



MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

Planning/Career Center Committee

Online Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87620164053?pwd=VmIrk3IRYU1pbFRXUUY5WU9MMjdwZz09>

Meeting ID: 876 2016 4053

Meeting Password: 548428

Thursday, November 19, 2020

9:00am

Meeting Minutes

MEMBERS IN PARTICIPATION:

Ann Marie Borgesi, Andrew Herlihy, Carol Riemer, Bob Wescott, Ron Contrado

STAFF IN PARTICIPATION:

Abel Vargas, Corina Ruiz, Varsha Gandhi, Tracy Myszkowski

GUESTS IN PARTICIPATION:

Linda Rohrer

I. Approval of Minutes of the August 25, 2020 meeting (vote required)

A quorum being present, Chairwoman Ann Marie Borgesi called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m. and then called for a motion on the minutes of the August 25, 2020 meeting.

Motion by Ron Contrado, seconded by Carol Reimer, to approve the minutes of the August 25, 2020 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

II. Performance Summary as of October 31, 2020

Abel Vargas presented the performance reports. There are still problems with the WIOA Adult and Youth numbers and there is still work to be done. Varsha said there is about half dozen ITA's being processed - 2 Adults, 2 DW and 1 Youth.

Linda Rohrer added that it pains her to see the entered employment numbers. She compared the Merrimack Valley entered employment with other regions and Lowell and Worcester appear to be doing better, all other regions are struggling as well. They are struggling with WIOA and perhaps they should release a group training RFP.

Bob added that the numbers seem to reflect the economy.

III. Budget Update as of October 31, 2020

Abel presented the budget report and said that we have spent 25%.

Tracy Myszkowski said that staff is moving along but training spending has been slow. We are waiting for partner costs that covers the infrastructure quotes. We are waiting for ServePro to do a deep cleaning because we had an employee test positive for Covid-19. Lastly, Tracy said that our work has been very productive while working from home.

IV. Grants Update

Abel said the WB applied for a Manufacturing/ESOL grant and is waiting response. NAMC continues to apply for funding and the technical schools applied for CTI programs.

V. Career Center Report

Linda Rohrer presented an update for career center.

Reopening for On-Site Services Planning

- 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

Career Center Unemployment Insurance Services

- Dept. of Unemployment Assistance staff will not be returning to career center for foreseeable future
- Career center staff are being trained (Level 1 – Basic) (Level 2 – More In-Depth Support)
- Limited additional funding to provide these services – reduces capacity for reemployment services

Urban Agenda Grant – City of Haverhill

- Intensive business services support to HR to recruit workforce for Joseph's Pasta, Cedar's, and Hans Kissle
- Pandemic is making relationship development a challenge

Southwick/Philips/3 M Touch Systems – 675 Workers Affected

- Grant has been submitted to state for submission to USDOL – to serve 203 workers
- Southwick has been Trade certified
- Through October, 81 workers from these companies have received career center services

Recruitment for Upcoming Trainings

- CNC Training at Greater Lawrence Technical School – 15 participants
- Career Technical Institute Training (if funded) at GLTS – 15 to 45 participants
- Both projected to begin mid to late January 2021

Linda mentioned the career center accomplishments.

Massachusetts COVID-19 Disaster Recovery Dislocated Worker Grant

- 23 of goal of 28 individuals placed in temporary jobs in programs addressing food insecurity (\$17-\$25/hr)
(Food for the World, Lazarus House, Lawrence Council of Aging, Elder Services, GLCAC)
- 2 of goal of 10 individuals in training

Assessment for MVWB Learn to Earn Welding/Metal Fabrication Training Program

- Completed math and reading assessments for 13 program candidates
- Each done individually and virtually using WorkKeys tool

Virtual Job Fair – November 10th

- Participated in a statewide virtual job fair using new tool purchased by the state – Premier Virtual
- Statewide – 302 businesses participated; Merrimack Valley – 38 businesses participated
- Statewide – 853 job seekers attended; Merrimack Valley – 77 job seekers attended (136 registered)

Increase in Social Media Presence

- Team focusing on increasing relevant FaceBook and Twitter posts
- Substantial increase achieved in likes and followers

Linda then mentioned the career center challenges.

Reluctance of Individuals to Seek Employment

- Fear
- Child-care
- School for children – remote and hybrid

Most Training is Virtual

- Limited options
- Technology for some job seekers is a barrier

Technology Issues

- Knowledge and skills
- Lack of sufficient devices

Staff are Stressed

- Technology (customers and their own)
- Reduced peer support
- Multiple projects

VI. Other Business

Abel mentioned the RFP for the One Stop Career Center and that he will be reaching out to the Executive Committee to talk through the options. Most of us agree that although there are some challenges, we would like to keep Northern Essex Community College as the operator.

VIII. Adjourn (vote required)

Chairwomen Ann Marie commended the staff for the good work despite Lawrence being the City with the highest positive cases of Covid-19 in the State. She wished everyone finds peace and joy in the holidays.

Motion by Bob Wescott, seconded by Carol Riemer to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Corina Ruiz

Recorder