



MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

Youth Committee

Wednesday, June 10, 2026
11:00 am

Remote Meeting via ZOOM
Meeting ID: 895 5320 8102
Passcode: 102102

Meeting Minutes

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Audra Durkin, Linda Soucy, Cal Williams, Ellen Weinhold

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Alicia Appugliese, Michael Bevilacqua, Roberto Duran, Brad Howell, Tia Gerber, Fermin Peralta, Tom Raiche, Jeurys Santiago, David Tagliaferri

STAFF PRESENT:

Lynda Buote, Cristy Gomez, Abby Seripias

I. Call to Order

Chairman Williams called the meeting to order at 11:04 a.m. and thanked everyone for attending today. This meeting is recorded for meeting minutes purposes.

II. Approval of Minutes from April 8, 2026, Meeting (vote required)

Chairman Williams said we cannot vote to approve the minutes from the April 8, 2026, meeting today as we do not have quorum. Approval of the April 8, 2026, meeting minutes will be included in the October 14, 2026, Youth Committee Meeting agenda for approval.

III. WIOA Program Update

Cristy said during the fourth quarter, the youth team continued to advance workforce development opportunities for young people across the Merrimack Valley through the Connecting Activities, WIOA Youth, and YouthWorks programs. Key priorities included youth recruitment, career readiness, employer engagement, work-based learning opportunities, completion of year-round programming, and preparation for summer programming.

The WIOA In-School Youth Program, in partnership with Haverhill Public Schools, continued to support participants in achieving their academic, employment, and personal development goals. The current

program cycle concludes on June 26, followed by 12 months of follow-up services. Haverhill Public Schools did a great job with this program but unfortunately, they will not be continuing after this cycle.

Additionally, proposals from two organizations for future WIOA Youth services were reviewed and submitted to the Planning Committee for recommendation to the Board. I am unable to share information until the Planning/Career Center Committee and MMVWB Board of Directors approves the recommendations.

Throughout the quarter, MassHire MVWB and MassHire MVCC youth teams provided comprehensive WIOA Youth services, including assessments, case management, career counseling, pathway planning, educational support and referrals, employment readiness training, ITA referrals, supportive services, follow-up services, and connections to supportive resources.

Performance snapshot as of end of May:

- Enrollment: 83 = 76% of 100 goal
- ITAs: 25 = 48% of 52 goal
- Exits: 55 = 87% of 63 goal
- Entered Employment: 12 = 50% of 24 goal
- Average Hourly Wage at Placement: \$20.02

I don't have information about who the Career Center has in the pipeline, but we are working with them to co-enroll 10 youth into our YouthWorks program to boost our numbers. Ana Gonzalez is collecting WIOA Youth eligibility information. It's more complex than the YouthWorks program, but we already have seven potential youth for enrollment into the new pilot this summer. We hope to see the results so we can continue into the year-round program and if it's successful, we can request a continuation.

Cal said what does the 12-month follow-up with Haverhill High School participants entail and Cristy said we will connect with them monthly to make sure they are following through with the goals they set and provide them with any support they need. For example, if they can't continue to college, but are interested in training, we can refer them to the Career Center for services. In our past experience, most youth do well. In the program we completed last year with YMCA Haverhill, eight of the nine youth are still working for them, and some have moved up in position. After exit, we follow-up on post-program job placement at 3 months, 6 months and 9 months and enter retentions in MOSES.

Linda Soucy said do you offer OSHA 10 and Cristy said no, it is a credential that was offered as part of the WIOA Youth ISY group program. We don't offer it as a training program. HPS included it as part of their program.

VI. YouthWorks and Connecting Activities Update

Connecting Activities

Cristy said the MassHire MVWB Connecting Activities team continued strong collaboration with school districts, employers, and community partners to expand career awareness, career exploration, and work-based learning opportunities for students.

