



# FRESNO REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD

Workforce Development Board  
March 5, 2025 @ 4:00 p.m.

## SUMMARY MINUTES

The meeting was called to order at 4:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL: PRESENT – Stephen Avila, Lacy Barnes, Edgar Blunt, Rodney Branch, Luis Chavez, Jeff Hensley, Kurt Madden, Tyler Maxwell, Scott Miller (arrived at 4:18 p.m.), Dennis Montalbano, Alisha Morgan, Joe Olivares, Chuck Riojas, Vasili Sotiropulos, Sandra Vicente (arrived at 4:04 p.m.), Lydia Zabrycki, Chris Zeitz (arrived at 4:04 p.m.), and Legal Counsel Ken Price.

ABSENT – Shayn Anderson, Alysia Bonner, Douglas Dart, Carole Goldsmith, Wyatt Meadows, and Terry Metters, Jr.

COMMENTS BY FRWDB CHAIR  
AND/OR EXECUTIVE STAFF: None

AGENDA CHANGES  
REMOVAL OF ITEMS OR  
EMERGENCY ADDITIONS: None

ABSTENTIONS/ DISCLOSURES OF  
POTENTIAL CONFLICTS  
OF INTEREST/RECUSALS: Blunt – Items B1 and B2; Madden – Item B1; and Olivares – Item B1.

PUBLIC COMMENTS: None

### **Item Description/Action Taken**

#### **6. Committee Reports**

Adult Council: Director Riojas reported that the Adult Council (Council) met on January 23rd, at which time they saw a video highlighting the Third Quarter Adult Achievement Award winner.

Directors Vicente and Zeitz arrived (4:04 p.m.)

The Council reviewed and recommended Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board (FRWDB) acceptance of the Local Performance Results Reports, Providers of Services Monitoring Report, and Job Seeker Customer Satisfaction Report. They also were presented two (2) information items: the America's Jobs Centers of California Usage Report and the Adult and Dislocated Worker Demographics Reports. He noted that there were no issues or concerns with any of the reports.

Skills Development Council: Director Zabrycki shared that the Skills Development Council (SDC) met on February 5<sup>th</sup>, at which time they recommended for FRWDB approval, the allocation of a \$2 million Growth Opportunities Grant award from the U. S. Department of Labor, to support the creation of the FRWDB's Course Correct program. They also recommended the approval of the allocation of a \$500,000 award from the James Irvine Foundation for the Workforce Support 360° project, which is a

24-month project intended to enhance the capacity of Workforce staff and strengthen collaboration with Community Based Organizations to facilitate better employment outcomes for low-wage workers and connect them with quality job opportunities. Director Chavez asked what was considered “low wage” in Fresno; was it making minimum wage? He also asked what the amount would be for a family of four (4). Mr. Konczal indicated that it varied by region and could vary by grant. Mr. Konczal indicated that he would provide Director Chavez with more information on this.

The SDC reviewed a PowerPoint overview of the Aspen Leadership Academy. They were also presented with reports covering several topics, including: Individual Training Accounts, special grants, staff training, and discretionary grants.

Blake Konczal, Executive Director, FRWDB, noted that the special grants report covered both the construction and forestry programs that have been running for a number of years in the valley. FRWDB has been fiscal and administrative agent for these regional programs, and this would help the FRWDB be competitive with other regional grant funding opportunities in the future.

Ms. Zabrycki thanked Director Dart for chairing the February 5th SDC meeting in her absence.

Executive Committee: Chair Blunt reported that the Executive Committee (Committee) met on January 15th, when they reviewed and accepted the November 2024 Financial Report and Agency Budget and Expenditures Reports. He reported that the Committee approved a number of items: The City of Fresno One Fresno Youth Job Corps Grant Award allocations; the High Road Training Partnership – California Legacy Well Service grant award allocations; the contract modification for Fresno County Private Security; term limits for non-FRWDB Committee and Council members; and the updated FRWDB Procurement Policy.

Director Miller arrived (4:18 p.m.)

