

**VERMONT APPRENTICESHIP ADVISORY BOARD MEETING MINUTES**  
**5 Green Mountain Drive, Montpelier, VT 05601 (or Microsoft Teams)**  
**- Recording of meeting available on YouTube -**  
**November 14, 2024, 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM**

The Apprenticeship Advisory Board Meeting was called to order at 10:02 A.M. and was attended by the following individuals in person:

- Michael Harrington, Commissioner (Board Chair) – VT Department of Labor
- Sarah Knight, Apprenticeship Director (Board Secretary) – VT Department of Labor
- Jay Ramsey, Director of Workforce Development – VT Department of Labor
- Rowan Hathorne, Principal Assistant to the Commissioner – VT Department of Labor
- Pam Benoit – Benoit Electric
- Andrew Prowten – Agency of Education
- Gerald Schartner – VT Department of Corrections

Joined by Microsoft Teams:

- Jerry Baake – The University of Vermont Health Network
- Jeff Wimette – IBEW Local 300
- Amelia Wurzburg – Agency of Education
- Derek Williams – River Valley Tech Center
- Rhoni Basden – Vermont Works for Women

Unable to Attend:

- Greg Gove – UA Local 693

## **WELCOME & INTRODUCTIONS**

Commissioner Harrington welcomed the Board members, and members introduced themselves. The Commissioner gave an overview of the agenda. There were no additions or deletions to the agenda.

## **UPDATES**

### **I. Austria Visit**

- Jay shared a slide show and photos for the trip while he and Commissioner Harrington gave an overview and key takeaways from the trip.
  - Context and history of relationship with Austria, previous visits by the Ambassador, Dr. Petra Schneebeauer, to Vermont, the MOU signed last year, and the desire to become sister-states with Styria, Austria
  - Discussion of the economic development, education, and apprenticeship systems in Austria as compared to the U.S. and Vermont

### **II. Federal Apprenticeship Monitoring Review**

- Jay and Sarah shared that the Federal/Regional team from the U.S. DOL Office of Apprenticeship was on site November 6 for the day to review our State Apprenticeship Program
- Findings will be formally reported in the coming weeks for us to address: minor findings in terms of language in Act 55 around ratio variances, recordkeeping,

protected classes, reciprocity of national and other state programs, and policy and procedure development. A federal rule update will be released shortly, so we will wait for guidance on those before suggesting changes to the VT statute.

### III. National Apprenticeship Week

- Sarah gave an overview of events planned for National Apprenticeship Week, November 18-22, 2024:

These events and communications activities have been planned to align with the daily themes that were determined by the Federal Office of Apprenticeship.

- Monday: **Youth and Young Adult Apprenticeship Day**
- Tuesday: **Registered Apprenticeship in New and Emerging Industries and Around the Globe**
- Wednesday: **Expanding Registered Apprenticeship to Underserved Populations**
- Thursday: **Women in Apprenticeship**
- Friday: **Federal Apprenticeship and Veterans in Apprenticeship**

#### **Monday 11/18/24**

Visit a CTE class at St. Johnsbury Academy to highlight the new agreement with VTSU to allow the secondary CTE instructors in Electrical and Plumbing to use the Year 1 curriculum during the daytime classes. This will allow these students/apprentices to graduate high school with at least year one of their 4-year apprenticeship completed. While they always had the option to test out, having access to the actual course curriculum will increase successful outcomes. The event will be followed with a press release and posts on social media.

Event details: St. Johnsbury Academy, CTE, 9:30-10:30

#### **Tuesday 11/19/24**

Visit the North Country Career Center to recognize Vermont's first group of K-12 Teacher apprentices. This work has been made possible through a partnership with the Vermont Rural Education Collaborative and the VT Agency of Education. The overview is that we have seven school districts in the Northeast Kingdom that have registered apprenticeship programs. To be accepted into the program, the apprentices had to have a bachelor's degree and be working in the school as a para-educator, long-term substitute, or on a provisional teaching license. This is a one-year apprenticeship program with related training being provided by the Vermont NEA. There are 28 apprentices that will be recognized, with a discussion forum and Q/A session planned. The event will be followed by social media posts.

Event details: North Country Career Center, Room 360, 4:00-5:00 PM

## **Wednesday, 11/20/24**

The Institute for American Apprenticeship (formerly known as Vermont HITEC) is hosting an apprenticeship awareness event at the Burlington Job Center. IAA has a long history with apprenticeships in Vermont. Remarks from key partners and apprenticeship program completers will be given.

Event details: Burlington One-Stop, 63 Pearl St, Burlington, VT 4:00-5:30

## **Thursday, 11/21/24**

Publish an interview with Emily Devers, a female electrical apprentice. Watch for this on your social feeds and in other media outlets.

## **Friday, 11/22/24**

Publish video, photos, and quotes from a recording session with Jennifer St. Jean, Vermont Veteran's Affairs, and Larry Forsyth, JVSG Program Administrator. These conversations will provide an overview of how Veterans can access their GI Bill and other benefits while registered as apprentices. Larry will share information on how VDOL resources can complement a registered apprenticeship program. Watch for the finished product on social channels, YouTube, and the VDOL website.

