



MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

Quarterly Meeting

Zoom Meeting ID: 889 2697 0691

Meeting Password: 082661

Minutes

Wednesday, September 8, 2021

9:00am

MEMBERS IN PARTICIPATION:

Joseph Bevilacqua, Ann Marie Borgesi, Andrew Herlihy, Supt. John Lavoie, Jeff Linehan, Supt. Maureen Lynch, Rosa Muñoz, Carol Riemer, Bob Westcott, Cal Williams, Juan Yepez

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Edward Bartkiewicz, Christian Brennan, John Bruno, Ron Contrado, Marko Duffy, Evelyn Friedman, Lane Glenn, Robin Hynds, Joselyn Marte, John Person, Fred Shaheen, Ellen Weinhold,

STAFF IN PARTICIPTION:

Corina Ruiz, Varsha Gandhi, Brian Norris, Tracy Myszkowski, Leah Sparks, Rosmery Marzan, Cristy Gomez, Robin DelNegro, Mike Paglia, Yevette Garcia

GUEST IN PARTICIPTION: Linda Rohrer, Allison Dolan-Wilson, Donna Musumeci, Paul Fahey

I. Call to Order

A quorum being present, Chairman Juan Yepez called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m.

II. Welcome and Introductions

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

III. Approval of May 27th and June 17th, 2021 minutes (vote required)

Chairman Yepez called for a motion on the minutes of the May 27th and June 17th, 2021 board meeting.

Motion by Bob Wescott, seconded by Cal Williams to approve the minutes of the May 27th and June 17th, 2021 meeting as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.

IV. Report of Chair

Chairman Yepez said that at the previous Board meeting, we approved Northern Essex Community College to be our One Stop Career Center Operator/Service Provider. Since then, we have signed an “umbrella” contract with Northern Essex to guide the detailed annual plans for the MassHire Merrimack Valley Career Center.

The Board’s next important step is to complete the FY 22 Workforce Board/Career Center Integrated Plan. The Commonwealth had set August 27th as the target date for completion of this plan but in mid-August they granted an open-ended extension to that deadline to enable late breaking budget information to be included.

Our Board staff have continued to work closely with the State and with Northern Essex Community College to complete the budget process and are seeking our approval to delegate the final approval to the Planning and Career Center Committee. I'll ask for a motion to authorize this later in the meeting

Significant issues addressed over the last quarter are:

- A new 4-year WIOA plan was completed and submitted to the state. You can access the plan from the Workforce Board's website.
- We will be working with our regional partners, Greater Lowell and North Shore Workforce Boards to develop a new Northeast Regional Blueprint.
- We received a contract from Commonwealth Corporation to start the Northeast Healthcare Hub and have begun recruitment for training programs for Certified Nursing Assistants and Medical Assistants.

There are also new issues. The Workforce Board and One Stop Career Center Office occupy 4 floors at 255 Essex Street in downtown Lawrence. The lease governing the space will expire on January 31, 2022. I have had a couple of meetings with Brian Norris and Corina Ruiz to develop a plan of action to secure a new lease at 255 Essex or elsewhere. We all agree that the most satisfactory outcome would be to co-locate the two agencies as they have been for several years, but we're not sure that appropriate space is available. Brian, Corina, and Tracy are actively meeting with the Career Center to plan and initiate the procurement process.

V. Report of Executive Director

Brian emphasized a couple of issues that Juan discussed.

First: The Workforce Board/One Stop Career Center Integrated Budget process is on-going. While some numbers are still unknown, we have a good sense of most line items. You can find in you Board package a summary of expected resources.

Allocation of Funds	TOTAL FY'22 Planned Funds		TOTAL FY'21 Planned Funds		FY'22 Increase/(Decrease)	
Workforce Board	\$2,076,518.83	20.69%	\$1,436,959.81	19.12%	\$639,559.02	44.51%
Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium	\$143,612.86	1.43%	\$107,686.23	1.43%	\$35,926.63	33.36%
Department of Career Services	\$1,524,387.93	15.19%	\$1,284,349.43	17.09%	\$240,038.50	18.69%
Northern Essex Community College	\$3,511,081.88	34.98%	\$2,286,461.07	30.42%	\$1,224,620.81	53.56%
Customer Training	\$2,692,883.63	26.83%	\$2,351,210.66	31.28%	\$341,672.97	14.53%
Customer Supportive Services Funds	\$89,044.90	0.89%	\$49,527.05	0.66%	\$39,517.85	79.79%
Total	\$10,037,530.03	100%	\$7,516,194.25	100%	\$2,521,335.78	33.55%

In total, we expect a 34% increase in funding versus prior year budget, including a 54% increase in Career Center funding to \$3.5 million. The increase in funding is accompanied by an increase in programming demands which will require us to hire additional people at both the Workforce Board and Career Center. We are in the process of formulating detailed organizational plans as part of the budget completion process. We seek to fully develop the budget details and staffing plan with the help of the Planning and Career Center Committee.

Second: Workforce Board and Career Center office space. I'll reiterate that the most satisfactory outcome would be to find a space large enough to co-locate Board staff and the Career Center. We will be working with NECC and with the Mayor's office to start a procurement process before the end of September. That will give us 4 months to procure and configure space and to move our operations.

