

**NORTH COUNTRY COUNCIL
CEDS Committee Meeting
White Mountains Community College Berlin, NH
June 21, 2024**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Angela Cleveland called the meeting to order at 10:10 AM.

2. ATTENDANCE

Members Present (Virtual = V)

Dan Whittet, Sarmad Saman, Melanie Robbins, Marc Pouliot, Kyle Aubut, Ben Amsden, Amy Basset, Annette Cole, Tim Josephson (V), Erin Talcott (V), Alan Reetz (V), Jason Achmoody (V).

Staff Present:

Glenn Coppelman, Taylor Roy, Angela Cleveland

3. PRESENTATION: WHITE MOUNTAINS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Mike Innis (Director of Admissions at White Mountains Community College), opened the presentation with an overview of where each school is located in the Community College System of New Hampshire. A notable fact he shared was that “In the next 25 years for every 2 people hired in the trades, we lose 5 people.” This highlights the school’s advantage and need in NH. They offer 40+ different programs in a range of presentation and attendance methods. These courses range from 1-2 years. Many students can start these programs in high schools through running start. WMCC offers flexibility for all ages and a wide variety of students. Some classes are mandatory in-person classes like welding or diesel mechanics. Hybrid offers in person and online. High-flex offers students the choice to come in person, zoom-in or work asynchronously online depending on your learning style/preference or schedule. They are now offering some courses in 8-week schedules rather than a 15-week course structure. This way students can fast-track some of their courses depending on different life needs. They have accessibility services for students who need extra help, the small class sizes make it easier for individualized learning. On-Board day is an in-person day where students can register for classes and get their student I.D etc. WMCC has the highest graduation rate of the entire CCSNH. Financial aid is available to anyone who is accepted to the school. They could also apply for scholarships on their website. There’s a “summers on us” program where students can take up to 2 free courses if they’re registered in the fall (or summer courses/certificates) for at least 9 credits.

Medical Assistant Program, there are two ways you can do this. The first an apprenticeship over 2 semesters which is an internship at a healthcare facility so they’re working, learning, and getting paid. The other way is three semesters and a clinical which would be fall, spring, and summer a full year. MA’s are one of the

47 fastest growing industries and your employment is almost guaranteed in the area.
48 They provide experiential learning, so the classroom feels like a doctors office with a
49 receptionist desk and patient rooms. There are less than 10 students per class.
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51 Kyle Aubut (Program Coordinator for the Advanced Welding Program) talked about
52 the WMCC accredited welding testing facility and the only one in New Hampshire.
53 The ATF was funded by the Northern Borders Regional Grant. This testing facility
54 provides proof of welding skills and allows anyone to check credentials of the
55 welder. It also prevents people from “faking” or making copies of the former paper
56 copies welders received. This needs to be maintained every 6 months and is a \$30
57 fee. Kyle read a stat that said “We will be 35,000 welder short by the year 2012, and
58 we will now be short 360,000 welders by 2026.” There is a major need for skilled
59 welders out there. They will start to open the facility for 1 test day per month for the
60 public. The testing facility makes our students more marketable in the workforce
61 after college. 100% of their students find employment after school. Portsmouth
62 Naval Shipyard is their biggest employer. They hired 7 kids out of 13 in the most
63 recent graduating class (they wanted all the students work for them). They often
64 work with local companies on welding jobs and employment after school. The Mill
65 Rights Union can provide students the opportunity to travel the United States and
66 make good money at the same time. They're struggling to get enrollment for the
67 program compared to the amount of welders they need in the workforce. Students in
68 high school can come to the college and take classes before they graduate, some
69 local schools also have welding programs at Berlin High School and White
70 Mountains Regional High School. There is something called a math for welders
71 class and a school in Vermont wants to partner with on an early college program.
72 Students can graduate from WMCC with up to 8 welding certifications. They are
73 introducing robots and more technology into welding and these skills will have to be
74 learned as the industry adapts.
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76 Annette Cole said investing in workforce skills is a win for both employers and
77 employees. WMCC serves the areas of Coos and northern Grafton and Carroll
78 County. They have two campuses, one in Berlin and the other in Littleton. Workforce
79 development programs can be customized to the student or needs of the employer.
80 Some of these courses have to abide by state and federal regulations and cannot be
81 altered. The greatest benefit is investing in human capital like training, science, and
82 technology; this generates a higher quality workforce and local economy.
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84 Marc Pouliot is the Program Coordinator for the Deisel and Heavy Equipment
85 Technology Program at WMCC. This program is based out of Littleton and is
86 accredited where they teach what the current industry requires. The program is more
87 than just trucks and they don't differentiate between diesel engines, we look at them
88 all. Classes include safety training, forklift training, services and repairs, tool usage
89 like a dial bore gauge, etc... We have a bridge crane in Littleton and now can teach
90 students how to operate it. There are two programs, the first is a 1-yr certificate
91 program from fall to spring and a certification test. The second option is two years, 5
92 semesters total, which means there are classes during the summer and most of
93 them are internships with industry partners. Some students have doubled up on
94 majors in diesel and welding to get a better knowledge of the general industry.

95 During the summer the students are required to work 400 hours during the summer
96 semester, which gives them a good step into local employers. Most students come
97 from south of the notch. There are employers in both northern and southern New
98 Hampshire. When EVs become more popular we will include classes on that to keep
99 up with industry standards. They are creating hydrogen engines with diesel type
100 engines; we will continue to keep up with the times and stay current.

