Lori Laberee introduced Bob Meyer.

The open community forum was informal.

Input was given by community member in response to the following questions:

1. What are you willing to share about your business or community plans for the future (that might impact WITC’s planning)?
2. What educational, training, or recruitment issues do you face in accomplishing those plans?
3. In your view, how can WITC best serve your business/community?

a. Community Development Planning
   The region is about community development. It affects the population and all of us are part of the strategy. We need to find students who are interested in doing a community development project.

b. Community Development
   The reputation of WITC is excellent in the way of being involved in community events, etc. However, our population is declining and will continue to decline as long as we let it. It is a frame of mind – are we going to continue to let the population decline? We need to be doing everything we can in this area.

c. Distance Learning Tools
   Continue to offer well-rounded continuing education programs. Let’s get smart about using the tools of distance education – the wave of the future. This does have a community economic development perspective in that taking advantage of the tools means people don’t have to leave their small communities and small schools. Let’s talk more between the secondary and post-secondary schools on how we can make distance learning easily accessible and used between K-12 to K-12 and the technical colleges.

   Bob Meyer noted that we are working on the concept of improving the technology with distance education.

d. Transferability
   The cost of the four-year college, both in the private and public schools, is increasing so dramatically that it is pricing the students right out of the system. We need to transfer credits from the technical college to the four-year college. What is the situation for the students who are attending this college to transfer their credits to the UW system, making their college more affordable?

   Mimi Crandall noted that it is getting a lot better as we have agreements with specific four-year schools (on a program by program basis) where at least 15 of our associate degree general studies credits will transfer to the four-year colleges. We have many agreements with Northland College and the Milwaukee College of Engineering (MSOE). We need more agreements and our legislators are saying we will do this. The university system is doing better at partnering with the two-year schools.

e. Management Skills
   Management skills are important and are marketable skills that are needed for the non-profit sector area.
f. Provide Blue Collar Workers for the Anticipated Baby Boomer Retirements
   The demand for blue-collar workers (machinists, electricians, carpenters, welders, etc.) is
everging with the baby boomers who are doing these jobs being close to retirement. The
industry is having a hard time finding people who are interested in these jobs. It is going to
grow; it’s not going to go away. This region is a low to moderate income area; however, WITC Ashland can provide courses for the blue-collar professions noted above. We need
to encourage students to enter these fields.

g. Emerging Fields: Alternative Energy Partnering
   We are working on a progressive alternative energy for our area (this is in the discussion phase). The U.S. Department of Energy is pursuing support for local industries on a
research project. There is a need for renewable energy (solar, wind, etc.). How will WITC
be a part of that with us, because we want you to be? WITC has a role in that niche and will
be invited to the table from now on. Bob Meyer said we are very interested in that
partnership, just invite us there.

h. Renewable Energy
   Looking to the future, it was noted that all three Bay Towns (Ashland, Washburn, and
Bayfield) have equal municipality decrees. It would be very useful for WITC to move into
skills building to help these towns move into a fossil fuel free future by installing wind
systems and solar systems (help people learn those skills and develop certification
systems).

   Bob Meyer noted that WITC is putting together groups on each campus and a super group
on sustainability at Ashland. Kim Odden was on TV and he is helping farmers in the area
to extract their own oil from seed pods and creating their own fossil fuels. Within the
technical college system, Lakeshore and Mid-State Technical Colleges have programs in
wind generation that they have taken a real lead on and Bob Meyer has seen some
opportunities to partner.

i. WITC Helped Blue Cross Blue Shield Employees
   It was appreciated in 2000, when Blue Cross Blue Shield employees were without office
space due to a fire, that Don Marcouiller, retired Campus Administrator, fit 30 some
students into classes within a day and they only missed one day of work. That’s great
cooperation and working with the community. Bob Meyer noted that partnerships with the
community are important.

j. Support for New WITC President Bob Meyer
   One gentleman said it is a WIN-WIN situation having Bob Meyer at WITC. He feels real
fortunate to work in the system with Dr. Meyer in the system.

k. Lake Superior Area Partnerships
   As a result of the Lake Superior Technical Conference, there is a desire to link the Lake
Superior region with the world and make connections with the UW Madison Research Park
in November. The third conference was successful and they want to be players in the
game. The real need in the community (that Northland used to fill) is a two-year campus
where you could get your basis core subjects and transfer them to where your focus was.

   If financial resources come forward from the business and industry community and from the
grants that we apply for, as a regional partnership, there may be areas where WITC could
expand to meet area economic workforce needs.

   It was noted that the Oredocker Foundation funded a pilot field trip.
l. **BART Bus System**
   With the price of gas and all of the baby boomers who will be retiring, one person asked if there would be any way to incorporate the BART Bus System (Bay Area Rural Transport System) so that we can get the retired people back into this area to take some courses. Northland College students can ride the BART Bus system.

m. **Angel Network for Lake Superior Region**
   For the past four years, work has been done on a Lake Superior Angel Network, which the WIN – Wisconsin Innovation Network wants to move forward on. There are 17 Angel networks in the state of Wisconsin; however, there are none north of the Chippewa Valley area.

n. **Entrepreneurship**
   Entrepreneurship is really getting a lot of attention these days. What is lacking is some degree of harmony and cooperation. There needs to be some organization in the whole region for entrepreneurship.

o. **One College Concept**
   One person would like to know about the lessons WITC has learned from the "one college concept" as the Rural Community School Alliance (Mellen, Butternut, Mercer, Winter, and Glidden high school districts) is trying to work as one with alternate delivery educational tools.

   Bob Meyer noted that we still want to work as one college and streamline things to give students the same experience. The challenge is how to balance that with meeting the needs of the community. Decisions aren't made in silos with this model. We have to figure out the global roles and responding to the community. It was noted that CESA 11 wants more information from us.

p. **Safe Route to Schools Grant**
   It was recommended that there be a trail connecting Northland College to WITC and K-12 schools.

q. **Superior Days**
   The Superior Days effort was originated by NWCEP who organized a luncheon for business executives in the region to find out about their concerns and needs. They needed more clout in Madison. They met once a year. It was suggested that Superior Days would be a great place for Bob Meyer to talk to these business executives. The target is the business community (Superior Days.com). They will only take issues that benefit the region.

r. **Dual Credit Transcript**
   It was suggested that students be given credit or recognition for community service and soft skill attainment such as leadership and work ethic development, etc. There was a request to allow students to intern on the job or shadow in real work environments. We can do more than what we are doing locally and regionally.