord, Michigan  
December 8, 2008**

- I. Call to Order – 10:05 a.m.
- II. Introductions, Roll Call and Approval of the September 22, 2008, Meeting Minutes.

Members

Dennis Kauffman, Chair  
Gerald Fournier  
Ken Glasser  
Mike Lange  
Ken Timm

Guests

Kathy Bradley, NEMCSA  
Laura Budreau, NEMCSA  
Dawn Finnegan, NEMCSA  
Genny Hoskey, NEMCSA (MPRI)  
Tamara Ward, NEMCSA

Staff

Kurt B. Ries, Director  
Terry L. Basel, Program Coordinator  
Jane Zielaskowski, Program Coordinator

Timm moved to approve the September 22, 2008, meeting minutes, supported by Lange. Ayes all, motion carried.

- III. Director's Report.
  - A. Gaylord Michigan Works! Center. Ries welcomed the members to the Gaylord Michigan Works! office, which was opened in July 2008. Staff had outgrown the previous location due to increased plant closures and unemployment in Otsego County. Ries noted that the Grayling office has been expanded, and the Cheboygan staff will also be relocating to a larger space in the spring.
  - B. National Issues. Everyone is aware that change has occurred at the national level, but it's too early to know the implications. Democrats tend to favor public works programs, so there may be increased opportunities for NEMC, NEMCOG, and others to pursue additional federal funds. Ries anticipates more funding for dislocated workers and the possibility of TAA benefits being broadened.
  - C. State Level. DLEG has been expanded to include the Department of Energy, so are now known as DELEG. Ries anticipates that the state will continue to emphasize training and increasing enrollment numbers, but available jobs are

decreasing as businesses go bankrupt and/or close. Participants continue training for jobs in hope that economic conditions will improve.

- D. Plant Closures. Recent plant layoffs include Kneeland Industries (Star Cutter) in Mio (50-60 workers), and Moran Iron Works in Onaway (45 laid off). Michigan Works! staff met with Moran's this week to offer assistance. Often, corporate decisions are made elsewhere, leaving local workers unaware of the situation. Ries has been in touch with Lydia Murray (MEDC) to see what assistance may be available to struggling companies. More plants will look to diversification and alternative (green) energy. Michigan has unused capacities in manufacturing that could be turned to alternative uses. Ries asked that commissioners contact Michigan Works! or MEDC to discuss layoffs in their counties. Interest in the Federal Procurement process has increased and the PTAC staff has been conducting classes and training more business owners in the region.
- E. Support for Local Grant. Kauffman noted that he recently received a call asking to endorse a grant for AuSable Valley Community Caring. Two years ago they applied for a \$2 million grant from HUD to upgrade 10 of their units to assisted living. They are now trying to extend the grant to in order to make the best use of the monies. Construction must be started by May 2009, or the funds must be returned. Letters of support to may be sent to elected representatives. The project would create 4.5 additional jobs in Mio. If the board endorses the extension, Ries would contact Lori Saur of NEMCSA to collaborate on the appropriate language to support the grant. Lange moved to support the AuSable Valley Community Caring in extending their application for six months, supported by Fournier. Ayes all, motion carried.

IV. Michigan Works! Office Functions, Orientation and Tour ( Laura Budreau, Tamara Ward, Dawn Finnegan).

Budreau introduced her staff to the Board. NEMCSA operates the welfare reform, WIA, NWLB and Trade programs for NEMC, with 32 full-time and 4 part-time staff across the 8 counties. Budreau provided data and program information on WIA and the NWLB program for the Board. Otsego County currently has the highest WIA/Trade caseload. JET activities are primarily job readiness and job search. Welfare reform program participants do job search on their own time, using a log to document their contacts, as staff must verify them. Participants may also go to a WEP (work experience program) site for approximately a week to gain experience and network, with the goal of gaining unsubsidized employment and becoming self-sufficient. Some training is allowed, particularly for those needing a GED. Some support services are available help remove barriers (mileage reimbursement, public transportation when available). If a participant doesn't comply or meet their hours, they go to a triage (meeting with the participant, staff & DHS) to determine if they had "good cause" for not

meeting their hours that week. If no, their case may be closed by DHS for 3 months, and after a third incident, may closed up to 12 months.

Staff maintains a good working partnership with DHS in our counties. The federal participation rate is the major focus, and the state must be over 50% or risk losing TANF funds. In September, our MWA had the highest participation rate in the state. Budreau commended the staff for making sure that all data is accurate and complete for MIS reporting.

Tamara Ward offered that the Georgia-Pacific layoffs were the starting point for the Trade program in our region (Trade assists workers who lose their jobs to foreign competition). Participants may receive training, job search assistance, and in some cases, relocation assistance. Otsego County staff has also provided Trade assistance to workers laid off from Cooper-Standard (prior to Georgia-Pacific), Kimball, Dura, H&H Tube Fab, Lear, and others who are located outside of our region, but whose workers have been impacted as they live in Otsego County. Otsego, Crawford and Cheboygan counties have the highest number of Trade participants.

