Minutes
Twin Districts Workforce Development Area
Local Elected Official Board

Wednesday, April 29, 2026, 9:30 AM
914 Sullivan Drive, Hattiesburg, MS

PRESENT:

Donald Hart, Arthur Keys, Stephen Lee, Frankie Massey, Calvin Newsom, Joe Norwood, Greg Shaw

ABSENT:

Nathan Barrett, Terry Bass, Dermarrio Booth, Randy Bosarge, Lorenzo Carter, Christopher Cole, Steven Crotwell, Terry Frazier, Hal Hayes, Jon Jones, Darron Keyes, Dillon McInnis, Kirby Nazary, Obbie Riley, Steve Stringer, George Walters, Tim Wise

STAFF:

Allison Hawkins, Patricia Morrison, Marilyn Minor, Shonta Duncan, Marvin Dickey, Shari White, Elena Borel, Leonard Bentz

CALL TO ORDER/WELCOME:

LEO Chair Calvin Newsom called the meeting to order and greeted those in attendance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

ACTION: Mr. Stephen Lee motioned to approve the agenda; Mr. Frankie Massey seconded. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

ACTION: Mr. Donald Hart motioned to approve the minutes from the last meeting (January 22, 2026); Mr. Greg Shaw seconded. Motion carried.

TWIN DISTRICTS UPDATE:

Mr. Newsom called on Mrs. Allison Hawkins to present the Twin Districts update.

Ms. Hawkins informed the members that there are several vacancies in the private sector category on the Board and advised them to make any recommendations they may have. They were also advised that the nominees did not have to be from their respective counties; however, they should be decision-makers for the company and must not be receiving WIOA funding.

Ms. Hawkins reported that the SMPDD Youth Monitoring Report was received with no findings. A small number of minor observations were noted; however, these reflect improvement compared to the prior year's report.

She further reported that preliminary WIOA funding for Program Year 2026 was received, indicating an overall reduction of approximately 10%. Despite this decrease, there will be no staff reductions due to attrition.

Members were advised that Kacie Brown would give an overview of our Career STEP Program at the Workforce Board meeting.

She concluded her report by advising that she would provide additional information following the One-Stop Committee report.

Mr. Newsom addressed the funding reduction and invited comments from Ms. Hawkins and Ms. Morrison. Both agreed that the cut was not attributable to a single factor but rather to a combination of issues, such as reauthorization and the way Boards allocate and spend their funds.

Mr. Leonard Bentz addressed the attendees and stated that Ms. Hawkins and Ms. Morrison continue to advocate for staff raises and related support, even during times of funding reductions.

TWIN DISTRICTS FINANCIAL REPORT:

Mr. Newsom called on Ms. Shari White to present the Financial Report. She began her report with the Program Year 2025 (PY25) Funding Overview. The total PY24 carryover, which included the Unobligated and the Unliquidated Obligations totals $3,075,301.12. The PY25 Allocations are as follows: Adult $1,804,473; Dislocated Worker $1,877,566; and Youth $1,889,355.

On December 18, 2025, TDWDA received PY25 NFA #6, which provided the TDWDA the authority to expend and request PY25 Rapid Response Funds, in the amount of $485,000. With this new NFA, TDWDA's PY25 Allocation increased to $6,056,394.00, and increased the Total Funds Available to $9,131,695.12. A copy of this NFA can be found in the meeting packet.

Ms. White continued with the Obligations and Expenditure Summary. The expenditures reported are through the Third Quarter - the period ending 3/31/25. The Obligations were as follows: Adult was 97.9% obligated, Dislocated Worker 88.9%, Youth 100%, and Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion was 59%.

Ms. White then summarized the expenditures through March 31, 2026: Adult was 44%, Dislocated Worker 46%, Youth 64%, and Rapid Response/Layoff Aversion was 52% expended. Overall, TDWDA has expended 51% of its PY25 Obligations, equaling $4,243,245.12. Please note that the PY25 Youth Work Experience Rate is at currently at 37.95%.

Next, Ms. White went over the Unobligated Remaining Funds. Unliquidated Obligations are funds that were obligated, but not expended. The Unobligated funds were as follows: Adult funds totaling $65,865; Dislocated Worker $266,018; and RR/LA $455,000 (due to the new allocation). Any funds remaining after all the closeouts have been received (which should be mid-August) will roll forward into PY26.

Ms. White continued with the Expenditure by Quarter Report. Expenditures are as follows: 1st Quarter expended $1,280,944.45; 2nd Quarter $1,426,300.37; and 3rd Quarter $1,536,000.30. We expect 4th Quarter expenditures to greatly increase.

