Northeast Indiana Works Board
October 3, 2025
9:00-10:30 AM

Board Members Present: Kim Barnett-Johnson, Rich Beck, Jessica Beste, Angie Dane, Jordi Schroeder, Lance Halsey, Leroy Jackson, James Phillips, Kent Prosser, Rebecca Schroeder, Shelly Sterns, Michael Venturini, Jim Walmsley.

Staff Present: Edmond O'Neal, Erica Lillie, Victoria Durnell, Kim Tempel, Lori Rice, Michael Scher.

Call to order

Board Chair Rebecca Schroeder called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. A quorum was present. Schroeder announced Jessica Beste taking the seat of Board Member Dale Buuck and Richelle Orn resigning from the board. Schroeder announced Rick Farrant's retirement and welcomed Victoria Durnell to the Northeast Indiana Works staff.

Consent Agenda: Board Minutes, Financial Report

The minutes of the June 6, 2025, board meeting and financial report were provided in the packet of advance materials. Jordi Disler moved to approve the minutes and financial report. Michael Venturini seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

2025-26 Operation Budget Approval

Lori Rice explained the key items from the PY2025-26 budget, which is $3.8M in total less than last year's budget. Much of the reduction is due to the discontinuation of various Job's for America's Graduates (JAG) funding streams. Additional cuts from the Employer Training Grant and RESEA make up the remainder of the reduction. Leroy Jackson moved to approve the full audit. Shelly Sterns seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Power Up/Employer Training Grant (ETG)

Kim Tempel presented an in-depth look at Power Up, the new employer training program replacing ETG, highlighting its higher wage increase requirement of 25% and a minimum starting wage of $20.35 per hour. The board discussed concerns about the feasibility of employers meeting these requirements, with Kim noting that employers were generally not supportive of the new program.

Chief Elected Official's Remarks

Commissioner Richard Beck discussed his efforts to address issues with SB1, expressing optimism to change despite potential challenges. He also discussed the challenges with depending on local income tax (LIT).

President/CEO Report

Edmond O'Neal asked board members to complete and submit their conflict-of-interest statements. New office hours for affiliate offices were reviewed, and the relocation of the LaGrange office was discussed. Signs of a potential economic slowdown were discussed, with some employers reporting a reduction in hiring and preparation for the next fiscal year, while others continue to grow rapidly. Edmond reviewed the annual employer seminar, which included topics such as mental health, AI in the workplace, and interview techniques. Edmond discussed potential changes in workforce regions that may be forthcoming, but little concrete information is known outside of the realignment of the IEDC map. An announcement was made the Rachel Bryant, the manager with Brightpoint, won the Glynn Hines Lifetime Achievement Award for JAG.

Board Chair's Remarks:

Schroeder opened the floor for feedback, to which there was none.

Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 10:29 p.m.

(The next meeting of the board will be from 9 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. January 9, 2026. There will be a virtual option, but all are encouraged to attend in person.)