

**NORTHEAST OHIO CONSORTIUM (“NOC”)  
COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENTS  
MEETING MINUTES**

April 8, 2020  
10:00 a.m.

Conducted via Phone Conference  
Due to Coronavirus Pandemic

**ROLE CALL OF THOSE PRESENT FOR PHONE CONFERENCE:**

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Commissioner Casey Kozlowski  
Commissioner Sabrina Christian-Bennett  
Commissioner Jim Dvorak

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Angel Brandner (PCDJFS), Michelle Laveck (Area 19), Denise Gehring (Area 19), Craig Sernik (Area 19 Director), Margo Reda (OMJ-Geauga), Mandy Berardinelli (OMJ-Portage), Sue Brannon (PCJFS), Brian Boykin (PCJFS), Kim Brown (OhioGuidestone), Hattie Grubke-Barnard (OMJ-Ashtabula), Ron Smith (ACDJFS), Patrick Arcaro (ACDJFS-Director), Veronica Curry (OhioGuidestone)

Mr. Kozlowski called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m.

*Discussion Regarding Phone Conference Meeting.*

We believe this meeting is in compliance with the Attorney General’s guidance and the legislation passed by the Ohio Legislature in signing the law by Governor DeWine regarding open meetings. The date and time of this meeting was published in the local newspaper and indicated to the public if they were interested in participating to visit the NOC COG website for the call-in information.

Administrative Report

*Covid-19 Status Update from State and Area Perspective.*

Area 19 administratively sees this crisis as two phases: 1) Disaster; and 2) Recovery. Area 19 is currently in Phase One with the main focus being unemployment and a constant communication with ODJFS. The state has, for individuals who’re applying for unemployment during Covid-19, temporarily waived the waiting week, the filing requirement of uploading a resume into OhioMeansJobs system, and to seek employment of at least two employers per week. A federal benefit of \$600 will arrive soon. All state unemployment claims will be honored retroactively and any lateness or tardiness on claimants will be waived. Because of the volume of unemployment claims the state is training more of their own state staff on doing unemployment and has announced that on Friday they’ll be engaging those around the state who have volunteered to attend the

unemployment lines. Question was asked is the \$600 bonus guaranteed, and if so, for how long? Mr. Sernik responded the \$600 is available at least for up to four months. Question was asked is the \$600 tax free money? Mr. Sernik responded in the negative, it is considered income and has to be declarable on taxes. Question was asked the \$600 is this only for those effected by Covid-19 that anyone before Covid-19 will not be eligible to receive the \$600. Mr. Sernik responded in the affirmative, it needs to be related to Covid-19. Mr. Sernik stated Rapid Response during Covid-19 the state has encouraged all the businesses to use one mass filing number. This makes it difficult distinguishing an employer who is closing its doors for good from one that is idling individuals due to Covid-19. The state has enacted policies saying their staff couldn't do in-person Rapid Response orientations. When we move out of the disaster and individuals go back to work, it will fall upon the local areas and the state to determine what are now permanent layoffs and permanent dislocations compared to temporary. The state is also reassessing items that were appropriated in the 2-year budget bill and what they could move to either address Covid-19 or buffer the impact. The state is potentially considering TechCred to be on temporary hold but are evaluating the applications that came in during the month of March. Anticipate that those businesses that were approved for a TechCred application for training reimbursement for Round 1, Round 2, or approved in Round 3 will still be honored. The Area 19 staff in April will be busy with sorting through all of the legislation, figuring where to assist on unemployment, RFPs, and updating policies approved in March along with new policies from the state related to Covid-19.