Ms. White concluded her report.

YOUTH COMMITTEE REPORT:

Mr. Newsom called on Ms. Lillie Graves to present the Youth Committee report. Ms. Graves stated the Youth Committee met virtually on April 15th. The current Youth total enrollment is currently 223 participants, which includes 183 out-of-school youth and 40 in-school youth. Third-quarter benchmark reviews are scheduled to occur soon.

Ms. Graves reported that Meridian Community College will phase out its Youth Program and will not continue it in Program Year 2026. The decision was made due to budget concerns; however, all currently enrolled participants will be allowed to complete the program.

The Youth Committee approved one action item, the Program Year 2026 SMPDD Youth Subaward. Although the total funding is reduced compared to Program Year 2025, the program will continue to serve 110 participants, with an increased focus on work experience and in-school youth. The total amount of the subaward has been decreased and is in line with the overall 9.04% for Youth. Ms. Graves requested approval of the subaward. Mr. Newsom called for a motion.

ACTION: Mr. Donald Hart motioned to approve the PY26 SMPDD Youth Subaward; Mr. Arthur Keys seconded. Motion carried.

ONE-STOP COMMITTEE REPORT:

Mr. Newsom called on Ms. Rebecca Brown to present the One-Stop Committee report. Ms. Brown reported that the One-Stop committee met on April 24th in Picayune to discuss One-Stop certifications and the Laurel WIN Job Center.

The certification reviews that were conducted (per WIOA requirements) included: Meridian, Choctaw, Picayune, and Pascagoula WIN Job Centers. Ms. Brown requested certification of these WIN Centers through June 30, 2028.

ACTION: Mr. Greg Shaw motioned to certify Meridian, Choctaw, Picayune, and Pascagoula WIN Job Centers through June 30, 2028; Mr. Donald Hart seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Ms. Brown continued her report by informing members that due to a scheduling miscommunication, the certification review for the Forest WIN Job Center was not completed. The review would be completed prior to June 30, 2026. Ms. Brown requested that the LEO Board authorize the Executive Board to make the certification decision for the Forest WIN Job Center following the One-Stop review.

ACTION: Mr. Stephen Lee motioned to authorize the Executive Board to make the certification decision for the Forest WIN Job Center following the One-Stop Committee's forthcoming review; Mr. Greg Shaw seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Ms. Brown further stated that the Laurel WIN Job Center's certification expires on June 30, 2026. The committee did not conduct a certification review based on the staff's recommendation and pending Board action. Ms. Brown stated that there was a lengthy discussion with Mrs. Hawkins and other staff members regarding this issue. She concluded and turned the matter over to Mrs. Hawkins for further discussion, noting that the One-Stop Committee supported Mrs. Hawkins and staff in their recommendation.

Ms. Hawkins opened by thanking the One-Stop Committee for their work certifying the WIN Job Centers in our area.

Ms. Hawkins informed the Board of a two-year review of Workforce Center operations to identify cost-saving measures while maintaining access to services. The review considered customer volume, facility costs, space, and geographic access. Declining WIOA funding and ongoing staffing challenges necessitate steps to ensure long-term sustainability.

The key finding for the three WIN Job Centers included in the review, Columbia, Laurel, and Forest, indicates:

1. All three Centers serve comparable annual customer volumes.
2. Laurel has the highest operating cost per customer (4.5 times more expensive than Columbia).
3. Laurel to Hattiesburg- approximately 35 minutes
   Columbia to Hattiesburg – approximately 45 minutes
   Forest to Meridian – approximately 60 minutes.
4. Despite a larger population base, Laurel does not serve any more customers than the small service areas.

5. MDES is deploying kiosk-based virtual service technology to supplement in-person services. The proposed installation includes Laurel and Jasper County.

The Laurel WIN Job Center provides service levels similar to those at comparable locations, but at the highest cost, with nearby alternative access available. We recommend closing the Laurel WIN Job Center effective June 30, 2026, with a phased transition beginning June 1, 2026.

While we acknowledge community impact, this recommendation reflects the need to balance fiscal responsibility, service accessibility, and long-term operational sustainability.

ACTION: Mr. Greg Shaw motioned to close the Laurel WIN Job Center effective June 30, 2026, with a phased transition beginning June 1, 2026; Mr. Arthur Keys seconded. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS:

No new business.

ADJOURNMENT:

With nothing further to discuss, Mr. Calvin Newsom called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

ACTION: Mr. Donald Hart motioned to adjourn; Mr. Stephen Lee seconded. Motion carried.