



MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

Annual Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, October 24, 2023

9:00 am

One Union Street, Suite 202

Lawrence MA 01840

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Joe Bevilacqua, Lisa Crutchfield, Wilson DeLos Santos, Beth Goguen, Andrew Herlihy, John Lavoie, Fred Shaheen, Ellen Weinhold, Juan Yepez

MEMBERS ABSENT:

John Bruno, Ron Contrado, Mark Forman, Lane Glenn, Kemelin Domenech, Billy Lang, Maureen Lynch, Joselyn Marte, Vilma Martinez-Dominguez, Carol Riemer, Cal Williams

STAFF PRESENT:

Rosangela Amaro, Frank Bonet, Lynda Buote, Robin Del Negro, Varsha Gandhi, Yvette Garcia, Cristy Gomez, Yeang Leng, Valerie Luque, Tracy Myszkowski, Corina Ossers, Abby Seripais

GUESTS PRESENT:

Francisco Brea, Norca Disla-Shannon, Alison Dolan-Wilson, James Henderson, Cheryl L'Heureux, Fanggit Matias, Ken Messina, Eric Nelson, Linda Soucy

I. Call to Order

A quorum being present, Chairman Juan Yepez called the meeting to order at 7:48 a.m.

II. Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Yepez said welcome and thank you for attending today's meeting.

III. Approval of the June 27, 2023, quarterly minutes and October 5, 2023, special meeting minutes (vote required)

Chairman Yepez called for a motion on the minutes of the June 27, 2023, quarterly meeting and the October 5, 2023, special meeting.

Motion made by Ellen Weinhold, seconded by Wilson DeLos Santos to approve the minutes of the June 27, 2023, quarterly meeting and the October 5, 2023, special meeting as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. Report of Chair

Juan said welcome and thank you for attending. I hope you all had a great summer. This summer the MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board was super busy. One of the more important happenings was that there was recruitment to become members of this board. We thank Ann Marie Borgesi (resigned), Jeffrey Linehan (end of term), Rosa Munoz (resigned), Bob Westcott (resigned), and Robyn Hynes (resigned) for their time and service they provided to the board. These individuals are no longer board members. All but one of these individuals have moved on to other companies, or organizations, outside of the Merrimack Valley. Both Anne Marie and Rosa have taken employment elsewhere. Bob Westcott has chosen to retire. Robyn Hynds is now Acting President of LGH and so she is very busy. I want to express my appreciation for their contributions. I am sure that you will all agree that our collective efforts yielded a great outcome for this organization with them on this board.

The CEO has added a few new members that you may have already met or seen at some subcommittee meetings. They are Vilma Martinez-Dominguez from the Greater Lawrence Community Action Council (Board Vice Chair, and Planning Committee Chair), Wilson De Los Santos (Board Treasurer), Lisa Crutchfield of Lawrence General Hospital, and William Lang (Board Clerk; Union - IUPAT DC35).

Additionally, several board members' terms of service have been renewed. They are Calvin Williams, Carol Reimer, Fred Shaheen, Joselyn Marte, Dr. Lane Glenn, Andrew Herlihy, and Superintendent John Lavoie. Congratulations on your continued journey with this board and the important work before us.

Mayor DePeña has continued meeting with Frank, to discuss board member composition. As you may know a Request for Proposal for WIOA Adult/Youth Training was sent out on April 24, 2023. The review team met and provided their recommendations of the Request for Proposals that were submitted.

Unless there are any questions, this concludes my report.

V. Guest Speakers: Ken Messina and Eric Nelson – MassHire BizWorks

Ken Messina and Eric Nelson provided a presentation about Rapid Response and BizWorks services to employers and their work with Career Centers. Norca Disla-Shannon, Fanggit Matias and Cheryl L'Heureux from the DCS Rapid Response team were also in attendance. (See PowerPoint presentation, guide, and current employer listing).

Ken said our team of 22 people across the state assists businesses with company consultations concerning transitional services, informational sessions on additional state services for employees, unemployment insurance sessions, virtual or onsite workshops, initial job search assistance, job fairs and specialized recruitments and assistance to companies and their employees who are affected by natural disasters and emergencies.

