

**St. Charles County
Workforce Development Board**

Manufacturing Task Force

Mission Statement:

The St. Charles County Workforce Development System is an alliance of public and private leaders dedicated to moving careers, companies and communities forward through workforce development that impacts local wages, economic development that impacts local business investment and community development that impacts the local tax base.

Committee: Manufacturing Task Force (August 25, 2021)

Attending Manufacturing Taskforce

WDB Members: Amanda Sizemore, Ben Abbott, Michael Hurlbert,

Attending

Manufacturing Task Force Members:

Chris Seyer – Seyer Industries
Dan Sutton – SAK Construction
Dawn Williams- RB
Diana Forbes- General Motors
Jeremy Sutton- BCI Skills Center
Louis Pounds – SAK Construction
Patrick Brown – Fort Zumwalt
Patty Brown – City of O’Fallon
Theresa Matlock – Newco Coffee

Attending Guests:

Katie Vargas- Francis Howell School District
Stacy Ross – EDC St. Charles

Staff: Lori Myers, and Vicki Swartzenberg

1. Welcome/Comments

Michael Hurlbert welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending.

2. Approve Task Force Meeting Minutes from 26 May 2021

The minutes from the May 26, 2021 meeting were reviewed. Patty Brown made a motion to accept the minutes. Chris Seyer seconded the motion, and all were in favor. Minutes approved.

3. Discussion: St. Charles County Port Authority and Workforce Development

Michael provided background information on the St. Charles County Port Authority. The Port Authority is working with two consultants: one for staff support services and one for a strategic plan initiative. PGAV is the consultant hired for the strategic plan initiative. PGAV conducted 3 initial focus groups for economic development, business groups/officials and transportation/infrastructure. Workforce development was a topic that came out of all three focus groups, so they held a fourth focus group with education and workforce development. Michael asked the task force members to provide feedback on the gaps in the workforce system, what is not funded by the workforce system and key programs for future workforce needs. Discussion items included the following:

- Ben Abbott – There is a lack of labor at all levels. We need to tackle low unemployment and labor participation and those that commute outside of St. Charles County for work. All businesses are struggling.
- Amanda Sizemore – Need to work on figuring out why people aren’t participating in the labor force.

- Chris Seyer – It’s about people – there is no one out there looking for work in the technical field. Seyer Industries has a couple of standing open positions for assemblers and machinists. Job applications at Seyer Industries are down 75% compared to the last few years. Additional challenges include other companies poaching employees by offering higher wages. They have to compete with company culture and other non-financial types of benefits.
- Dawn Williams – RB is having major labor shortages. They have conducted some labor analysis and found that they are having challenges staying competitive. As a result, they are in the process of seeking approval to increase starting wages.
- Michael Hurlbert – Census data recently came out to reveal that St. Charles County grew just under 13% since 2010. He thinks the growth is internal. We need to do better at attracting individuals from other states.
- Louis Pounds – No one group can solve the problem. SAK is paying a fair wage but he believes many potential job candidates do not live close by because there is not enough affordable housing available.
- Patrick Brown – Are manufacturing employers surveying their employees to ask why they applied and accepted a position with their company and why do they stay?
 - Dawn Williams indicated that they have conducted exit interviews showing that people are changing jobs for just \$.10 more per hour. They are also competing with retailers and fast food establishments who are paying higher wages.
- Katie Vargas – The Francis Howell School District is working towards helping students identify their aptitude and interests at an earlier age. The school district needs partners for pre-apprenticeship and youth apprenticeship programs. She proposed that perhaps the Port Authority could assist securing the resources needed to develop a regional apprenticeship program to prepare students for opportunities in St. Charles County.
- Patrick Brown – It would be ideal if freshman and sophomore students could get exposed to the opportunities but the challenge with manufacturers is that they can’t take students until they are 18 years of age which is probably too late.
- Louis Pounds – Child labor laws prohibit youth under 18 from working in manufacturing facilities due to the potential dangers.
 - Katie inquired if an OSHA certification would help in this matter.
- Patty Brown – Could the CAPS program consider a manufacturing strand? Perhaps CAPS associates could work on manufacturing projects or internships.
- Katie Vargas (Chat comments):
 1. I’d like to learn more about the regulations that prohibit minors from participating in learning experiences on hazardous job sites (is this a DESE, MO law, federal law, etc.?). Wondering if there is a way to involve the necessary entities to make revisions/exceptions to these regulations, so that we can provide more experiential learning opportunities for high school students.
 2. CAPS and Lewis and Clark are PART of the solution, but due to limited Perkins funding and available seats in these two programs, we need additional experiences/programming by way of pre-apprenticeships.

4. Local Workforce & Economic Development Update

Lori gave an update on the latest local unemployment numbers. July had an unemployment rate of 3.2% down from 4.1% in June. Labor force participations numbers increased to 228,720 in July from 227,843 in June. Michael provided an update on housing data in St. Charles County. Single family permits continue to be ahead of last year. Multi-family numbers are down considerably. New commercial permits are ahead of last year’s numbers. Growth continues to be very strong in St. Charles County.

5. Next Meeting Date:

The next meeting is scheduled for November 17, 2021 at 8:00 a.m.

6. Adjournment

Ben made a motion to adjourn. Patty seconded it. All were in favor.