Glasser asked how many have relocated in the past couple of years. Ward responded that no more than 5, (2 in-state and 3 out-of-state). The balance of the participants are in training programs (currently 126 enrolled) or the waiver process (not yet training, looking for work locally).

Kauffman asked that as we near the end of the second year of the Trade program, is the number of workers relocating expected to rise? Ward responded that many are receiving training in hopes of finding employment in the area.

The Board adjourned at 11:00 to tour the facility. The meeting resumed at 11:10 a.m.

Kathy Bradley, Business Liaison (BL) for Otsego County, explained that her role is to meet employers, assist with direct participant placement and organize annual job fairs. Crawford & Otsego counties are joining forces to conduct monthly mini-seminars with guest speakers, for local employers. All NEMCSA BLs have completed training to aid businesses in crisis, help them maintain worker stability, and bring in partners to assist when needed. BLs also recruit for the Incumbent Worker (IW) training program. Bradley noted that businesses are becoming increasingly more responsive to our services.

Dawn Finnegan stated that the focus of Employment Services is on job seekers, assisting employers in finding employees, and ensuring that the UI work test requirements are met. Staff help job seekers with resume development, and screen employers looking for specific skills when hiring. The Otsego location has been assistant 60-80 job seekers a day. They also provide referrals to local area

resources. Employment Services focus on people's skills, abilities and assets in job seeking.

Glasser broached the subject of the UI process, which he has been discussing with regional legislators. Having to apply on-line or by phone is unwieldy for so many applicants. Phone waits to talk to UI staff are lengthy, so people are encouraged to apply on-line. Michigan Works! staff is not allowed to answer any UI questions, but may direct applicants to the problem resolution office in Gaylord for walk-in services. Glasser asked if there is a potential alternative solution to the problem. Ries responded that this is not a new problem, there is not enough phone capacity, and the system isn't working efficiently. Local UI offices were too expensive for the state to maintain, but this system isn't functioning effectively. First time UI applicants must apply via telephone, and must keep trying to call until they get through. There needs to be more capacity to handle the volume of phone calls, or UI needs to allow first time filers to apply on-line. Budreau added that staff provide claimants with legislator's contact information so they can express their concerns. NEMCSA staff have been discussing the situation with ES staff on streamlining our internal processes to help applicants as much as possible.

V. Program Update(s).

Basel reported that NEMC has received \$10,000 for Disability Navigator Program training, of which \$6,000 may be used for equipment. She has contacted WIA Adult, Youth and ES contractors to see if there is disability training that they could use. Funds may also be used for training board members on disability issues.

NEMC has received \$43,719 of GF/GP state NWLB funds as part of the Governor's No Worker Left Behind program. Additional funds are available through an RFP process, and must be spent by 6/30/09. Ries added that on 07/01/09, NEMC will need more NWLB funds or risk turning people away who have already been enrolled in training, and customers will suffer as will performance. The state needs to look at how to sustain the program after 07/01/09 despite the economic situation. Federal funds are generally driven by unemployment rates, so there may be more federal funds available. NEMC will need approval to pursue any additional NWLB funds

Funding is also available to provide NWLB eligible individuals through an RFP process. MWAs must submit a written proposal to DELEG in order to be considered for the funds.

NEMC has also received a \$2.5 million Adult Education Demonstration RFP. Both NCMC (provides services in Cheboygan and Otsego Counties) and Alpena Public Schools (ACES Academy) in partnership with Alpena Community College are pursuing the funds. NEMC will be supporting their applications with referrals,

resume' assistance, Work Keys and Career Readiness Certificates, etc. The maximum amount available is 5 grants at \$500,000, but there will likely be a larger number of smaller grants.

Glasser moved to approve NEMC's pursuit of funds as needed, and to accept the Disability Navigator Program training allocation of \$43,719, supported by Fournier. Ayes all, motion carried.

VI. Michigan Prisoner Re-entry Initiative (MPRI) Presentation (Genny Hoskey, Community Coordinator).

Hoskey oversees the MPRI program in 14 counties, which has been contracted to NEMCSA to provide services. The program began in 10/07 and has been providing services since 3/08 to the hardest-to-serve parolees (229 referred since program inception). Staff meet with parolees and their agents, aiding parolees in becoming productive, employed members of society. She noted that the 48% recidivism rate drove this change. Parolees may also get help with housing, and medical care is sought for those who don't qualify through DHS. The program also provides transportation assistance, or reimbursement to a volunteer driver to transport parolees to work or appointments.

VII. Other Business.

- A. Ries thanked the guest staff for their presentations, adding that he is continually impressed by the staff that's out there, and their dedication and development of resources to serve our customers.
- B. Glasser elaborated on the diversions Otsego County is using through a criminal justice committee and their approach to first-time, petty offenders.
- C. The next meeting of the Administrative Board will be on 2/23/08, at 10:00 a.m., in Atlanta.
- D. Kauffman presented a plaque to Ken Timm in recognition of his years of service. Timm noted that it has been a pleasure to serve on the Board, and that Sheila Phillips may be assigned to this board as representative Crawford County.

VIII. Public Comment.

None.

IX. Adjourn – 12:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurt B. Ries  
Secretary