## **BOARD DISCUSSION & QUESTIONS**

### **I. Ratio Variance**

- Jay shared the language in Act 55, which states that VT currently has a 1:1 ratio for an apprentice to mentor, with the ability to move to a 2:1 once the apprentice completes year 1 (2,000 hours). Beyond that, there is a process described for considering sponsors' requests for a ratio variance request, which would be decided on by the Commissioner with input from the apprenticeship team and the Advisory Board
- The Federal Office of Apprenticeship questioned this policy in terms of whether the 2:1 allowance after one year should be across the board, or only apply to non-hazardous occupations, or be determined on a case-by-case basis
- Sarah shared that they are drafting a form for sponsors/employers to be able to use to apply for the variance and provide all the required information needed in terms of justification, safety record, licensed individuals on staff, etc. Pam shared that in the past, Benoit Electric has needed to apply for these ratio variances, and that procedure had been drafting a letter to VDOL, so a form with clear areas to address would be helpful.
- Board members agreed that this is a bigger discussion and that Sarah should do some outreach to the Licensing Boards/Agencies for the occupations they oversee to make sure we are in alignment within the State. Andrew provided a contact and email introduction to OPR, and Pam shared about Electrical Licensing Board meetings.

### **II. Pre-Apprenticeship vs. Youth Apprenticeship (review form)**

- Jay shared the definitions of Pre- and Youth Apprenticeship in Act 55 and how we look at Youth Apprenticeship in VT differently than the description by the Office of

Apprenticeship. We are considering Youth Apprenticeship to be 16/17-year-olds enrolled in our CTE Centers. We are utilizing this approach with Electrical and Plumbing students at two CTE Centers this year who are completing year one of the apprenticeship program with instruction embedded into their daytime CTE programs.

- Pre-apprenticeships are the focus of this conversation. Jay reviewed the eight elements of a program to be Certified in VT. Sarah shared a draft of an application form with a memorandum of agreement to be used between a Pre-Apprenticeship program provider and the aligned Registered Apprenticeship Program that it must connect to.
- Discussion around the various populations that a Pre-Apprenticeship could support in targeted ways: gender-specific, youth out of high school, English Language Learners, career changers, those wanting to explore various career/apprenticeship pathways prior to deciding on a path, etc.
- Rhoni shared the great work and programs being offered by VT Works for Women in Construction and the upcoming developments in the semiconductor industry.
- Jerry mentioned that it is a “chicken or the egg” situation in terms of designing pre-apprenticeships and registered apprenticeship programs in the Healthcare industry.

## **BOARD QUESTIONS/TOPICS OF INTEREST**

- The Commissioner mentioned that we will be watching for changes/effects on our programs and federal funding with the upcoming federal administration changes.
- Jay asked if Jerry has been in contact with Suzanne from the Agency of Human Services, which he has.
- The Commissioner shared that the reconstitution of the State Workforce Development Board should be fully appointed by the end of the year or the beginning of next.
- Board members expressed interest in having someone from the Styria, Austrian Chamber present at one of our future meetings.
  - Jeff asked about the difference between public and municipal work
  - Jerry asked about apprenticeships in Healthcare
  - Pam asked about the cost to businesses for membership in the Chamber
  - Sarah asked about any child labor laws they may have
  - Jeff asked about the short (6 months) military service and if they do a specific type of occupational training during that time
  - Takeaways from a visit to Austria – Jay said that the systems are not so different, so it makes us ask how we can replicate some of their work here, noting that a lot of what they do is a long-standing history and culture. – Commissioner said his takeaway was also about how we could encourage Austrian businesses to set up in VT and/or possibly share apprentices or have an exchange program. Also, what we can do to offer incentives/benefits to make apprenticeships and CTE more mainstream and continue to break the stigma. Pam said they had a German apprentice on an exchange many years ago. Andrew shared that many CTE centers are using the ASVAB student test for aptitude and career exploration.
  - All were interested in the 7<sup>th</sup>/8<sup>th</sup>-grade assessments youth complete to help them determine their strengths and aptitudes toward various career paths
- Andrew shared updates on Teacher Apprentice Program developments at future meetings. They had a great meeting with VT State University and are looking forward to a partnership and collaboration moving forward.

**DISCUSSION OF NEXT BOARD MEETINGS / MILEAGE REIMBURSEMENT:**

The Board will meet at least quarterly. The meetings will be hybrid (in-person or online). Mileage reimbursement forms will be coming shortly.

**The Board agreed to set the next meeting for Thursday, February 20, 2025, from 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM.**

**PUBLIC COMMENT:**

No members of the public were in attendance

**ADJOURN**

Upon motion by Andrew Prowten and seconded by Pam Benoit, the Advisory Board unanimously voted to adjourn the meeting at 11:52 A.M. – PASSED.