Norca Disla-Shannon reviewed the current employer listing and said Fanggit Matias is a product of Rapid Response and Career Center services and Fanggit said I worked for an employer in Wilmington, and I went through the Trade program and finished my associate degree and was employed as an Employment Counselor at the Career Center and now work on the Rapid Response team.

Ken said we provide services up front for companies who are conducting layoffs, and we refer customers to Career Centers for services.

Eric Nelson said we receive the referral report from Rapid Response each week and we outreach these customers and outreach and schedule them for Career Center Seminars and next steps including training, job search and if enrolled, provide RESEA services until they are successfully re-employed.

Ken said many times employers say we provide outplacement services. We are not in competition with outplacement services, but we offer services they don't include information about unemployment benefits, training, WIOA Act resources and National Dislocated Worker funds.

Ken said we also have Francisco Brea here today and AFL-CIO is a major component of the Rapid Response team and Francisco said thank you. I am also a product of Rapid Response services.

Ken reviewed the Rapid Response Guide and said we want to work with employers to understand your business cycle to determine which resources work at the right time. Think of us as a partner in your business. The guide is always kept up to date.

Ken said Norca Disla-Shannon is your contact in the Northeast Region and Norca said we worked with the MMVWB and the Career Center on the Southwick, Phillips, 3M Touch Systems National Dislocated Worker Grant during the pandemic. We received the funding, and the Career Center did a great job providing services to employees.

Joe Bevilacqua said this information is very important and helpful and you have a great record of assistance and how much knowledge you impart to companies and Ken said we're here to help. We're part of your team. We will be providing two focus groups to learn how we can do a better job. Let us know if you want to participate in a focus group.

Eric reviewed the team's organization chart (see presentation slide) and said our team partners with the MassHire MV Career Center. We have four Business Services Representatives (BSRs) and were geographically based prior to reorganizing into industry sector teams. When we went to the industry sector team model it was with the idea of focusing more on industry specifics and understanding the needs and wants and providing an enhanced understanding of the business needs.

The BSRs meet with companies, talk about our services, and solicit job openings that are then posted in our system and our recruiters work with our job seeker population to make matches. It works very well with the industry sector team model.

We have our core services, job posting, job fairs, in person and virtually, and when BSRs contact your company, we do a needs assessment. We also provide enhanced services as Ken has mentioned.

Eric reviewed the team's performance (see presentation slide) and said our contact information is available in your handout.

Juan said thank you Ken and Eric. There is a lot of information here that any business owner must look at and take advantage of. Knowing there is a program in place to assist would be very beneficial. I wish the state would require that people who are looking to start a business take a seminar or receive a guide. I think there are a lot of beneficial tools that can help business owners and Ken said the best thing you can do is echo that to Secretary Jones. Feedback from customers is important and helps us.

VII. Reports of Committee Chairs

i. Planning and Career Center Committee

Frank said Vilma Martinez-Dominguez could not be here today and said the FY 2024 Local Plan was submitted to the Planning Committee for approval on September 19, 2023. The votes were unanimous and approved and sent to the full board which met in a special meeting and unanimously approved. The report was then forwarded to the CEO (with board recommendation) and was signed on Tuesday the 17th. October. Frank sent the plan to the Commonwealth's Department of Career Services on October 19, 2023.

Additionally, at the last Planning Committee meeting, members approved the WIOA Adult and Youth Funding Recommendations made by the Review Team. It will be presented later in the agenda for board approval.

Juan asked if there were any questions and there were none.

ii. Youth Committee

In Cal Williams's absence, Yvette Garcia said here are the highlights of this quarter: YouthWorks Cycle 1 Summer Experience Program: Team worked very diligently in placing 251 youth in meaningful experiences this summer. We met 97% of our enrollment goal of 260. The youth team processed over 260 applicant packages, however due to various circumstances, some youth were not able to continue with the program. I am glad to report that 18 younger youth who attended our Tier 1 – Health & Wellness/Career Pathways/First Aid project-based learning, attained their First Aid Certifications.