A major highlight this quarter was the Workforce Connection – Building Youth Pathways Convening, held on May 6, 2026, which brought together more than 40 education, workforce development, and employer partners to strengthen regional collaboration and expand career-connected learning opportunities across the Merrimack Valley.

The convening reinforced alignment across DESE Connecting Activities, YouthWorks, and WIOA Youth, advancing a shared goal of building a seamless and coordinated youth workforce pipeline.

A key focus was the DESE Innovation Pathways, preparing students for high-demand industries including healthcare, advanced manufacturing, information technology, environmental science, and life sciences. Featured speaker Andrew Wulf, Principal of Newburyport High School, shared successful implementation strategies and highlighted their future expansion through Chapter 74 CTE funding.

DESE continues to advance efforts focused in innovation pathways. We have four high schools participating in our area including Pentucket Regional, Newburyport High School, Phoenix Academy Charter School and Haverhill High School is the newest with an IT Career Pathways program. We provided support to these schools specifically during the application process including letters of support and labor market information from Frank Bonet, our Executive Director. Our youth team support these high schools throughout the school year by enhancing Connecting Activities Career Development Education opportunities for their students.

Linda said have we thought about meeting with Methuen's new superintendent and Cristy said I have not set up a meeting with her. We have not been successful with Methuen High School, but we are working with Methuen youth through the Methuen Arlington Neighborhood, Methuen Housing Authority, and we have connected with the new youth and resource center in Methuen and will start collaborating with them. It is our hope to provide Connecting Activities services at Methuen High School during the upcoming school year.

Audra Durkin said do you come to Greater Lawrence Technical School and Cristy said yes, Cecelia Lunde, one of our Youth Service Specialist, goes to GLTS weekly during the school year and is also working with Elaine Davey. We are not visiting the schools at this time as we are working to place the summer youth in jobs.

Cal said is Methuen High School in the pipeline and Cristy said we always include Methuen High School in all of our communications. We still have a connection, but we'd like to be more present because the youth need more one-on-one support and we can provide those services and Cal said regarding Linda's question, please keep us informed on any progress and Cristy said we will reach out to them again. We are already speaking with area high schools about the upcoming school year.

2025-2026 YouthWorks Year Round

Cristy said the YouthWorks Year-Round Program successfully concluded on June 5, 2026, serving 208 youth and achieving 99.9% of enrollment goals. Participants engaged in structured career readiness and skill-building activities designed to strengthen educational achievement and workforce readiness.

The Driver's Education program was a success. We had to adjust the number of participants as we unfortunately had a no-show for one spot. We will find a new vendor for next year's program as the current vendor is unable to continue. Youth must be enrolled in our 2026-27 YouthWorks program to be eligible to participate in the driver's education program.

Signal Success is a mandatory requirement of the program. If a summer youth participant does not complete all Signal Success components, they cannot enroll for cycle two.

Planning for the 2026 YouthWorks Summer Program remained a major focus this quarter, resulting in 593 applications for 175 available opportunities.

On June 6, we successfully hosted the Youth Orientation and Job Match Event. Participant placements are now being finalized ahead of the July 6 program launch.

Partnerships & Employer Engagement - Employer, school, municipal, nonprofit, and community partnerships remain central to expanding youth opportunity and improving outcomes across the region.

On June 3, the youth team hosted the 2026 Summer Employer Orientation Breakfast, convening over 30 employer partners. The session provided key program updates, expectations, and best practices to ensure employers are prepared to deliver meaningful, structured, and supportive summer project-based learning and work experiences.

The event further strengthened employer engagement and reinforced the critical role of worksites in youth skill development, career readiness, and long-term workforce success.

Special thanks to our Youth Committee members, Linda Soucy and Mike Bevilacqua, for always supporting our events. Cal said I appreciate the effort, and Cristy said I also can't say enough about our youth team. They are doing an amazing job.

Cal said how many are we over-enrolling by and Cristy said about 14 youth. Sometimes youth drop out or need to attend summer school, etc. We over-enroll so we can be sure to spend the funding.

