

Chamber Education Committee / Business Advisory Council Minutes March 10, 2025

Location Host: R. G. Drage Career Technical Center 2800 Richville Dr. SW Massillon, Ohio 44646

Attendance

Barb Bennett	Bryan Boatright	Martin Bowe	Shawn Braman	Scott Burdge
Debbie Busby	Scott Campbell	Dawn Catalano	Joseph Chaddock	Matt Cola
Jeff Dafler	Chris DiLoreto	Shana Ebert	Shaun Eller	Sharla Elton
Brent Fatzinger	Dave Fischer	Lada Gibson-Shreve	Chrisopher Goff	Benny Griffiths
Tamiko Hatcher	Mike Hearn	Mary Ellen Icaza	Rebecca Kuzma	Janelle Lee
Vince Lindsey	Santana Lopez	Dan Lowmiller	Melissa Marconi	Brent May
Robert McBride	Adam McKenzie	John Milan	Dan Murphy	Kristin Paumier
Jim Reinhard	John Richard	John Rizzo	Tiffany Rogers	Valery Russ
Mark Scott	Michele Shaffer	Randolph Snow	Dan Swisher	Jeffery Talbert
Lisa Talbert	Christine Taylor	Tom Venturella	Brittney Wells	Brett Yeagley
Matt Ziders	Jane Timken	Matt Kishman	Jim Thoman	Richard Regula
Alan Harold				

1. Welcome and Call to Order

Chris Goff called the meeting to order at 10:05.

2. Approval of agenda and February 25, 2025, minutes

Chris Goff asked for approval of today's agenda, as well as the minutes from the February 25th meeting. Chris DiLoreto made a motion to approve the agenda and minutes, Mike Hearn seconded. Upon being put to a vote, the motion carried.

3. R. G. Drage Welcome – Joe Chaddock, Superintendent Stark Educational Service Center

Joe Chaddock introduced himself and highlighted the importance of career tech education in Stark County, mentioning the 91 centers in Ohio and the six sites in Stark County. He detailed the various career tech programs available for juniors and seniors, emphasizing the importance of skills and certifications. Joe discussed partnerships with the business community and the Chamber to ensure students are prepared for the workforce, military, or college. Joe introduced Dan Murphy, the director of R.G. Drage, and mentioned the upcoming tour and lunch.

4. Overview of R.G. Drage Career Technical Programs – Dan Murphy, Director R. G. Drage

Dan Murphy provided a brief history of R. G. Drage's opening in 1977, and expansion in 2001. He explained the name of the center after Dr. Raymond G. Drage, who served the schools of Stark County for over six decades as a teacher, principal, high school superintendent, county superintendent, and county school board member, and he helped establish vocational education legislation. Dan detailed the 21 programs offered at R.G. Drage, including the early college programs with the University of Akron that allow 50 students per year, per grade to earn a full associate's degree for free, and the importance of college credit for students. Dan stated that the building has had a staff of 77 year after year to service the increasing student population. Dan outlined the unique programming agreements within the county, mentioning specific programs like diesel and dental. Dan introduced Valery Russ.

5. Job Placement Program – Valery Russ, Early Placement Coordinator, R. G. Drage

Valery Russ discussed her role in job placement and the various outreach programs she coordinates for students. Valery provided details on the early placement program for juniors available to students with a 2.5 GPA and a "B" or better in labs. Placement Plus students only attend school twice a month for meetings and do their academics online while working 40 hours a week. Valery stated that there are currently 48 students on regular placement, 142 students on Placement Plus, and 2 on a junior pilot program. Valery introduced Scott Burdge and highlighted his extensive training and background.

6. Educator Perspective – Scott Burdge, Welding Instructor, R. G. Drage

Scott Burdge discussed the importance of collaboration with industrial partners and the role of the advisory board in hiring and training students. Scott shared examples of how industrial partners support the program, including donations of materials and technical assistance. Scott emphasized the success of the welding program, and the opportunities provided to students through job placement and certifications.

7. Tour & Lunch

Dan Murphy provided final instructions for the tour and encouraged participants to fill out the cards with questions for the legislative panel discussion. The tour was divided into groups before lunch.

8. Legislative Panel Discussion – Moderated by Jeff Dafler, President & CEO, Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce

- State Senator Jane Timken
- State Representative Matt Kishman
- State Representative Jim Thomas
- Stark County Commissioner Richard Regula
- Stark County Commissioner Alan Harold

Jeff Dafler began the legislative discussion with the introductions of the elected officials, and each official shared their background and priorities regarding education and workforce development. Jeff Dafler opened the discussion with a question regarding the status of property tax relief legislation and the priorities of the elected officials regarding education funding. Property tax increases affecting residents, particularly seniors on fixed incomes, were highlighted along with the shortage of housing and its impact on property values and taxes. Commissioner Alan Harold and State Representative Jim Thomas discussed the interconnectivity of property taxes and school funding, and the potential impact of legislative changes. State Senator Jane Timken and State Representative Matt Kishman emphasized the importance of workforce development and the need for affordable housing, as well as the challenges of property tax relief and the need for broader reform to address the issue. Commissioner Richard Regula stated that there is a need for more energy production to address rising electricity costs, and bringing in more manufacturing companies to the region will increase real estate tax revenue. Commissioner Regula stated it is his goal to complete Route 30 to open better access to the port in Wellsville and fill the corridor with data centers new investments in the plastics and chemical industry to benefit Stark County. Jeff asked the legislators to give their outlook for continued funding of key skills programs in the state operating budget. The Ohio House is currently finalizing hearings and amendments to the state budget by this Friday. The Senate is set to receive the operating budget on April 9th.

9. Closing Announcements – Jeff Dafler, Canton Regional Chamber of Commerce

Jeff Dafler thanked the legislators for serving the people of Stark County, R.G. Drage for hosting the meeting and providing lunch and take-home gifts, and all the participants for attending. Jeff reminded the committee that the next meeting is April 22nd.

10. Adjourn

Chris Goff adjourned the meeting at 12:02.