This summer Secretary Lauren Jones of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development visited our partner host/worksites the Methuen Arlington Neighborhood, Inc. "The Healey-Driscoll administration is committed to investing in Massachusetts' future talent," said Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development Lauren Jones. "I commend Methuen Arlington Neighborhood for providing dozens of local YouthWorks participants with employment opportunities right in their local community and exposure to gain essential skills like communication, financial literacy, teamwork, and leadership."

For more highlights of the 2023 YouthWorks Summer Experience program, please visit our website.

YouthWorks Cycle 2 Year-Round Experience: Team is currently processing over 300 youth applications in an effort to enroll at least 210 youth in this program cycle. We are still recruiting employers to partner with us to provide youth with mentoring, guidance, and supervision while placed at their hosts and worksites. This is a great opportunity to make a difference in our youth lives.

Connecting Activities (CA): Team started visiting our partner high school in an effort to align our programs. Our purpose is to continue to provide robust school to career and career development education services. In September, the team participated in LHS Gear Up Career Fair where they meet lots of youth and network with other partners. We are available to support our local districts applying for DESE Innovation Career Pathways applications. Our Executive Director, Frank Bonet, wrote a letter of support for the Newburyport HS DESE ICP planning grant application. They are applying to develop an Environmental and Life Sciences Innovation Career Pathways program.

WIOA Youth: Seven youth enrolled in the WIOA In School Program at the YMCA of North Shore Haverhill completed their program successfully. The career center and the YMCA teams will continue to provide follow up services for the next 12 months. In partnership with the MassHire Merrimack Valley Career Center, we released a WIOA Out of School Youth RFP and received a proposal. The MassHire MVWB Planning Committee has approved the review team recommendation to award the proposal to Lare – HiSet/Customer Service/MS Word Certification program. The board will vote on this today.

Special thanks to our Youth Committee member, Mrs. Linda Soucy, for being part of the WIOA Out of School RFP review team. We welcome Roberto Duran, Work-Based Learning Manager at Lawrence Public Schools/Lawrence High School, as the new member of our Youth Committee.

Unless there are any questions, this concludes the Youth Committee Chair Report.

iii. Nominating Committee

Juan said we have no report at this time.

iv. Finance Report

Wilson DeLos Santos said good morning. I am glad to be here. As the Finance Chair, I'd like to report that the Fiscal Year 2024 Lower Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Area Annual Budget Summary was approved by the full board at a special meeting. The workforce's summary budget for FY24 includes:

- A 4.11% increase in Customer Funding - Training/Wages/Stipends/Support from \$3,294,135.63 in FY23 to \$3,163,961.62 in FY24.
- A 30.62% increase Merrimack Valley Workforce Board – MVWB Funding Allocation. Includes \$34,296 of Contracted funding to our Regional Partners for support of our Programs. FY24 Funding allocation increases from WIOA programs, FY23 increase of carry-in funds from WIOA and Youthworks, a new 3-year ESOL Program, along with new Healthcare, Behavioral Health, and regional Planning Grants, will support staff and overhead costs.
- A 9.44% decrease in our operator due to the ending of Southwick's Trade and NDWG Programs, DUA Technology Deployment, and a 64% decrease in State One Stop Funding. Funding will support staff and overhead costs. Of course, the decrease is to take his funding back to pre-covid levels.
- A 9% increase in Department of Career Services – DCS funding allocation. Funding allocation increases from various programs and carry-in funds will support staff and overhead costs.

1. Programs/Funding that are no longer in operation are:

- Southwick Trade
- Southwick National Dislocated Worker Grant
- Department of Labor Reentry Program
- Apprenticeship Sector HUB
- EPA
- DUA Technology Deployment

2. New programs funding include:

- Workforce Competitive Trust Fund ESOL Program
- City of Lawrence Stand Alone Intensive English Program
- Regional Planning – Which the Merrimack Valley leads in the Northeast

- Healthcare HUB Planning
 - Behavioral Health Planning
3. In the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) and Wagner Peyser funding the summary budget is as follows:
- There is a 29.20% increase in WIOA Youth
 - A 30.88% increase in WIOA Adult Youth
 - A 15% decrease in WIOA Dislocated Worker funds
 - And a 3.88% decrease in Wagner Peyser.

