



Wednesday, September 9, 2020

Zoom ® Meeting

Helena, MT

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Dean Bentley, Grover Wallace, Ross Lane, Asta So, Rebecca Morgan, Becky Bey, Jennifer Kobza, Paul Hopfauf, Vicky Byrd, Al Ekblad, Ken Fichtler (Designee), Scott Eychner (Designee), Commissioner Jane Weber, Katie Madsen (Designee), Chanda Hermanson-Dudley (Designee), Brock Tessman (Designee)

**MEMBERS EXCUSED:** Loren Rose, Karen Miller, Heather O'Hara, Representative Joel Krautter, Director Tara Rice, Commissioner Mike McGinley

**GUESTS:**

Kathleen O'Leary, Deputy Commissioner, Montana Department of Labor & Industry  
Sharyl Allen, Deputy Superintendent, Office of Public Instruction

**STAFF:** Shannon Lewis

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL:** Chair Bentley called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

**ROLL CALL:** Shannon Lewis conducted roll call and established a quorum.

**AGENDA:** Chair Bentley asked for a motion to approve the agenda.

*Mr. Hopfauf moved, and Mr. Wallace seconded a motion to approve the agenda.*

*The motion carried.*

**NOVEMBER 20, 2019 MINUTES:** Chair Bentley asked for a motion to approve the draft meeting minutes from the November 20, 2019 meeting.

*Commissioner Weber moved and Ms. Kobza seconded a motion to approve the November 20, 2019 meeting minutes.*

*The motion carried.*

**CHAIR'S REMARKS:**

Chair Bentley discussed the challenges of navigating Montana's economy and workforce through the pandemic. He discussed the board's role in helping to retrain and upskill Montanans who are dislocated from employment. There is opportunity for employers to work with training and education providers to help get Montana's economy moving again. In addition, he thanked Chair Rose for his service to the board and asked that board members reach out to him individually to thank him.

**MonTECH INTRODUCTION AND PRESENTATION:**

Chair Bentley introduced Milly Kimmel and the board of directors for MonTECH to discuss their program and share with the SWIB Board what role they play in serving Montana's employers and employees. Molly Kimmel shared a video about MonTECH's services, which serve as a lending resource for individuals to try new adaptive equipment to help them succeed in the workplace. The organization has a wide-range of adaptive equipment ranging from very low-tech solutions to higher-tech equipment for individuals. Grover Wallace has agreed to serve on the MonTECH Board on behalf of the SWIB to keep everyone up-to-date on the organization.

#### **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT UPDATES:**

Chair Bentley kicked off the workforce updates for the board, and while there have been significant changes to how businesses are working through the pandemic, there is still growth happening throughout the state. Some of the largest shifts reported to the board are within the public institutions, with OCHE, OPI, and DLI pivoting to serve students, employers, and individuals most heavily impacted by the pandemic. In addition, many large employers serving on the board have moved to a fully remote operation for safety. Those who are unable to go remote, like the essential workers at NorthWestern Energy and those working in the mines at Sibanye-Stillwater have exercised caution, and continue working with modifications for safety.

#### **ECONOMIC ANALYSIS: MONTANA DURING COVID-19: PRESENTER:**

Barbara Wagner, Chief Economist, Montana Department of Labor & Industry

Ms. Wagner updated the board on the impacts of COVID-19 on Montana's economy. The initial impact of the virus on Montana's economy was significant, the shutdown led to widespread unemployment, and dislocations throughout the state. Industries with the greatest impact were in the service and tourism sectors, which employed the largest groups of workers that were at the greatest risk for exposure to the virus. Since the initial economic shutdown, Montana's economy continues to show steady improvement in the industries coming back, and the number of individuals applying for assistance through the unemployment insurance program. Should Montanans continue exercising caution to ensure the virus doesn't have rapid spread, Montana's economy should continue to slowly recover. That said, most economists aren't expecting a full recovery for some time.

#### **HEALTHCARE PANEL: PANELISTS:**

Amy Watson, Senior Economist, Montana Department of Labor & Industry

Chris Hopkins, CEO, Montana Health Network, Inc.

