



MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

Youth Committee

Wednesday, April 8, 2026
11:00 am

Remote Meeting via ZOOM
Meeting ID: 867 5698 8583
Passcode: 102102

Meeting Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Alicia Appugliese, Michael Bevilacqua, Audra Durkin, Linda Soucy, Cal Williams

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Roberto Duran, Brad Howell, Tia Gerber, Fermin Peralta, Tom Raiche, Jeurys Santiago, David Tagliaferri, Ellen Weinhold

STAFF PRESENT:

Lynda Buote, Cristy Gomez

I. Call to Order

Chairman Williams called the meeting to order at 11:04 a.m. and thanked everyone for attending today. I'd like to thank Linda Soucy for covering for me in my absence. This meeting is recorded for meeting minutes purposes.

II. Approval of Minutes from the October 8, 2025, and January 14, 2026, Meetings (vote required)

Chairman Williams asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the October 8, 2025, and January 14, 2026, meetings as submitted.

Motion by Linda Soucy, seconded by Michael Bevilacqua, to approve the minutes of the October 8, 2025, meeting as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.

Motion by Linda Soucy, seconded by Audra Durkin, to approve the minutes of the January 14, 2026, meeting as submitted. Motion passed unanimously.

III. WIOA Program Update

Cristy said the Haverhill Public Schools group program is progressing well, reaching 94% of its enrollment goal with 33 youth enrolled. Participants have completed internship classes, and 32 students are already

placed in internships. Two students earned OSHA-10 certifications during the program, while many others entered already certified and several more are currently working toward their certification. While Haverhill Public Schools expressed strong appreciation for the partnership this year, they have decided not to pursue the grant for year two due to staff capacity constraints.

We recently met with the WIOA Youth Program Director at the MassHire Metro South/West Workforce Board to learn about their innovative service delivery model and strong partnerships with schools and youth-serving organizations.

Cal said what was the goal for this group program and Cristy said the goal was 34 youth and we enrolled 33 but 1 has dropped out.

The Career Center continues to enroll youth. I don't have those numbers at this time and can get them to you. At the last meeting we had with them, they had about 11 youth enrolled in ITA programming. We met with UTEC in Haverhill to collaborate and make the connection with the Career Center team in recruiting WIOA out-of-school youth.

The 2026–2027 WIOA Youth RFP was released on March 9th, and we look forward to strong proposals that will continue expanding workforce opportunities for youth in our region. The WIOA Youth Procurement Bidder's Conference is today at 1:00 PM. We will keep you posted.

Cal said is there a timeline for the RFP and Cristy said the RFP is posted and proposals are due in May. I don't have the timeline in front of me. We can fund only one in-school youth program and at least 2 out-of-school youth programs. I will reach out to the committee for volunteers to review the proposals.

Audra Durkin said how does a school district apply for the in-school RFP and Cristy said the instructions are available in the RFP. Proposals would include the application, budget, target population, number of participants, outcomes, etc., and Audra said who would complete a proposal for Greater Lawrence Technical School (GLTS) and Cristy said I believe it's the grant writer with Superintendent's approval. Cristy encouraged committee members to follow the instructions on the RFP posted on our website and will share the link to today's bidder's conference.

VI. YouthWorks and Connecting Activities Update

Connecting Activities

Cristy said the Youth Team continues to support several local high schools including GLTS, High School Learning Center, Haverhill Gateway Academy, Haverhill High School, Triton Regional High School, Phoenix Academy Charter, and Amesbury Innovation High School.

Recent activities included college field trips to North Shore Community College and Salem State University, financial literacy and professional development workshops, and ongoing one-on-one student support.

Other highlights include participating in Triton Regional High School's Career Week March 23 – March 27 that included a student visit to Bentley University, tabling at Phoenix Charter, and a career fair at Lawrence High School Learning Center on March 18th.

On April 17 we will be collaborating with Amesbury Innovation High School to host their first College & Trade Fair.

We are also supporting student internships and capstone placements and planning additional field trips to Northern Essex Community College for GLTS and Triton Regional High School students.

We have been collaborating with Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Consortium (NAMC) to provide workshops to the cohorts at Lawrence High School for advanced manufacturing.

We are currently planning a Connecting Activities Regional Convening for May 6th. This event will bring together school partners, employers, and youth-serving organizations to share best practices and strengthen collaboration across the region. The Youth Committee will be invited to this event.

Cal said do we have a total of students who participated in Connecting Activities and Cristy said our goal is to help over 2,000 students from all the high schools, I believe we have reached the goal. It's difficult to track because Connecting Activities is in transition. We don't have a platform like we did in the past. Our team has been using a spreadsheet. Each quarter it's a different number depending on the activities and events, but we are on target.

Linda Soucy said is Methuen High School involved and Cristy said Methuen High School has been invited to be part of Connecting Activities for many years and we have not been able to connect. For a while, we were providing services to the alternative high school students and Linda said we have a new superintendent and Cristy said it would be amazing if we can get into Methuen High School and Linda said I'm going to try and work on this. Who is the contact and Cristy said they can contact me.

Cristy said this has been a great year and most schools are taking advantage of these career development education services.