The Committee received an information item from Phyllis Stogbauer, Senior Deputy Director, FRWDB, on the FRWDB’s Continuous Improvement Plan, which must be reviewed and updated every three (3) years. Chair Blunt noted that the FRWDB hired a consultant who worked with FRWDB and provider staff to identify areas for improvement. FRWDB staff will provide updates to the FRWDB as the improvements are implemented. The Committee also received Mr. Konczal’s report on his activities for the previous quarter.

This was an information item.

**7. Approval of the December 4, 2024, Meeting Minutes**

**MADDEN/OLIVARES – APPROVED THE DECEMBER 4, 2024, MEETING MINUTES. (UNANIMOUS)**

**8. January 2025 Financial Report**

Mr. Konczal presented the January 2025 Financial Report for the FRWDB’s acceptance. He reviewed the grants that were highlighted in the agenda item and stated that FRWDB staff had no concerns. He reminded Directors that the FRWDB receives a formula allocation from state that comes from the U.S. Department of Labor and that the FRWDB’s current formula allocation was just over \$20 million. He shared that the FRWDB had applied for competitive grants and those budgets were at \$37 million and were included in the Financial Report. There were no questions from the Directors.

**OLIVARES/SOTIROPULOS – ACCEPTED THE JANUARY 2025 FINANCIAL REPORT. (UNANIMOUS)**

**9. Fresno Regional Workforce Development Board First Vice Chair Contract Signatory Authorization**

Mr. Konczal presented a contract signatory authorization for the FRWDB First Vice Chair to sign FRWDB contracts when the Chair is unable to sign. Mr. Konczal shared that the FRWDB's Bylaws allow for the FRWDB to authorize the Chair to sign contracts on the Board's behalf; however, there is no authorization in place for contracts to be signed should the Chair be incapacitated, out of the country, or should there be a conflict of interest. This authorization would allow the FRWDB First Vice Chair to sign contracts when the Chair is unable to sign. Mr. Konczal noted that whether a contract is signed by the Chair or the Vice Chair, all contracts will have been reviewed and approved per existing FRWDB policies and procedures prior to execution; and that this authorization complies with the FRWDB's Bylaws.

Chair Emeritus Montalbano stated that many times, contracts had time constraints for when they need to be signed. He indicated that this was a great idea to authorize First Vice Chair to sign.

**RIOJAS/ZABRYCKI – APPROVED THE FRESNO REGIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD FIRST VICE CHAIR CONTRACT SIGNATORY AUTHORIZATION. (UNANIMOUS)**

**10. Authorization of Executive Committee to Approve Contract Amendment**

Mr. Konczal presented an item for the FRWDB to authorize the FRWDB Executive Committee to approve an amendment to the contract between the FRWDB and State Center Community College District (SCCCD) for the High Roads Construction Careers (HRCC) ValleyBuild program.

Mr. Konczal explained that SCCC was awarded an HRCC grant for which only colleges could compete. SCCC would like to amend the existing contract with the FRWDB in the amount of \$781,490 to fund ValleyBuild pre-apprenticeship training cohorts. The SCCC Board of Trustees would be voting on this contract amendment at their meeting of April 1, 2025, and the first HRCC-funded ValleyBuild cohort was scheduled to start April 7, 2025. There would be only the six (6) days between the SCCC meeting and the start of the cohort for the FRWDB to approve the amended contract.

This item would authorize the FRWDB Executive Committee to approve the contract amendment at a special meeting held between April 1 and April 7, 2025.

**OLIVARES/MAXWELL – AUTHORIZED THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO APPROVE CONTRACT AMENDMENT. (UNANIMOUS)**

**11. Board Member Spotlight**

There was no Board member spotlight; however, Mr. Konczal shared the latest information about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) reauthorization and funding for the upcoming program year. He was asked to serve on the Board of Trustees for the U.S. Conference of Mayors Workforce Council and on a recent Zoom meeting, was able to hear from their lobbyists and members in D.C. about what could be coming for the world of workforce development.