Cristy said we are also providing the Health and Wellness program for our younger participants. Sherry Abruzese from GLTS will facilitate and youth will receive first aid certification. It's a wonderful program. Sherry does so many activities with the youth. It's a great opportunity for younger youth to start learning about employability and how to take care of themselves.

Cristy said we'll share updates during the summer, and we are very active on our social media.

Cal said thank you Linda for attending the orientation breakfast and Linda said it was very well organized; everyone enjoyed themselves and the food was fabulous.

VII. Partner's Information

Linda Soucy said Methuen Arlington Neighborhood is ready to start the summer parks and recreation program on 7/1. We'll have youth through MMVWB, we've hired seven youth from the City of Methuen, and we also have hired seven supervisors. We anticipate about 140 to 150 youth per day, and we are looking forward to all the field trips and basketball league and everything else. Without the help from MMVWB with the hiring of the youth, we wouldn't be able to hold these programs. It's very important to us. Thank you.

We hire youth in our area so that transportation is not an issue. At the end of the program, we provide a survey and all the youth talk about how they helped their families financially. It's a huge program for us.

Cristy said many youth help their families financially with getting ready for school. I can't say enough about this program. I was a summer youth and used the money to help my mother at that time. It's really important and we hope for more funding for next year.

Cristy said we are also partnering with the City of Lawrence this year and we will collaborate with their recreation department. We are happy to have them on board once again.

Cal said how much are the youth paid and Cristy said youth ages 14-15 are paid \$16.25/hr (60 hours),

youth ages 16-17 are paid \$17.50/hr (100 hours), and participants ages 18+ are paid \$18.75/hr (100 hours) and they'll be paid \$16.25/hr for participating in Signal Success. If they complete the summer program successfully, they'll receive \$100 incentive and if they complete Signal Success, they'll receive \$75 incentive.

Linda said I think you need to stress to youth that if they don't complete Signal Success, they will not be able to come back in September. We're constantly on top of them to complete Signal Success, we incentivize it with a Chic-fil-A gift card to the top two youth who finish early, and Cristy said that worked very well and I think all your youth completed Signal Success last cycle. I do emphasize that with our employers and partners. Sometimes youth wait until the last minute and if too many are on the platform at the same time, there can be technology related issues. Linda asked Cristy for a weekly update of where each youth is on a weekly basis. Cristy said we send weekly reminders to the youth. They will have approximately five weeks to complete the program's 10 modules.

Audra said GLTS is almost ready to wrap up, we are approaching final exams, our seniors graduated on June 4th, and we are done on June 22nd. These are exciting times. As Cristy mentioned, we are currently working with Elaine Davey to provide in-house positions for our students and the special education department as well for the next school year. We are implementing a pre-employment program to help our students develop more skills and prepare them for the industries so they can go out on co-op and potentially have full-time opportunities post-graduation as an option as well. We're trying to emphasize and enhance our programs as best as possible.

Cal said Audra, are you having a tough time with finding opportunities for co-op and Audra said we did in the fall. I think due to weather and jobs not being available, especially in the construction trades, but now that the weather has made a turn, things are picking up again. I know the supply chain was extremely expensive and that is another issue with not having enough in the construction trades, but for hospitality and allied health programs, it has been consistent.

Cristy said I have a pending meeting with Elaine to start planning for next year. We will be working through the summer and Audra said I should be around this summer to connect with that.

Ellen Weinhold said the new HUD Administration is talking about work requirements for able-bodied people. It's a challenge to navigate. We were funding to December and hopefully we'll be funded next year.

VIII. Topics Not Reasonably Anticipated

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

Cal said thank you for attending today. Have a great summer and congratulations on a job well done.

IX. Adjourn (Vote Required)

Chairman Williams asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Motion by Ellen Weinhold, seconded by Audra Durkin. Motion passed, and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Lynda Buote

Recorder