

Youth Council Meeting Minutes

Tuesday

March 18, 2025

12:00 PM - 2:00 PM

Huntington One Stop

Meeting Facilitator: Heather Merritt – Youth Program Supervisor/SNAP E&T Case Manager

Present: Lauren Patrick, Sally Nelson, Elizabeth McCulloch, Amanda Brubaker, Olivia Welch, Bradlee Jordan, Kaitlyn Blankenship, Rachel Patterson, Tonya Wallace, Lindsey Hamilton, Wesley Varney, London Donahoe; Region 2 Staff: Melissa Bias, Malissa Dishman, Heather Merritt, Courtney Harrison, and Adam Warden; Region 2 WIB Youth: Bryanna Farnsworth, and Alexis Miller. Attending virtually: Diane Fetty, Nichole Stephenson, Robert Welch, and Jonna Shelton.

Call to Order: Melissa Bias – Executive Director Region 2 Workforce Investment Board

Minutes: There was a motion to approve the minutes from our last meeting on February 18, 2025, by Bradlee Jordan and Amanda Brubaker seconded the motion.

Region 2 Youth Report:

- Melissa Bias shared that the Region 2 WIB needs youth for the Youth Program. Please share any information with us regarding any youth you may know who could use our assistance or services.

Guest Speakers introduced by Heather Merritt, Youth Supervisor:

- **London Donahoe** - London is a Huntington High School student who volunteers in various ways to help our community. London has been involved in organizing events and participating in political rallies. As his volunteering opportunities grew, so did his passion. He was accepted onto a youth advisory board. Now, London is leading a new chapter of the Sunrise Movement. The recently formed Sunrise Movement Hub, the first in the State of WV, is focused on mobilizing youth to push for policy-driven environmental change in the region.
- **Olivia Welch (Wild Horizons Discovery Academy)** - As Owner/Executive Director of Wild Horizons, Olivia climbed the ladder to the top through hard work, extensive learning,

and solid determination. Olivia's daycare named, Wild Horizons Discovery Academy, has been voted: "Best in the Tri-State", "Best in Huntington", and "Best Montessori Daycare in Cabell County". "We have stamped our presence upon our community that can't be ignored, all because I took a job that I didn't really want, in a field that I didn't really care about, in a town that I had no intention of staying in; not where I imagined I'd be, but here I am anyway. So, I encourage you to take the chance. Take the job. Get the experience. It may not be where you imagined yourself being, but sometime that can make the best stories." "Now I have my dream job!" (Olivia Welch)

- **Lauren Patrick (Greater Huntington Park & Recreation District)** - Lauren is the Assistant Director at Greater Huntington Park & Recreation District; they have over 14 parks and 4 cemeteries. GHPRD offers volunteering opportunities, as well as, free and low-cost community events. Lauren majored in Natural Resources and Recreation Management at Marshall and graduated in 2014. She began her journey by having summer jobs as a life guard at Beech Fork State Park for 3 years; then, she was their summer naturalist for the 4th year with them (which helped her get into the field of Parks & Recreation). She began volunteering for Greater Huntington Parks while attending Marshall. She worked for AmeriCorps after graduating Marshall for a year. Then, Lauren took a job offer at Greater Huntington Park in 2015; now she is the Assistant Director.

Youth Presentation:

- Heather began by introducing her Youth Career Planners: Adam Warden and Courtney Harrison. Adam updated everyone on the youth he is working with: twins, Quinton and Zachary, as well as Alexis and Bryanna on career exploration and job interviews (Work Experience contracts). Courtney discussed Zoe, who went to BCTC and now rents a booth at the local salon, and Autumn, who has now completed Penn Foster Online High School, passed her Phlebotomy Exam, and is preparing to take the MA exam. Courtney has also been working with Preston who wants to go into the military once he completes Penn Foster. Heather and the Youth Career Planners informed everyone of the outreach events they have been attending across the region.

Open Floor Discussion

- Family Resource Fair: Saturday, March 29, 2025 from 11am – 2pm @the Family Support Center.
- HART in the Park at The Ritter Amphitheater: "The Prom" (June 2025) and "Mary Poppins" (July 2025)
- GHPRD: Upcoming Events – April through May 2025

Adjourned at 1:14pm

Respectfully Submitted by Malissa Dishman