



MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

**Wednesday, January 9, 2019 - 1:00 p.m.
255 Essex Street, 4th Floor
Lawrence, MA 01840**

Members Present: Juan Yepez, Ann Marie Borgesi, Karen Conard, Bob Wescott

Members Absent: Cal Williams

Staff Present: Abel Vargas, Corina Ruiz

I. Call to Order

A quorum being present, Chairman Yepez called the meeting to order at 1:08 p.m.

II. Approval of Minutes of the October 5, 2016 meeting

Chairman Yepez asked for a motion on the minutes of the October 5, 2016 meeting.

Motion by Karen Conard, seconded by Bob Wescott, to approve the minutes of the October 5, 2016 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

III. General Updates

a. Grants Update

Abel Vargas discussed the dynamics with SISU on the Reentry grant. The grant is to work with youth. SISU has identified 8-0 youth for enrollment. There was some back and forth with Ralph Carrero on the budget, but the contract has been signed and SISU will receive a total of \$468,000.

The EPA grant will not be affected with the government shutdown.

The workforce board received a second round of funding for the Workforce Competitiveness Trust Fund.

This region is seen as a model for apprenticeships. Worcester has contracted us to replicate the model and Brian Norris from NAMC is leading the efforts with Marry Sarris from MassHire North Shore WB taking the lead.

This is the first time we have received EOHED funding to training adults at the Greater Lawrence Technical School.

b. Plan Updates: 4-Year WIOA Annual Plan

Abel said the Board must submit a 4-Year plan and Connecting Activities 3-Year Plan. He presented a 1-page summary. There is an increase in population & jobs from 2012 to 2017. Lawrence's household income has increased significantly by 24%. Haverhill, Lawrence, and Methuen have low unemployment numbers. It is interesting to see 30% of Merrimack Valley residents go to the Metro area for work.

Karen Conard if the 1-page summary can be made available electronically to share on the MVPC website.

Abel presented the key strategies:

- Develop industry clusters for our Business Service Representatives to focus on. Those areas include Manufacturing, Trades, Health Care, and Professional Services.
- Continue to support occupational training programs in priority industries.
- Coordination of Employer Facing organizations to better align outreach efforts.
- Recognizing that there is a larger Spanish speaking population, efforts have begun to study best practices around bilingual manufacturing floors. The premise being that if language is a barrier for employment, and businesses need the help, is there steps employers can take to leverage the Spanish speaking workforce without disrupting operations.
- Regularly engage economic development partners at both the municipal and regional level. This includes attendance at regional economic development planning meetings.
- Develop familiarity with municipal master plans and/or economic development priorities.
- Gain relevance by being part of the solution on time sensitive issues such as the gas explosions or new businesses coming to the area.
- Increased community presence through community events
- Look to find opportunities to partner with new organizations and build closer ties with existing partners.
- More tightly follow plans and develop a system to track progress.
- Build on becoming a greater convener on all issues related to workforce development.

Abel said we are grossly under performing in WIOA programs.

Bob Wescott said it did not appear that low in the last meeting. Abel said it is normal but still an area of concern and that the career center is engaging with the public and doing outreach.

Juan Yepez asked if the problem is not having more training providers or not being able to get people. He suggested getting a list from Lawrence Public Schools of the HS dropouts to contact them and see if they are interested in training.

c. Formal Complaint to MassHire Merrimack Valley – Denial of Cosmetology

Abel said he denied the Cosmetology program for Lawrence Training School. Most regions don't approve this type of programming. Juan recalled that in the past the Board decided not to fund Cosmetology and Barbering due to limited funding and they were going to focus on priority industries.

Juan asked what the next steps and Abel were said he submitted answers to the State Complain Officer, and he is awaiting response.

IV. Recommend Abel Vargas as permanent Executive Director of the MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board (vote required)

Juan Yepez said Abel has been doing a great job leading the Workforce Board and the City through the Columbia Gas Explosion crisis.

Karen said Abel has a great background with economic development.

Bob Wescott added that the ties he has made make him a great candidate.

Ann Marie Borgesi said she has absolute confidence in Abel.

Karen made a motion, seconded by Ann Marie Borgesi to recommend Abel Vargas as permanent Executive Director of the MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board. Motion passed unanimously.

Abel thanked everyone adding that the WB staff is good team.

Juan mentioned the importance of the committee to meet and have discussion on the direction moving forward. It is ideal if the committee meets monthly.

V. Other Business

Abel presented the budget reports. Moving forward he would like to create financial statements to highlight formula funding.

There was discussion on what should be presented at Board meetings. Ann Marie suggested that a presentation from the committee might be insightful.

Juan said we should add job seeker success stories and show how we helped them.

VIII. Adjourn (vote required)

Having no further business Ann Marie Borgesi made a motion to adjourn the meeting seconded by Bob Wescott, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Corina Ruiz

Recorder