Bob asked how much sq. ft. we need, and Brian said the workforce board needs about 4-6K sq. ft. and the career center 12-14K sq. ft. Brian said both the workforce board and career center are contemplating remote work and shared space for the new location.

Superintendent Lavoie asked Brian if extra funding is being guided by the Northeast Labor Market Blueprint update and Brian said yes. In fact, we are kicking-off a new blueprint process at the end of the year. John added that GLTS wants to make sure that is the direction they follow when developing new curriculums.

VI. Reports of Committee Chairs

i. Planning and Career Center Committee

As Juan and Brian mentioned, one of the most important tasks for the Planning Committee over the next couple of weeks will be to develop and agree to the Fiscal Year 2022 Workforce Board/Career Center Integrated Plan. The large increase in resources available comes with a commensurate increase in responsibility and accountability for both Board and Career Center staff.

We fully expect that more people will be seeking to re-join the workforce in the months ahead and Board and Career Center staff will need to be ready. This will necessitate new hires, including a Deputy Director at the Career Center. We will also need to fill accounting positions at both the Board and Career Center to cope with additional transactions, analysis, and reporting requirements.

Later in this meeting we will be seeking Board approval to delegate the budget approval process to the Planning Committee. We hope then, to hold a Planning Committee meeting next week to review the detailed budget and organizational plans.

ii. Youth Committee

Chairman Yopez asked Leah Sparks to present the Youth Committee report on behalf of Cal Williams.

Despite COVID-19, this summer, we provided meaningful service project-based learning, in person placement, and career development opportunities to over 240 youth.

First, we would like to thank our 25 employers, community-based organizations, youth servicing organizations, community of faith, and local high schools for collaborating with us to provide our youth the opportunity to develop the career as well as employability skills.

Under the guidance of our funders the Commonwealth Corporation, we enrolled 227 youth in our 2021 YouthWorks Summer program. Our 14-15 years old participated in service project-based programs, some of our 16-21 years old were placed on subsidized employment, and a small cohort of 17-21 years old participated in micro careers. We also facilitated virtual project-based learning opportunities in the areas of Health and Wellness and Social Media.

Also, enrolled youth participated in live virtual Signal Success sessions, Career Chats, Career Readiness Bootcamp, and completed Signal Success online self-paced modules. These activities taught career and employability, leadership, safety, and necessary self-advocacy skills for youth to protect themselves and others in the workplace. In addition, participants explored career-education interest and employment goals. Supplementing Signal Success, the Massachusetts Work Based Learning Plan was used to set and measure individual youths' attainment of their program goals.

Also, we facilitated the process for six local high school teachers to participate in the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Summer Teacher's Externship program. The Teacher Externship Program was designed for selected academic and technical teachers who deliver instruction to students enrolled in districts that receive Perkins funding. We referred six teachers from Greater Lawrence Technical School, Haverhill High School and Methuen High School. Teachers who completed the process received a \$7,000.00 stipend for this experience.

These teachers were matched with five employers from the STEM field. These employers committed to sponsoring the teacher for at least 50 hours on site and supporting the teacher's involvement in projects that will enable the teachers to develop useful lessons that address issues in particular career fields. These lessons plans are to be shared with the students during the 21-22 school year.

I am happy to report that we got level funded to continue our career development education services and activities through our Connecting Activities Initiative. This funding will allow us to expand career preparation for college and provide robust services to students with higher needs. In addition, we're increasing private employer involvement, supporting the development of Career Pathways, and maintaining higher levels of student participation. We are grateful to the Baker Administration and our state legislators for supporting Connecting Activities.

Now, we want to share the Lawrence High School Pathway Leadership Summer Program 2021 Final Presentation YouTube video. This video provides an overview of this service project-based learning opportunity that 11 of our local youth experienced during the summer.

iii. Nominating Committee

Jeff Linehan made a motion to nominate Mark Forman of Bake 'n Joy to the Board of Directors. If approved, Jeff will draft a letter for Mayor Vasquez to make final appointment.

Motion by Bob Wescott, seconded by Cal Williams to accept Mark Forman's nomination to the Board. Motion passed unanimously.

iv. Finance Report

Bob said that as everyone can see, we've had an increase in funding. He also talked about residents not being able to afford to live in inner cities. We need to promote subsidization is part of employment. Employers will have to look at this new era where people are looking to get paid more and more and more small business are closing. Workforce training is good but all our thinking for employment is for one economic model – we need to be creative with training.

Juan Yepez said that he and his brother will be making an announcement in the upcoming days related to subsidization.

VII. FY22 Annual Plan – Planning Committee to act on behalf of the board with regards to the annual plan and budget (vote required)

Juan said that as they have done in the past, he is asking for a motion for the Planning Committee to act on behalf of the board with regards to the annual plan and budget.

Motion by Joe Bevilacqua, seconded by Jeff Linehan to grant the Planning Committee to act on behalf of the board with regards to the annual plan and budget. Motion passed unanimously.

VIII. Other Business

No other business.

IX. Adjournment (vote required)

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

Ann Marie Borgesi made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Joe Bevilacqua. Motion passed, and meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Corina Ruiz

Recorder