

MINUTES OF THE HOUSE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Lana Gordon at 3:30 P.M. on March 13, 2008 in Room 519-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Valdenia Winn- excused
Owen Donohoe- excused
Broderick Henderson- excused
Judy Morrison- excused
Don Myers- excused

Committee staff present:

Emalene Correll, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Jason Long, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
Matt Todd, Office of the Revisor of Statutes
Ann Deitcher, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Rae Anne Davis, Deputy Secretary, Dept. Of Commerce

The Chair introduced Rae Anne Davis who spoke of the workforce services vision to provide economic prosperity for Kansas by leading an effective workforce system. (Attachment 1).

Saying that their mission at the Department of Commerce was to deliver the highest level of business development workforce and marketing services with the goal of building a healthy and expanding Kansas economy. In the Division of Workforce Services, their vision is to provide economic prosperity for Kansas by leading an effective workforce system and their mission is to provide workforce solutions to Kansas businesses and job seekers.

Speaking of the training programs for FY 2007, and the federal programs in the workforce investment system, Ms. Davis explained that of the 56,488 Kansas receiving services, 3,811 were trained statewide. These services were delivered through 5 local areas.

Asked if it was true that some of the workforce centers were being closed, she said that they are still in every community at least one day a week. They were not closing. They did downsize staff and had layoffs. Forty-two employees have laid off this year.

Ms. Davis said they were also spending quite a bit of time on the "Offender Re-entry Program" where they help train felons as they are nearing completion of their prison term and can closely be connected with an employer. They developed, in conjunction with Federal community colleges, a local workforce investment board in the Wichita area a nine-week certification program. This certification program is then moved into Winfield Correctional Center where the warden and his staff identify good candidates to go through the program and they get certified with the employer and validated to work in the aviation that's geared toward aerostructure and sheet metal in aerostructure. There are some employers who are willing to at least guarantee an interview with these individuals as they leave prison. She said that she was proud to say that out of the first class they've had a graduate who's been hired by Hawker-Beechcraft.

Speaking of their attempt to reach out to Kansans where they are, Ms. Davis said they've done quite a bit of work to improve their website which is what job seekers and employers use. They've launched a new KANSASWORKS.com from the old Kansas Job link, the purpose of the redesign being to make it easier for customers to navigate and find what they need. This would put less focus on the bureaucratic needs of program managers which is where the old site was focused and put more on their customers.

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Ms. Davis said they've received the Disability Navigator Grant from the U.S. Department of Labor which has allowed them to hire six individuals to serve as program managers, to help persons with disabilities to navigate the public workforce system and then to help the Workforce Services staff to work with those individuals with disabilities.

They've also received two National Emergency grants related to disasters. They are available for help with clean up and recovery efforts. These were for Greensburg and SE Kansas.

Regarding the KANSAS WORKS Mobile Workforce Center, (Attachment 1-5 and 1-6), Ms. Davis said that this was so they could reach out to Kansans where they live and not saying "come to us as a Workforce Center. Making sure that all their activities aren't just focused on the "brick and mortar". They feel they've made themselves accessible by having locations in Oakley, Hutchinson, Liberal, Hays, Ft. Riley, Garden City, Dodge City, Abilene, Salina, Great Bend and Concordia.

Questions and answers followed.

Representative Hill said he wanted to take the opportunity to thank Ms. Davis and her agency for the assistance they've provided to the residents of Emporia during the past few weeks.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:35. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, March 17, 2008.