

NORTHEAST MINNESOTA OFFICE OF JOB TRAINING
LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIAL BOARD
Wednesday, September 18, 2019
Virginia CareerForce
1:00 p.m.

Chair Adee called a special meeting of the Elected Official Board to order at 1:07 p.m. with the following in attendance:

Pete Walsh

Kevin Adee

Burl Ives

Paul McDonald

Conference call in: Dave Mills and Tom Proulx

Excused: Don Niemi

Staff: Michelle Ufford, Randy Lampton, Renee' Marconett

Ufford informed the county commissioners she has been offered a position with the Eveleth-Gilbert & Virginia schools districts to help plan and implement the new academy school facility. A \$168 million referendum was passed in May 2019 to move forward in building a career academy-style facility that will focus on better preparing students to enter the workforce. Ufford's role would be to connect with business and industry to design experiential learning opportunities for students and develop other ways of engaging the business community with the school, such as hosting teacher externships and work readiness and applied curriculum development. This new model will be similar to the school models in Alexandria and Shakopee. The new facility is slated to be opened in three years. The ensuing time will be used to establish a new academic model, consolidate the two districts, and engage employers in a variety of ways.

Ufford described this project as an incredible windfall for workforce development and reported a deep personal interest in the position because of its workforce enhancing potential. She expressed this initiative as an opportunity for NEMOJT to be a leader in the public workforce development system as the first to formally partner with a public school system to tackle critical workforce development challenges. This project is a natural progression of the work NEMOJT has done for years through state and federal youth programs, Career EdVenture and Pre ETS.

Because of the clear benefit to NEMOJT, counties and the public workforce system in retaining the knowledge, skills, and resources that would be used in this position, Ufford proposed developing a five year contract with the school districts to perform in this capacity while remaining an employee of NEMOJT. She stated that having ties to both the schools and the workforce system would demonstrate a truly innovative partnership between public systems, specifically a county-based unit of government and education, and serve as a model for other areas in the region to replicate.

The proposed concept is for the school district to pay her salary with NEMOJT covering the benefits. After five years, the contract will be revisited to see how things are going. If the contract isn't renewed, Ufford would return to full time employment with the Office of Job Training in the capacity of Director of Program Development and focus on program innovation, grant writing, and agency development. This proposal will require hiring a new Executive Director with the benefit of retaining Ufford's knowledge and availability to mentor the new executive director as part of the agency's management team on an ongoing basis.

The county commissioners think this would be an excellent opportunity for Ufford to pursue, but need additional information prior to agreeing on the terms she is proposing at this time. Ensuring Ufford is available to work on related NEMOJT business is important though it was acknowledged that the amount of work and time required for this position is as yet unknown. Ufford pointed out that much of this work will include benefits to NEMOJT such as continued attachment to the skilled trades and healthcare sector initiatives of the Workforce

Development Board as well as enhancing NEMOJT youth programs and general employer engagement in all our programs.

Ufford and Lampton will be meeting with the NE MN Office of Job Training auditors to discuss the conflict of interest so everyone has a good understanding of what is going on and inform county commissioners of any risks.

Once a contract is developed and questions are answered by the auditors, there will be another meeting with commissioners to review the contract and discuss details.

County commissioners gave updates of relevant activities happening in each of their respective counties.

Motion made by Walsh, supported by McDonald, to adjourn at 2:19 p.m.; motion carried unanimously.