Unless there are any questions, this concludes my report.

VIII. Approve the WIOA Adult and Youth Funding Recommendations Made by the Planning/Career Center Committee (vote required)



To: MMVW Board of Directors

From: Frank Bonet, MMVWB Executive Director

Re: WIOA Adult Program Request for Proposals

Date: October 18, 2023

The following information relates to the responses to the Request for Proposal (RFP) issued by the MMVWB which solicited programs providers who would singularly or collaboratively provide comprehensive cohort-based Occupational Skills Training & Placement services for WIOA eligible Adults aged 18 and older who reside within the within the 15 cities and towns in the Merrimack Valley Service Delivery Area. The RFP sought innovative proposals for programs that will perform recruitment and outreach, intense case management, career readiness activities, career pathway activities, occupational skills training leading to an industry recognized credential, placement in employment/registered apprenticeship/military, and follow-up services for one year after program exit.

The RFP was distributed to Individual Training Account Vendors in the State, Community Based Organizations in the Merrimack Valley region, COMMBUYS, as well as advertised in the local papers and on our website. The proposals solicitation resulted in the following four qualified responses:

- 1) LARE Institute, American Training Inc – Phlebotomy Program
- 2) LARE Institute, American Training Inc – Electromechanical Assembly Program
- 3) International Institute of New England – Adult Refugee Career Pathways
- 4) Center for Manufacturing Technology – Intro to General Machine Shop Practices

The proposals were received and reviewed by a team of six staff from the MMVWB and MMVCC and two Board of Directors.

Each proposal was rated in terms of its response to categories and criteria outlined in the RFP. The ratings and results of the review and discussion are detailed below:

LARE Institute, American Training Inc. – Phlebotomy Program:

Reviewer Scores:

Criterion	Total Points Awarded	Average Staff Rating
Program Design - (30 points)	198.38	28.34
Outreach & Recruitment - (20 Points)	126	18.00
Program Outcomes - (20 Points)	127.58	18.23
Administration - (5 Points)	34.45	4.92
Program Operations - (5 Points)	31.11	4.44
Budget & Budget Narrative - (20 Points)	18.00	18.00
Total Points	535.52	91.93

LARE Institute, American Training, Inc. – Electromechanical Assembly:

Reviewer Scores:

Criterion	Total Points Awarded	Average Staff Rating
Program Design - (30 points)	199.21	28.46
Outreach & Recruitment - (20 Points)	127.40	18.20
Program Outcomes - (20 Points)	124.77	17.82
Administration - (5 Points)	34.45	4.92
Program Operations - (5 Points)	35.00	5.00
Budget & Budget Narrative - (20 Points)	17.00	17.00
Total Points	537.83	91.40

International Institute of New England – Adult Refugee Career Pathways:

Reviewer Scores:

Criterion	Total Points Awarded	Average Staff Rating
Program Design - (30 points)	152.54	21.79
Outreach & Recruitment - (20 Points)	100.00	14.29
Program Outcomes - (20 Points)	119.03	17.00
Administration - (5 Points)	30.58	4.37
Program Operations - (5 Points)	30.00	4.29
Budget & Budget Narrative - (20 Points)	14.00	14.00
Total Points	446.15	75.74

Center for Manufacturing Technology – Intro to General Machine Shop Practices:

Reviewer Scores:

Criterion	Total Points Awarded	Average Staff Rating
Program Design - (30 points)	193.37	27.62
Outreach & Recruitment - (20 Points)	116.51	16.64
Program Outcomes - (20 Points)	123.81	17.69
Administration - (5 Points)	31.67	4.52
Program Operations - (5 Points)	21.67	3.10
Budget & Budget Narrative - (20 Points)	14.00	14.00
Total Points	501.03	83.58

The score minimum needed to be approved for funding is 70 points. LARE Phlebotomy with 91.93 points and LARE Electromechanical Assembly with 91.40 points both have Highly Advantageous ratings. The International Institute of New England with 75.74 points and Center for Manufacturing Technology with 83.58 points both have Advantageous ratings.