Joseph Thiel, director of Academic Policy & Research, Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

Renee Erlandsen, Health Science Education Specialist, Career and Technical Education, Office of Public Instruction

Ms. Watson discussed the long-term needs for healthcare workers across Montana. Healthcare is Montana's largest employing industry in the state and there has been

consistent growth over the last ten years. On average Montana added approximately 1,300 jobs per year since 2008. Despite the demand that the virus has had on providers, the healthcare industry still saw a slight employment loss this year at -1%. Of the top ten healthcare occupations, six require a degree through an institution of higher education. The other four occupations are credentialed and don't necessarily require post-secondary education as the source for the credential. The top healthcare occupation continues to be registered nurse, which requires a degree and licensure.

Mr. Hopkins discussed the work that the Montana Health Network, Inc. has been doing around registered apprenticeship and healthcare occupations. Montana Health Network, Inc. is based in Miles City and serves a large portion of Eastern Montana, which encompasses a high number of highly rural hospitals and healthcare providers. In order to meet the demand, they have developed and continue to support growth of registered apprenticeship as a model to meet the need of occupations that don't require a post-secondary degree. In addition, they continue to support healthcare education through the AHEC program.

Mr. Thiel discussed Montana University System's capacity to educate nurses and other healthcare occupations. Montana's programs continue to operate at capacity for baccalaureate RN programs, and near capacity for Associate RN's. In addition, the university system is exploring new delivery models for other occupations like radiology and respiratory therapists in order to ensure those programs have the capacity to continue operating the programs.

Ms. Erlandsen discussed the significant amount of work happening through career and technical education's healthcare program. Educators and students continue to have interest in the program, and employers throughout the state are excited about growth and expansion with educating students on the options for healthcare as an employer throughout the state.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Chair Bentley adjourned the meeting at 3:45 PM.



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**GUESTS:**

Kathleen O'Leary, Deputy Commissioner, Montana Department of Labor & Industry

**STAFF:** Shannon Lewis

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL:** Chair Bentley called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

**ROLL CALL:** Shannon Lewis conducted roll call and established a quorum.

**PANEL DISCUSSION: HOW DO WE RETURN TO WORK SAFELY, KEEPING EMPLOYEES AND CUSTOMERS SAFE**

**PANELISTS:**

Dr. Maggie Cook-Shimanek, Medical Director, Employment Relations Division, Montana Department of Labor & Industry

Dr. Greg Holzman: State Medical Officer, Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services

Tiffany Ott: Occupational Health Safety Specialist, Employment Relations Division, Montana Department of Labor & Industry

Jake Sandau: Occupational Health Safety Specialist, Employment Relations Division, Montana Department of Labor & Industry

Dr. Cook-Shimanek and Dr. Holzman led the conversation about the impacts of COVID-19 in the workplace. Employees and employers throughout the state have had questions about how to work safely. Largely, employee safety and the employer's responsibilities to ensure safety falls on the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA). Guidance from OSHA wasn't designed to cover a highly-contagious virus, therefore much of the guidance for safety in the workplace has come from Centers for Disease Control (CDC). The CDC's guidance is the best resource for employers who are looking at how to operate safely through the pandemic.

Dr. Holzman discussed the public health response to the virus, and discussed Montana's capacity and response to containing the virus and ensuring there are enough resources in place should the pandemic continue spreading throughout the state. He encouraged SWIB members to share the best practices and factual information about how to best control the spread of the virus. Including masking, practicing good hygiene, and avoid large crowds, events, and use caution when indoors.

**THE RURAL LANDSCAPE: WHERE'S THE OPPORTUNITY, WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES?**  
**PRESENTER:**

Dr. Jayne Morrow, Assistant Vice President of Research, Economic Development, and Graduate Education, Montana State University

Dr. Morrow presented on the impacts of COVID-19 in rural communities and how rural areas are responding. She discussed the need for rural communities to look beyond disruptions, like the disruption caused by COVID-19, and find ways to collaborate and develop resiliency so that when disruptions occur, rural areas are better positioned to withstand the impacts and recover without long-term devastation. She discussed models that have worked across the globe with building partnerships and issue-based work that could be replicated in communities in Montana to help build the infrastructure necessary to create community-based resiliency models.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

Chair Bentley adjourned the meeting at 12:45 PM.