*Covid-19 Status Update from Local OhioMeansJobs Center Perspective.*

*Portage County:* Ms. Berardinelli reported currently receiving a high volume of unemployment calls. The OMJ Center state staff individual who took unemployment referrals in the OMJ Center has been moved over to work the call line for PIN resets. The OMJ staff are now asking questions and then passing on to everyone else in the division to triage unemployment phone calls. Still trying to offer the majority of services virtually in the OMJ Center. If individuals call the main line, they'll be referred to job counselors who then can contact individuals through ZOOM or the phone to offer services virtually as much as possible. The Employer Services Unit is very busy with job orders and Rapid Responses. PRC and work activities are the most active. ABAWDs who need to do work activity requirements to keep their public assistance have been put on hold due to no work activity. However, the OMJ Center is still required to do assessments on new referrals and due to layoffs now seeing an increase in applications for SNAP and TANF. The money the state had given to the counties to use towards summer youth services can now be used for Covid-19 PRC services which is what the OMJ Center is using with the majority of the funds. Created a service that offers a one-time payment to families that have lost their job due to Covid-19. Still consider OMJ Center in the crisis mode but it is beginning to settle down to a new normal and beginning to look ahead on how to come out of it.

*Ashtabula County:* Ms. Grubke-Barnard reported the OMJ Center is still offering services either by phone or email and is closed to the public but still handing out applications in walk-in area. Had a

total of 22 job orders in March of which approximately half came in after the Stay at Home Order. The front desk and a few others are doing unemployment. Still assessing individuals for SNAP and accepting calendars for their SNAP activities. Doing everything from email, phone, and Facebook Messenger for CCMEP. The in school youth need even more support now.

*Geauga County:* Ms. Reda reported the OMJ Center has been virtual from approximately mid-March, developed an email to share with unemployment individuals that contains sources that are available to them, and the career center is looking to purchase virtual job fair software. Spoke to a lot of businesses particularly the 1099 and self-employed individuals who have no safety net will hopefully have something from the feds. Bringing essential employers on board to get some of their jobs online. The OMJ Center is part of Alliance for Working Together (AWT) who're working with a couple manufacturers in Lake County to produce face shields. They have a total of 21 face shields going to the OMJ Center to give to the Geauga County social workers who are going into the field. Ms. Brown with OhioGuidestone reported for CCMEP they're creating a virtual job club to occur at the end of the month. Also creating online career prep for out-of-school individuals which will go live weekly beginning next Thursday. Using Facetime or Life Size video conferencing to tutor the in-school individuals. Case managers are reaching out to individuals to see if they're in need of anything. Still working on summer employment which will probably be push this back a few weeks.

### Fiscal Report

Ms. Laveck stated the state audit has been completed and Area 19 will be receiving another clean audit.

### Old Business

Mr. Sernik stated to complement TechCred the area was planning to roll out Incumbent Worker Training (IWT) this Spring. He suggested placing IWT on hold and reserve those monies that were earmarked for IWT to spend on adult and dislocated worker placement, purchase of any needed technology, and/or training. And move some of the budget temporarily in the month that it is needed. Maybe reevaluated in May.

### New Business

#### *Post Pandemic Plans.*

Mr. Sernik stated weekly phone conferences are being held with the state and other local area directors. He suggested the OMJ managers have a weekly conference call with him to jointly plan what needs to be done. The first thing the area will need to do as businesses begin to come back is to determine the temporary layoffs from the permanent layoffs those businesses that have closed completely or those businesses that are in trouble or jeopardy. The area will need to work with each county's economic developers to identify this and to do outreach to businesses to offer assistance available in federal and state programs. Also to reach out to businesses to identify what their hiring

needs are and identify those employees that they permanently let go. Will look to take current allocations, any expected stimulus allocations from feds, and NEG grants to use on the three main pathways for dislocated workers. Currently working with the state and other local areas to identify virtual technology. Asked the state to still roll out the resource room money that was given before Covid-19 in order to buy virtual technology. The state after doing their allocation adjustments notified Area 19 of an additional \$6000 total in admin and program monies. Suggest the area hold on to the \$6000 as we explore with the OMJ Centers technology purchases. No recommendations at this time but will present at the May or June meeting a plan of how to spend this money. The area has until July 2021 to spend the money.

Public Comment Period

None.

Adjourn the Meeting

Role Call Vote:       Commissioner Dvorak – yes  
                              Commissioner Christian-Bennett – yes  
                              Commissioner Kozlowski - yes

Meeting concluded at 11:39 a.m.

Next Meeting:     May 6, 2020, Location and Method of Meeting TBD.

Minutes prepared by Denise Gehring.