He shared that both the House of Representatives and the United States Senate had passed their versions of a budget, but because they were differing versions, no unified budget was passed. The formula funding that workforce boards receive was currently on a stopgap spending measure that would go through the middle of March, and there were two (2) proposals being offered to keep programs funded: A Stopgap Spending Bill, which would continue funding at current levels through September of 2025; and a Continuing Resolution, introduced by Senator Collins of Maine, that would provide flat funding of all federal programs, meaning the amount programs have now, for one (1) year.

Mr. Konczal shared that the WIOA reauthorization bill, A Stronger Workforce for America Act (ASWA), had bi-partisan support, but was narrowly defeated in November 2024. The ASWA initially had a mandatory 70% training set aside on all formula funding, but was negotiated down to 50% in November, when the bill was defeated. A revised version of the ASWA was currently being looked at in the House, but there was no information yet on a training set aside percentage, if any. The original ASWA also proposed changing local workforce area designations, raising the population threshold from 500,000 to 5 million. That would mean California would go from the current 43 Workforce Boards, down to as low as seven (7). Director Montalbano asked Mr. Konczal if he thought the number of California Workforce Boards would be reduced. Mr. Konczal shared that unless there was something that compelled it at the federal level, he did not think that would happen in California.

Mr. Konczal shared that Career Technical Education (CTE) funding, previously routed through the Department of Education (DOE), could shift to the Department of Labor (DOL), with the DOE being dismembered. There were questions whether the DOL would use the existing workforce structure to distribute those funds. There was also a question of where the funding for the formerly DOE-funded AmeriCorps Vista program would go.

Another item Mr. Konczal shared with the FRWDB was how the DOL tracked workforce development activities. He indicated that while the federal government spends hundreds of millions of dollars on workforce programs, the DOL currently tracked only WIOA enrollees. In 2023, nationally, DOL's data showed a total of 279,000 Adult enrollees, 186,000 Dislocated Worker enrollees, and 132,000 Youth enrollees. DOL's data did not include the number of individuals visiting the workforce centers nor repeat visits. The US Conference of Mayors plans to propose that the new ASWA legislation include broader tracking by the DOL, which could reflect 5 to 6 million visits nationwide, as opposed to the current data reported, as noted above.

Mr. Konczal stated that FRWDB senior staff have been preparing for changes coming with the reauthorization and potential budget cuts by developing a number of plans to allow FRWDB to quickly respond to whatever might happen. Senior staff's goal is to be proactive, ensuring they are ready with recommendations for the FRWDB once the reauthorization and budget is passed.

This was an information item.

## **12. In the Community – Marketing Update**

Diane Jensen, Marketing Coordinator, FRWDB, presented the marketing update in Martha Espinosa's absence, providing an overview of the FRWDB's marketing activities through billboards, advertising, and outreach events.

Ms. Jensen shared that there were currently three (3) billboard campaigns in the valley. ValleyBuild billboards were on Highway 99 in three (3) locations: Fresno, Bakersfield and Livingston. Rapid Response billboards were located in Mendota and Parlier to reach laid off workers from Prima Wawona and Olam closures. There was also a billboard in Kerman with information about general Workforce services.

FRWDB continued to market its programs and services through various media outlets, including Fox 26, iHeart Radio, B95, and LaBuena, and The Business Journal.

Ms. Jensen reported on the different events the FRWDB held during the last quarter. On February 7<sup>th</sup>, all five (5) Workforce Connection locations participated in National Pizza Day, where attendees learned about Workforce services and got a slice of pizza. Also in February, the FRWDB held its first Employer Meet and Greet. This was an innovative way for FRWDB to fill some of its open positions for its business services, special projects and program units. Over 20 job seekers attended and four (4) new FRWDB staff members were hired.

FRWDB held a hiring event for the new Ross store coming to Fresno. Over 200 job seekers attended and Ross hired over 50 people from this event. While job seekers were waiting for interviews, Workforce staff conducted orientations so that if individuals did not get hired that day, they learned about the services Workforce has to offer.