The Review Team discussed the proposals and provided the following feedback:

LARE Institute, American Training Inc. – Phlebotomy

- The program proposal is in line with the labor market demand. Employers such as Lawrence General Hospital do not hire Phlebotomist without this certification.
- Participants will receive up to four certifications with this training.
- Provider partners with various healthcare partners in our service area.

LARE Institute, American Training Inc. – Electromechanical Assembly

- Advanced manufacturing is a critical industry and it's been successful.
- The enrollment numbers seem reasonable.
- The provider has good partnerships with area employers.

International Institute of New England – Adult Refugee Career Pathways

- The proposal has a good concept, and they provide a wide range of services for the community.
- The proposal is all over the place. It's hard to tell what the goal is and it's not a realistic pipeline.
- The provider relies on making referrals to partner agencies for services and there may not be any openings.
- The proposal seems like the provider is applying for additional funding to cover gaps but does not address the point of the RFP and more along the lines of a conduit, creating a layer that doesn't need to be there.
- The participant cost is high.
- No outcomes.

Center for Manufacturing Technology - Intro to General Machine Shop Practices

- Past CMT program has been very successful from an employer's perspective.
- The provider has been in business for some time.
- The numbers proposed are reasonable.
- Training addresses manufacturing needs.
- The training location is in Woburn and transportation can be an issue.
- The location is ADA compliant, but it was not clarified in the question.
- The description of how WIOA performance was going to be achieved was not as descriptive.

Based on the information provided above, the MMVWB Planning/Career Center Committee approved the Review Team's recommendations on October 17, 2023, as follow:

- **To fund**
 1. LARE Institute, American Training, Inc. proposal – Phlebotomy
 2. LARE Institute, American Training, Inc. proposal – Electromechanical Assembly
 3. Center for Manufacturing Technology proposal – Intro to General Machine Shop Practices

The committee found the proposals to be Highly Advantageous & Advantageous.

- **Not to fund**
 1. International Institute of New England – Adult Refugee Career Pathway Program

The committee found the proposal advantageous, but it did not offer the occupational training that the RFP required.

We will request your vote on these recommendations during the MMVWB Annual Meeting on October 24, 2023, at 7:30am.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 978-857-5394 or by e-mail at fbonet@masshiremvwb.org.

Thanks for your support.



MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

One Union Street
Suite 202
Lawrence, MA 01840
978.682.7099

To: MMVW Board of Directors

From: Frank Bonet, MMVWB Executive Director

Re: WIOA Out-of-School Youth Program Request for Proposals

Date: October 18, 2023

The following information relates to the responses to the Request for Proposal (RFP) issued by the MMVWB which solicited programs that provide comprehensive services for WIOA eligible Out-of-School Youth (OSY) between the ages of 16-24 who reside within the 15 cities and towns in the Merrimack Valley Service Delivery Area. The RFP sought innovative proposals for programs that would perform recruitment and outreach, intense case management, paid and unpaid work experiences, career readiness activities, career pathway activities, educational activities assisting with the attainment of a High School Equivalency (HiSet/GED), occupational skills training leading to an industry recognized credential, financial literacy activities, self and career assessments, follow-up services for one year after program exit.

The RFP was distributed to public-school districts and youth serving organizations in our region, Individual Training Account Vendors in the Merrimack Valley, as well as advertised in the local papers and on our website. The proposals solicitation resulted in one qualified response for Out-of-School Youth.

5) LARE Institute, American Training, Inc. – HiSet/Customer Service/MS Word

The proposal was received and reviewed by a team of five staff from the MMVWB and MMVCC and one Youth Committee member.

