

# Local Elected Official Board Meeting

**Date and Time:** September 24, 2025 10:00am – Hybrid: Virginia & Virtual on Teams

## **I. Call to Order**

Meeting called to order by Commissioner Travis Leiviska.  
Commissioners McDonald, Gamble, and Hopkins, were absent.

## **II. Approval of Agenda Items**

Motion by Commissioner Proulx, second by Commissioner Roche.  
Agenda approved unanimously.

## **III. Approval of Minutes**

June 25th minutes approved (motion by Roche, second by Proulx).

## **IV. Discussion / Action Items**

### **a. WIOA – Adult Funding**

Marie Domiano shared updates regarding proposed federal budget cuts to workforce programs.

- House Appropriations Committee advanced language that could eliminate adult funding under WIOA.
- Cuts are not expected to pass in final form but would severely impact services for low-income adults if enacted.
- JET recognized nationally for best practices and strong performance outcomes.
- Marie will draft talking points and resend the annual report to assist commissioners in advocacy conversations.

### **b. CareerForce Location Changes & Office / Lease Updates**

- Carlton County: JET will no longer have space in the Health & Human Services building. That space is being reassigned to the ACT team by January 1.
- A Temporary Plan Option: Two staff will be moved to Duluth to maintain operations while new space in Carlton County is secured.

- Ideal Plan: Maintain staff in Carlton County, particularly for Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) participants who require close coordination with county financial workers.
- Marie outlined multiple location options explored:
  - Miners Complex near Super One (requires build-out).
  - Royal Building (unavailable).
  - U.S. Bank building (cost prohibitive).
  - Union Lofts (office space considered).
  - Carlton County Courthouse (space being evaluated).
- Commissioners emphasized importance of keeping Carlton County services local.
- Temporary telework was approved for staff traveling to Duluth, reducing commute and maintaining service to participants.
- Other JET locations:
  - Virginia and Grand Rapids – stable with current leases and space.
  - Duluth – stable; part of separate workforce development area.
  - Hibbing – current comprehensive CareerForce location; space is excessive, and costs are rising due to DEED staff withdrawal. Efforts are ongoing to reduce leased space.
  - Aikin – landlord and service delivery concerns; staff currently providing receptionist services for other organizations, which is not an appropriate use of funds. Mille Lacs Energy Center looked at as possible new location.

### **Operational Strategy:**

- Emphasis on lean operations due to reduced funding and rising costs (e.g., healthcare +12.5%).
- Use of part-time and floater staff across counties to optimize resources.
- Safety measures may require temporary office closures during lunch breaks or when dealing with challenging clients.

- Transition to paperless systems and reduction in physical office equipment (copiers, phones, fax machines) to streamline operations.

#### **Staffing Updates:**

- New Administrative Director: Ashlee LeNoie, continuing fiscal support role temporarily.
- New Hire: Vicki Bernard, High Falls, performing well.
- Probationary Monitoring: One Virginia staff member under review; potential probation extension.
- Not currently hiring

#### **Financial Reports:**

- Current reports show no major concerns; grants and expenditures are on track.
- County contracts run January–December; new contracts starting soon.
- Operations Director Kari working closely with fiscal staff to proactively manage and adjust line items.

#### **Grant & Funding Updates:**

- Pursuing diverse funding streams.
- Registered Apprenticeship for Workforce Boards grant awarded; collaboration with Duluth Workforce Development.
- Pathways to Prosperity grant submitted; awaiting award decision.
- Senior Grants Specialist Randy Back leading grant identification and application efforts.

#### **County Workforce Updates:**

- Preliminary budgets: Aiken 5.25%, Grand Rapids 3.5%, others ~5.78%.
- North Shore Mining: Lawsuit resolved in favor of the mining company; hiring expected to resume.
- Workforce programming for laid-off miners is ongoing, strong participation in CDL and short-term credential programs.
- Housing projects underway: workforce housing and 55+ apartment complexes.

**Board Directives:**

- Prioritize Carlton County locations to maintain service for participants.
- Support temporary telework to ensure continuity of services.
- Continue evaluating cost-effective office solutions in Hibbing and Carlton County.

**V. Next Meetings**

- October 22, 2025
- November 26, 2025
- No meeting in December

**VI. Adjournment**

Motion by Commissioner Goutermont, second by Commissioner Proulx