

**MINUTES**

**Carpentry Program Industry Advisory Committee Meeting**

Tuesday, March 3, 3:30 PM – 5:00 PM  
SRJC Petaluma Campus  
680 Sonoma Mtn. Parkway  
Construction Training Center Carpentry Lab, Building 1400

- Members in attendance: Eileen Russell, Kevin Merritt, Letitia Hanke, Dan McCulloch, Keith Christopherson
- Members attending as proxy: Tom Starke (proxy for Angel Grassi)
- Members absent: Larry Richmond, Nicolette Weinzveg, Juanita Douglas
- Faculty, staff, and administrators in attendance: Frank DeNiro, Benjamin Goldstein, Gillian Estes
- Invited guests in attendance: Megan Rhodes, SRJC

**Was there a quorum**  Yes  No (if no quorum, no official business shall be performed)

**Commenced/Call to order:** Meeting called to order 3:35 pm

**Welcome & Intros:** Brief intros from all members present

**Minutes from November 13, 2025 Meeting:** Motion to approve: Dan McCulloch, Tom Starke seconded. All in favor.

**Public Comments:**

- Christopherson Builders is handling fire rebuilds in SoCal, with Golden State providing lumber. Things are going really well, with about 50 rebuilds in progress.
- Megan Rhodes – Career Fair on April 15th, 11:00–1:30. Would love for more employers to sign up and spread the word in your industries. Golden State will share on social media.

**Carpentry & CTC Status:**

- In the Carpentry program right now, we have almost 200 students (183) across the three semesters of the program. Some students who graduated in December wanted additional classes, so we offered an additional course focused on exteriors, decks, doors, windows, etc.
- Companies could send their employees in for OSHA 10 if we are able to expand offerings.
- Fall 2025 first graduating class – 24 graduates so far, still trickling in through the application-for-graduation process. A total of 33 students are/were eligible. Currently

have about 23 students in 747B class lined up for graduation in May if they complete the course.

- Developing a Home Maintenance and Repair course—mostly focused on repairs but also some minor remodeling.
- Three local officials have visited so far for tours: Assembly Member Chris Rogers, State Senator Mike McGuire, and Congressman Mike Thompson. Mike Thompson was the most recent visitor and was very impressed.
- Huber event – hosted a contractor training here with demonstrations; about 200 contractors/industry folks attended over the course of the day. This led to two students getting jobs.
- Terra Linda High School in San Rafael has a really good after-school carpentry program. Recommended that SRJC reach out to them.
- Working with North Coast Builders Exchange to enroll high school students in Survey of Building and Construction Trades. Had 150 applicants and turned down 90 due to size restrictions. Builders Exchange redirected those students to the JC.
- Discussed an evening event with local contractors in the fall. Wouldn't require people to miss work. Kevin Merritt volunteered to work with SRJC on this, with 6–8 weeks of media ahead of time.
- The Carpentry Tools and Safety (ADED 739) classes are very full right now. It's a feeder course for other classes, and almost all students continue, so we may have to add sections.
- Frank – noticed that students' skills really increased in the third semester, along with confidence.
- Rancho Cotati High School partnership in development; students would take classes at CTC during the day. We want to give that opportunity to other local high schools as well.
- Working on developing an equipment training course for fall. OSHA requires two hours of seat time per student per piece of equipment. Even if we can't give them certification, we can introduce them to the equipment and help them become familiar with it.

### **Industry Updates:**

- Keith Christopherson – Carpentry workforce in SoCal is hard to find and workmanship is not great; Christopherson Builders is bringing people down from NorCal to work on houses. On the residential side, during 2008–09 there were lots of flips and remodels, and fire rebuilding was huge. Currently there are many apartment projects (commercial), mostly wood framing.
- Keith Christopherson – Always a need for more skilled Carpenters. It's the fundamental trade in Construction.
- Dan McCulloch – restructuring the apprenticeship program. Closed down the San Rafael office as there are not many active carpenters in Marin; activity is much stronger in

Sonoma County. Also expanded to Washington and Oregon as part of “Northern California,” as there was not much representation there. Trying to line up contracts a year in advance, but those areas have typically worked on a last-minute basis. Adding about 22,000 carpenters to the union. A lot of local public works projects are coming up for bidding, including school facility bonds (especially in Napa). Lots of moving pieces—highway overpasses, the Graton expansion, and big jobs in Ukiah and Lake County. Contract negotiations with signatory contractors are coming up.

- Working to streamline the process and have the state work with unions to make things happen more quickly.
- Eileen Russell mentioned a Mendocino County project that has been going around and around for more than four years.
- Tom Starke – Construction workforce has been shrinking due to retirements.
- Dan noted that after the last recession there was a huge dip; things have slowly come back up but have mostly flatlined.
- Kevin Merritt – marketing side of the industry. Leads are up, traffic to locations is up, and there is strong purchasing activity, though spending might be down. Revenue can be a little tricky. Strong sales team and great customers. Many newer fire-resistant products are available now; building codes and insurance codes have shifted.
- Eileen Russell – the large-scale timber movement is holding steady, with no real decline or increase in sales. There are changes in how and what people are building. Looking at the regional job development perspective.
  - Questions remain about state-mandated building: what drives it, what funds it, and how it works with growth boundaries, wildlife mitigation, and affordability—especially with higher interest rates.
- Benjamin – Generation H Housing Summit (local advocacy group). He will attend on Thursday to participate and learn.
- General discussion – the State of California is working to make housing development easier and to overcome local ordinances.
- ADU permitting has become more streamlined, which could bring a small bump to the industry.
- Letitia Hanke – Next Gen Trades Academy. Many graduates are coming through the program; trying to get them into the JC, though many want to go straight into work. Wants to get them into unions. Programs cover Sonoma, Lake, Mendocino, and Marin counties. Many graduates have become licensed contractors. Trying to connect them with opportunities. The program is not slowing down—many contractors want to hire them. Possibly arrange a tour of the CTC.

## **Grant-Funded Projects, Tools, and Equipment**

- Every March we can submit a Strong Workforce Program/Perkins grant funding proposal. Carpentry Program has developed a list of potential grant-funded projects, tools, and equipment needs.
- SRJC shared list of potential grant-funded projects, tools, and equipment with Advisory Committee for feedback. Positive feedback received.
- Advisory Committee strongly supported expanding Carpentry and Landscaping program offerings at SRJC Roseland Campus.
- Advisory Committee supported partnering with local high schools to strengthen and expand their carpentry and construction programs (Analy, Santa Rosa, Healdsburg, Windsor and more).
- Advisory Committee supported creating a credit by exam instrument for high school students so they can earn credit for prior learning for Carpentry Tools and Safety (ADED 739) and move in to Carpentry I (ADED 747A).
- Advisory Committee supported more tools and equipment to continue to grow class sizes and expand offerings for dual enrolled high school students.
- Advisory Committee supported expanding the Construction Equipment Training course by adding a flatbed trailer and possibly another piece of equipment like a site-dumper or articulating boom lift.
- Advisory Committee recommended a Carpentry and Construction Training Center promo video promo to promote the program on social media.
- **Action item:** Approval of list of grant-funded projects, tools, and equipment presented for the SWP/Perkins grant application.
  - Motion to approve by Eileen; seconded by Keith. All ayes.

## **Program Promotion & Student Outreach:**

- Eileen suggested contacting the Press Democrat to talk about how the program was built, how we are training the next generation of builders, and the availability of free education. Benjamin and Gillian will work on that through MarCom.

**Meeting Adjourned:** Meeting adjourned at 4:45 for tour of CTC