The proposal was rated in terms of its response to categories and criteria outlined in the RFP. The ratings and results of the review and discussion are detailed below:

LARE Institute, American Training, Inc.:

Reviewers Scores:

Criterion	Total Points Awarded	Average Staff Rating
Program Design - (30 points)	184.21	26.32
Outreach & Recruitment - (20 Points)	117.9	16.84
Program Outcomes - (20 Points)	139.30	19.90
Administration - (5 Points)	34.45	4.92
Program Operations - (5 Points)	35.00	5
Budget & Budget Narrative - (20 Points)	14.00	14.00
Total Points	524.86	86.98

The score minimum needed to be approved for funding is 70 points. LARE Institute, American Training, Inc. with 86.98 points falls into the Highly Advantageous rating.

The Review Team discussed the proposals and provided the following feedback:

LARE Institute, American Training Inc. - HiSet/Customer Service/MS Word

- LARE has 40 years of experience and staff who have stayed for a long time.
- The provider works with the participants from beginning to end and is good at getting youth into the programs.
- LARE works with youth with barriers and work life balance for them.
- The provider's location is Andover, which is in our service delivery area, making it easier for transportation.
- The proposal stated they have experience working with people with disabilities without a lot of examples.
- Hoped there were more employer partners. Market Basket was the only partner listed. A person can be hired at Market Basket without this training.
- What was said about case management, there was no reference to where the information was transmitted to the participant.

Based on the information provided above, the MMVWB Planning/Career Center Committee approved the Review Team's recommendations on October 17, 2023, as follow:

- **To fund**
 - 4. LARE Institute, American Training, Inc. proposal – HiSet/Customer Service/MS Word Program

The committee found the proposal strong and liked the idea that the program will provide soft skills training to youth. The program outcome will allow youth to move to

We will request your vote on these recommendations during the MMVWB Annual Meeting on October 24, 2023, at 7:30am.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 978-857-5394 or by e-mail at fbonet@masshiremvwb.org.

Thanks for your support.

Chairman Yopez called for a motion to approve the WIOA Adult and Youth funding recommendations made by the Planning/Career Center Committee.

Joe Bevilacqua made a motion to approve the WIOA Adult and Youth funding recommendations made by the Planning/Career Center Committee. Wilson De Los Santos seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

IX. Election of Officers (vote required)

Chairman Yopez said he would like to offer the same slate of officers for election as last year. MMVWB Chair, Juan Yopez, MMVWB Vice Chair and Planning Committee Chair, Vilma Martinez-Dominguez, MMVWB Treasurer, Wilson De Los Santos, MMVWB Clerk and Nominating Committee Chair, Bill Lang, MMVWB Youth Committee Chair, Calvin Williams. He asked for a motion.

Ellen Weinhold made a motion to approve the election of Juan Yopez, MMVWB Chair, Vilma Martinez-Dominguez, MMVWB Vice Chair and Planning Committee Chair, Wilson De Los Santos, MMVWB Treasurer, Bill Lang, MMVWB Clerk and Nominating Committee Chair and Calvin Williams, MMVWB Youth Committee Chair. Andrew Herlihy seconded the motion and the motion passed unanimously.

X. Report of Executive Director

Frank said good morning and thank you for your support, ideas, and discussions on making the MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce, and Career Center important in supporting employers and residents, economically and through employment.

Continued meetings with Secretary Lauren Jones and Undersecretary Jennifer James from the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development and their staff, regarding the migrant issue in Massachusetts, have resulted in ideas and discussions on strategies moving forward in support of employment services and training for these folks. They have met with all the Commonwealth workforce board directors, took ideas, and placed them onto a drafted plan they hope will be presented soon.

Workforce Skills Cabinet Regional Sessions: Planning/Blueprint Discussion. On October 11, 2023, the Northeast Regional Planning Committee met in Lowell Memorial Auditorium. The Governors Workforce Skills Cabinet included Secretary Lauren Jones of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, Secretary Yvonne Hao of the Executive Office of Economic Development, and Secretary Patrick Tutwiler of the Executive Office of Education.

The session goal was to provide Secretaries with the big picture on major workforce development partnerships in the northeast region, generate new ideas for the top three occupational priorities identified in our region, and discuss scaling options with industry and workforce partners locally for occupational priorities shared statewide, generate new ideas to support statewide efforts to scale with industry and workforce partners across the Commonwealth. The meeting was a huge success and I thank you for your support and attendance.

