



MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

Pursuant to Governor Baker's [Emergency Order](#) Modifying the State's Open Meeting Law issued March 12, 2020, the quarterly meeting of the MassHire Merrimack Valley Workforce Board will be held using remote participation.

Online Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83875610860?pwd=SjlhUVhDRW5PVGhCVHpCYml3M1Fodz09>

Meeting ID: 838 7561 0860

Meeting Password: 178963

ANNUAL MEETING

Minutes

Tuesday, December 1, 2020

9:00am

MEMBERS IN PARTICIPATION:

Joseph Bevilacqua, Ann Marie Borgesi, Edward Bartkiewicz, Marko Duffy, Cynthia Faulkner, Lane Glenn, Andrew Herlihy, Jeff Linehan, Supt. Maureen Lynch, Joselyn Marte, Rosa Muñoz, Marianne Paley-Nadel, Carol Riemer, Ellen Weinhold, Bob Westcott, Cal Williams, Juan Yepez

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Christian Brennan, Fred Shaheen, Ron Contrado, Evelyn Friedman, Robin Hynds, Supt. John Lavoie

GUESTS IN PARTICIPATION:

Allison Dolan-Wilson, Linda Rohrer, Julie Moran, Michael Bevilacqua, Dawn Beati

STAFF IN PARTICIPATION:

Abel Vargas, Michael Paglia, Corina Ruiz, Varsha Gandhi, Brian Norris, Tracy Myszkowski, Robin DelNegro

1. Call to Order

A quorum being present, Chairman Juan Yepez called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. Welcome and roll call

Mr. Yepez welcomed everyone and asked for a roll call.

3. Approval of the Minutes of the June 23, 2020 meeting (vote required)

Chairman Yepez called for a motion on the minutes of the June 23, 2020 board meeting.

Motion by Bob Wescott, seconded by Ellen Weinhold to approve the minutes of the June 23, 2020 meeting as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.

4. Report of Chair

Chairmen Yepez said there will be some changes at the executive level. Abel Vargas has announced he is stepping down. Brian Norris will be the interim Executive Director for the foreseeable future.

Abel thanked everyone for their support. It has been a pleasure working for you these past two years.

Joe Bevilacqua commended Abel for his tremendous work during his tenure.

5. Career Center Update

Linda Rohrer spoke about the challenges the career center has faced due to covid-19.

Linda talked about the multiple employer NDWG that includes **Southwick, Philips and 3 M Touch Systems. Most of the workers have limited English. There will be 47 ESOL assessments to be done virtually and that is a challenge. The assessments will be done by the Adult Learning Center.**

Through the Massachusetts COVID-19 Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant, support has been provided to food banks. There were 23 out of a goal of 28 individuals placed in temporary jobs in programs addressing food insecurity, making \$17-\$25/hr. Some of the placements occurred at Food for the World, Lazarus House, Lawrence Council of Aging, Elder Services, and GLCAC. Linda presented a video of workers at the food pantry.

6. Reports of Committee Chairs

i. Planning and Career Center Committee

Highlights from the report include:

- There continues to be a struggle with the training placement in WIOA Adult and Youth
- Covid-19 continues to be a challenge
- Virtual seems to be the format for the coming months
- Reopening for On-Site Services Planning continues
 - Policies and procedures related to working in a pandemic environment completed
 - Space design and staggered staff schedule completed
 - PPE and supplies being ordered
 - Staff training presentation planned for December 10th
 - Current plan: January 4th - staff on-site and January 11th - customers by appointment

ii. Youth Committee

Due to loss of his voice, chairman Williams asked Robin DelNegro to present the Youth report.

Robin reported that 171 youth were served in the Summer YouthWorks program. There were 3 project-based learning opportunities in the areas of health, podcast, and social media. There were 11 youth placed in in-person worksites and two of them were retained by the employer.

iii. Nominating Committee

No report.

iv. Finance Report

Bob Wescott said it is obvious we have not spent as much money as we have in the past. It has been a difficult year and hats off to Linda for being able to get any training placements.

7. Election of Officers (vote required)

Chairman Yopez called for a motion to keep the current slate of officers; they are:

- Chair: Juan Yopez
- Vice Chair & Planning Committee Chair: Ann Marie Borges
- Treasurer: Robert Wescott
- Clerk and Nominating Committee Chair: Jeff Linehan
- Youth Committee Chair: Calvin Williams

Motion by Joe Bevilacqua, second by Marianne Paley-Nadel to keep the current slate of officers. Motion passed unanimously.

8. Report of Executive Director

Abel Vargas thanked everyone for the past 2 years. Over the next four weeks I will be working with Brian about staff and projects that are underway.

Abel said the Board has to go out for bid for the Career Center Operator and/or Service Provider. It is his understanding that going out for bid on both is more intensive and the operator is a shorter process.

Bob Wescott asked if there is a list who this RFP would be sent to and Abel said that the RFP will be put out by the City of Lawrence and those interested can submit a bid.

Juan said he looks forward to working with Brian in the near future.

9. Other Business

Ellen Weinhold said that although the State wants to open simultaneously, they must consider that Lawrence remains a high risk community of Covid-19 positive cases. Linda explained that the reasoning behind opening simultaneously is because if they don't, some Career Centers will be overwhelmed.

Juan shared that on the news he heard that 37% of small businesses will not survive. He also said to be alert because there is a significant number of people victimized by unemployment insurance fraud.

10. Adjournment (vote required)

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

Bob Wescott made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Carol Rimer. Motion passed, and meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Corina Ruiz

Recorder