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102 **4. CEDS AMENDMENT: INDUSTRY SUPPLEMENT – REVIEW AND NEXT STEPS**

103 Angela provided an overview of the CEDS amendment update to add an industry
104 supplement into the plan, which was approved in January by the CEDS Committee
105 but has not yet been officially inserted into the plan. The important top 5 industries
106 include education/healthcare and social assistance, arts/entertainment and
107 recreation, accommodation and food services, construction, and manufacturing.
108 Many of these top industries are similar around the region but may rank differently
109 depending on location.

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111 Goal 4 was changed to talk about resilient infrastructure whether that be against
112 weather or our aging infrastructure, or some other “problem”.

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114 Goal 8 is new, and it states, “retain and attract manufacturing and other skilled
115 trades that provide good jobs with year-round employment, livable wages and
116 advancement opportunities for this generation and beyond.” The three strategies
117 include retaining our next generation of workers and engaging them in the potential
118 for employment advancement, increasing the technology knowledge base of our
119 current and future workforce, and lastly encouraging the monitoring of potentially
120 available industrial properties.

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123 As required, to amend the CEDS plan it must be open for public comment for 30
124 days. Once the public comments and edits are made it will then go back to the
125 CEDS committee for approval, and lastly the North Country Council Board of
126 Directors.

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128 Angela asked if members were amenable to opening the 30-day comment period, in
129 which members can also take that time for comments. A comment was included
130 about adding what resiliency means to the plan. Present members agreed and
131 Angela will make the document public for the 30-day comment period.

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133 **5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

134 April 19, 2024 Minutes: This was tabled until next meeting due to lack of in-person
135 quorum.

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137 **6. PARTICIPANT SHARE OUT**

138 **Annette Cole (WMCC Workforce Development)** There is a new initiative starting
139 an innovation grant so LNAs can look for open shifts at any hospital at varying times.
140 This is good for people who need flexibility or don't have a set schedule. The new
141 generation is looking for more flexibility rather than benefits. We are looking for
142 feedback from employers on how we can better train our students for the workforce.

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Amy Basset (Director of Small Business Administration) Based out of Concord, NH. SBA had some people retire and we're looking to hire some new employees. We want to expand our marketing and outreach. We love to work with our Northern NH partners and potential communities that need our help.

Ben Amsden (NH Charitable Foundation) Community grants program that operates every year and will open on July 15th. There is a big change where there is an unrestricted project and unrestricted operating support track for organizations that may not want unrestricted funding. Our strategic plan is calling to focus on 4 initiative areas that allow us to zero on our strategic plan. These include substance use disorders and behavioral health, early childhood education, career development and workforce, and the environment.

Melanie Robbins (WMCC Director of the Academic Center) We've created a power generation technician program that will launch in the fall. Students will learn how to fix a diesel-powered engine, water powered, and really any engine that produces energy like solar generation.

Sarmad Saman (WMCC President) Our programs are designed to help students obtain the skills they need to join the workforce whether it be local, southern NH, or out-of-state.

Dan Whittlet (AHA Consulting Engineers, Berlin City Appointee) Is involved in a number of committees including the Berlin planning board and which they are establishing a sub-committee of the planning board dedicated to solving our eclectic needs in Berlin (Energy Committee).

Glen Coppelman (NCC) CEDC held an annual in-person meeting on June 13th at the Mountain View Grand. Around 150-160 people attended the meeting from around the state. From now on there will be an annual awarding of BLOC awards to business leaders in the region. There were 5 awards given out this year.

Angela Cleveland (NCC) We're looking for survey responses for our regional plan. We update it every 5 years or so. It covers topics ranging from housing, economic development, natural resources, recreation, and more. We really want you and your residents' opinions to be heard. We will also be at the Heritage Park tonight if you want to give us a response in person. NADO; the first time in 20 years the federal government is reauthorizing the Economic Development Administration (EDA). We would like your support for the bill.

Jason Achmoody (Woodsville Guarantee Savings Bank) We are looking for grant opportunities and coordination for a greenway near our shopping centers. We also would like some good contacts from DOT. On the bank side there are trends toward a recession so we need to be aware of how we should support economic development in our region and our future generation. Along with play-based childhoods and "Phoneless" schools/life.

191 **Tim Josephson (UVLSRPC)** We're working with towns on master plan services or if
192 you're town is interested let us know. We're always keeping tabs on housing
193 developments and economic development. We really need to help alleviate the
194 housing crisis that we've been in.

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196 **Erin Talcott (Development Associate of North Country Boys and Girls Club)**
197 Newest member of the committee and childcare is a crisis in Northern NH. We will
198 soon have students from WMCC majoring in early childhood development to work
199 with kids at the club. We want everyone to visit our center and increase knowledge
200 around why it's so important for both kids and parents. Without high quality childcare
201 it inhibits local employees.

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203 **7. FY25 MEETING DATES AND TIMES**

204 Members decided that future meetings will be held on Thursdays from 11am – 1pm.
205 This could be a brown bag lunch meeting. Angela will send out the schedule for the
206 year shortly via Outlook.

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209 **8. ADJOURN**

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211 Angela Cleveland declared the meeting adjourned at 12:15pm.

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