The next step in composing the new northeast regional blueprint is underway. The board has received \$100,000 from the EOWLD. Merrimack Valley is the lead on this project. We are composing/composed an RFP to select a consultant with experience in economic development to

guide us along this blueprint. The northeast workforce boards will meet with its partners on November 8, 2023, to seek creative ideas for the composing of the blueprint.

The board's by-law revisions continue to be underway. A review was conducted and continues to be discussed. A draft will be sent to members for ideas, recommendations, changes, and deletions to any by-law of the board. Afterward, when a conclusion on changes comes to fruition, it will be officially presented to the board, discussed, and voted on.

The local annual plan was presented to planning (approved), presented to the board on a special virtual meeting (approved), signed by Mayor DePena, and has been sent to the state. This completes my report. Thank you.

XI. Other Business

Chairman Yepez said is there any other business to discuss and James said I want to share an idea I have, and I'd like your feedback. About two or three weeks ago, Frank and I visited the migrant homeless shelter in Methuen, and I was struck by how the sense of being trapped and waiting for something to happen was palpable. I know the state is working hard and they have processes and things they have to do. We have an idea that with our limited resources and a little bit of help and a lot of effort, we can offer something right now. My request is to be allowed to close the Career Center at noon on the two Wednesdays in November (11/8 and 11/15). We will bring in our staff, resources and any partners willing to help. We will bring in 50 – 100 migrants, register and divide them and triage them into three groups, those who are documented and ready to work and have English language skills, those who are documented and ready to work but their English skills are not solid, and those not documented and are waiting. That team will work with them to get them processed. We're going to invite agencies to provide wrap around services. I'm asking if any of you have staff or know of anyone who can provide translation in Haitian Creole, anyone willing to help and any employers willing to hire. Our goal is to get everyone registered, sorted, and tested as best as we can and get them out of that shelter as quickly as we can.

James said I will be happy to stay and speak with anyone who has ideas to contribute or solutions.

Ellen Weinhold said the agency in charge of these people dropped the ball. We have been working with families and other local agencies were involved and we were told to not participate. Ellen expressed her frustration and said CTI is getting a lot of money and the situation is dehumanizing. This is one other step in the right direction. I wish the community knew more about what is going on. This is a great idea and I hope you will allow it.

Juan said yes, I think this is a fantastic idea. Thank you, James, for taking the initiative. If any of you can help, please stay, and talk with James. James, Ken and Ellen, if you can please stay to talk with people briefly and James, Ken and Ellen said yes.

Linda Soucy said is this plan just for the Methuen shelter and James said yes, we have to take a bite at a time, and I think that Methuen is the closest to where we can get people into our Center. I have to give Frank credit for spearheading the initial visit. It was eye opening. What we're thinking is that we need to bring them into our center to see that people really do care. We have to find transportation and Frank said I will call Noah Berger at MVRTA regarding busing.

Beth Goguen said James, I'd like to follow-up with you after the meeting. The state is working with 14 pilot sites, and I have experiences and information to share with you. I think this is great because eventually they will be beyond the current pilot sites.

James said we also want to get new clothing for everyone who registers, and Ellen said Debbie's Closet, Ruth's House and Uncommon Threads can help. The biggest barrier is for men's clothing and James said I'm in touch with a few men's clothing manufacturing companies and they said tell us once the plan is in place. The goal is to have something new to wear. Anything extra that we can do to make them feel they belong to the community will help.

Francisco said James, you mentioned you are looking for translation help in Haitian Creole. I would suggest that you go to schools and churches and talk with pastors for help and Frank said the school department may have a list of translation services and I will check with superintendents in the Merrimack Valley.

Alison Dolan-Wilson said I have a contact at TJX/Marshalls and James said that's fantastic.

XII. Adjournment (vote required)

Having no further business, Chairman Yopez called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion made by John Lavoie to adjourn, seconded by Wilson DeLos Santos. Motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynda Buote

Recorder