2025-2026 YouthWorks Year Round

We are wrapping up our YouthWorks Year Round program and as of today, the team has already enrolled 208 youth out of 210 youth enrollment goal. That's 99% of goal. The youth have successfully completed all required hours. A few sites have asked for an extension to complete their programming.

YouthWorks participants continue to receive support from our team and employer partners. Participants are currently completing Signal Success modules to strengthen workplace readiness.

Participants are required to complete Signal Success program component through the CommCorp Learning Management System (LMS) platform. We provide youth who complete each module a stipend of \$16.25 per module or per hour for in person facilitation, an incentive of \$75 if they complete Signal Success, and an additional incentive of \$100 if they complete all required program hours. I am happy to report that we will be dispersing over \$50k in stipends this week to youth who have participated in the first cohort this year.

We are also building new employer partnerships with Avita of Newburyport and Curious Creatures of Groveland, and a couple of additional pending sites to support internships connected to Triton Regional High School's post-graduate program.

Our team also attended the recent YouthWorks Regional Convening hosted by Commonwealth Corporation. Staff from across the state gathered to review program data, discuss eligibility and application processes, strengthen data quality practices, and share strategies for building youth leadership pipelines.

The YouthWorks Summer 2026 application link was opened on April 6th and will close on Friday, April 10th, with a goal of serving 175 youth this summer. Due to funding constraints, enrollment limits will be implemented for group programs to ensure resources are distributed fairly across partner organizations while maintaining program quality. As of this morning, we already have 360 applications. We expect over 600 applications by Friday. We hope the youth follow through the documentation and eligibility process by May 1st.

We will host an Employer Partner Orientation Breakfast on Wednesday, June 3rd here at the MMVWB office to prepare businesses for hosting youth employees and to review program expectations, mentorship opportunities, and liability guidelines.

Cristy said 10 youth successfully completed the February School Vacation Driver's Education class, with another student scheduled for the April session. Participants receive a stipend for attending along with lunch and snacks. We have added this as part of our programming for the 2026-2027 YouthWorks Cycle 2 for 11 participants depending on cost per participant.

Staff have also begun exploring potential new opportunities, including the upcoming MassHousing Summer Youth Employment RFP and CommCorp's Young Adults with Disabilities grant expected this fall. I will keep the committee posted.

Audra asked for the link for the RFP and Cristy said the RFP link is on our website. I sent the RFP to committee members when it was released. I will resend it.

Cal said we have a huge task this summer. Are any of the area cities and towns doing summer job programs and Cristy said last year we were able to collaborate with City of Lawrence's recreation department and with The Center. The recreation department usually does its own recruiting for summer counselors. They were also able to host our participants, and they have reached out to me to continue the partnership. We had some Haverhill city jobs last year, but youth selected other opportunities. In our program we allow youth to pick their jobs based on interest.

Cristy said the youth team has been amazing and they are so proactive in helping the school's staff, meeting with students, and talking to parents. Yvette Garcia has been working diligently with Triton Regional High School to place students, and we have five new employers to work with in that area this year.

Cal said that's excellent. Can you please send the invitation for the Employer Partner Orientation Breakfast to the committee and Cristy said yes, the invitation will be sent at the end of April.

Michael Bevilacqua, I want to commend Cristy and the team for the collaboration and all the work they are doing with limited resources. Great work and Cal said I concur. It's a continuance to get these youth involved and working for the summer. Congratulations on a job well done and I will share this at our quarterly meeting.

Cal asked if there were any other questions and there were none.

VII. Partner's Information

Linda Soucy said on Friday we notified our area youth that the YouthWorks summer program link would be available and we shared the link on Monday. We finished our Year Round youth program. It went very well. Thank you. It helps having the mentors at the Homework Center on a daily basis. Without that it would be difficult to run our programming.

We are coordinating a meeting with five youth and Steve Sullivan from ABC (Associated Builders and Contractors) regarding apprenticeships in plumbing, construction, HVAC and electrical. He will explain the process. We sent three students to Peterson School, but there are no jobs and Peterson School does not provide supportive services. I am also trying to work with Gould Institute. Without MMVWB, our youth would not have the opportunities they have. I concur with what Michael said. Great job and thank you very much.

Cal said I will make some phone calls to area unions and Linda said I'm looking for full-time jobs for these youth.

Audra said GLTS is having a hard time finding co-op jobs in the construction field due to the lack of work. Initially it was the cost of supplies, and we had some students come back from co-op late fall, early winter because the work is not there. We have other co-ops doing extremely well. We have students placed in the allied health aspect; medical, dental and health assisting students. If we can get everyone to have an opportunity, that would be great. It's asking us to think outside the box and get creative in what our students can do for employment opportunities and we're looking forward to the challenge.

Michael said keep up the good work and if the Merrimack Valley Chamber can assist, please reach out. We are looking forward to what's coming up this summer.

VIII. Other Business

Cal said is there any other business and there was none.

IX. Adjourn (Vote Required)

Chairman Williams asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by Michael Bevilacqua, seconded by Audra Durkin. Motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynda Buote

Recorder