On February 27<sup>th</sup> FRWDB conducted a job fair in Firebaugh where 358 job seekers attended. There were 18 employers, nine (9) training providers, and staff from the Department of Rehabilitation and Assemblymember Soria's office to offer resources to attendees.

Upcoming events included the Annual Achievement Awards Breakfast on March 12<sup>th</sup>; the Emergency Medical Services Corps kick-off celebration on April 3<sup>rd</sup>; Govaganza Government and Education Career Fair on April 9<sup>th</sup>; the California Workforce Association's WorkCon conference April 29<sup>th</sup> – May 1<sup>st</sup>, where FRWDB staff and Directors have three (3) presentations; Tough as a Mother Construction Expo in May to promote ValleyBuild; The Greater Sierra Forestry Corps Graduation on May 27<sup>th</sup>; the ValleyBuild Graduation on May 28<sup>th</sup>; and the FRWDB All Staff Conference on May 29<sup>th</sup>.

This was an information item.

### **13. Government Update**

Feleena Sutton, Government Affairs Manager, FRWDB, shared that the Department of Government Efficiency has asked the DOL to cut spending by \$330 billion over a ten (10)-year period, which was about \$330 million a year. These cuts would not come solely from workforce, but would likely impact programs such as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program), WIC (Women, Infants and Children), and TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). Ms. Sutton indicated that she would continue to closely track developments on this topic, daily.

Ms. Sutton reported that Lori Chavez-DeRemer was confirmed as Labor Secretary and the hearing for her possible Deputy Secretary, Keith Sonderling, would be held in early March. Mr. Sonderling was a former Commissioner of US Equal Opportunity Commission.

State legislation Ms. Sutton was following included:

**SB275:** A bill that would prohibit an approved training provider from being removed from the Eligible Training Provider List while verification documents were in review by the Employment Development Department. Ms. Sutton and Jose Espinoza, Training Manager, FRWDB, were on the Committee that worked on the content for this bill.

**SB581:** This bill would make seasonal firefighters full-time employees, so that they are working year round.

**SB845:** This is a large piece of legislation that would strengthen CTE standards, expand work-based learning opportunities, enhance youth apprenticeship programs, and ensure cost reimbursement for schools.

Ms. Sutton reported that she would be meeting with new Assemblymember Stan Ellis to share about the work the FRWDB does. She also reported that there would be a special election for Fresno City Council on March 18<sup>th</sup>.

Ms. Sutton concluded her update by distributing a publication she created showing the FRWDB's return on investment in both the Forestry and ValleyBuild programs, which are both regional programs. She indicated that she was also working on another publication showing how the FRWDB is not only helping individuals, but businesses, as well.

This was an information item.

**14. Consent Items (A1 – B2)**

**MONTALBANO/BANCH – APPROVED THE CONSENT ITEMS A1 – B2. (UNANIMOUS)**

**15. Recognition of Board Anniversaries**

Chair Blunt recognized Directors for their years of service on the FRWDB with a presentation of certificates. He recognized Directors whose anniversaries occurred in the months of January through March: Chris Zeitz – two (2) years; Stephen Avila – four (4) years; Alysia Bonner – five (5) years; Vasili Sotiropoulos – seven (7) years; and Chuck Riojas – 18 years.

This was an information item.

**16. Information Sharing**

Legal Counsel Ken Price shared that he would be leaving his law firm and would be becoming the Chief Legal Officer of Valley Children's Hospital in May. He shared that it had been an honor to work with Mr. Konczal and the FRWDB for over 20 years. He mentioned some of the work he completed with Mr. Konczal, including negotiating the Joint Powers Agreement between the City and the County and navigating the Targeted Hiring Agreement for the California High Speed Rail, which he said were career changing. Mr. Price shared that his colleague, Craig Armstrong, would be taking his place with the FRWDB. Mr. Konczal thanked Mr. Price and the Board gave Mr. Price a round of applause.

This was an information item.

**17. Agenda Items for June 4, 2025, Meeting**

No items were suggested for the June 4, 2025, FRWDB meeting agenda.

**18. Meeting Feedback**

There was no meeting feedback

This was an information item.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.