



MERRIMACK VALLEY WORKFORCE BOARD

Planning/Career Center Committee

Remote Meeting via ZOOM

Meeting ID: 846 211 6073

Passcode: 082661

Tuesday, July 20, 2021

9:00am

Meeting Minutes

MEMBERS IN PARTICIPATION:

Ann Marie Borgesi, Ron Contrado, Andrew Herlihy, Carol Reimer

MEMBERS ABSENT

Bob Wescott

STAFF IN PARTICIPATION:

Brian Norris, Corina Ruiz, Varsha Gandhi, Tracy Myszkowski

GUESTS IN PARTICIPATION:

Linda Rohrer, Juan Yopez

I. Approval of Minutes of the May 20th and June 16th, 2021 meeting (vote required)

A quorum being present, Chairwoman Ann Marie Borgesi called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m. and then called for a motion on the minutes of the May 20th and June 16th, 2021 meeting.

Motion by Ron Contrado, seconded by Carol Reimer, to approve the minutes of the May 20th and June 16th, 2021 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

II. Performance Update

Brian Norris said we have served 6,317 job seekers, which is 101% of plan and served 855 total employers, which is 70% of plan. WIOA youth has 21 new participants, which is 42% of plan. WIOA Adults had 41 new participants at 50% of plan and Dislocated Workers over exceeded with 95 total enrollments, 125% of plan. Some numbers are low and not surprising given the situation, but we will try to tighten those in FY22.

III. Budget Update

Tracy Myszkowski said fiscal staff is working on end of fiscal year reporting and there is nothing to update at this time. The Board fiscal staff did accrual reporting for the Career Center and MDCS and have actual numbers for the Board and the 501(C)3. We will consolidate all the data and publish a June report next week.

Brian thanked Tracy and Varsha for bringing us up to date with NECC billings.

IV. Other Updates

- a. **OSSC Operator/ Service Provider Contract:** Brian said the past 6 weeks we've been working on the OSSC Operator/ Service Provider Contract. The Board selected NECC as the operator. We have been involved in contract negotiations with NECC, the City of Lawrence and the Board Chair. We are in the process of obtaining all required signatures.
- b. **FY22 MMVWB Annual Plan:** Our umbrella contract with NECC specifies the broad terms guiding the four-year contract, but on an annual basis we will negotiate a separate plan that includes performance goals and an integrated budget based on annual allocations. The State guidelines were released a week ago and we have just started working on this plan.
- c. **Summer YouthWorks Program:** Corina said that a total of 800 applications were received but not all youth followed through with completing the process. As of this date, we have 230 enrolled in virtual and in-person, with a total of 15 employers hosting. We've had some challenges, one of them being lack of interest from youth participating virtually. Unfortunately, Commonwealth Corporation has a requirement that 30% of youth must participate virtually. The funding stipulates that we must spend 60% of the funds in youth wages and 40% on admin, staffing, overhead, etc. We will be asking Commonwealth Corporation for a waiver because we don't anticipate being able to spend 60% of the funds in youth wages. We are working with Ben, our TA from Commonwealth Corporation, to discuss our case and submit a waiver.

Corina said we are in receipt of the YouthWorks Year-Round RFP and that this year it will be allocation based and not competitive. We are expecting an increase of \$100K; roughly \$200K to put together a year-round program.

Tracy mentioned that another challenge is that our youth are getting paid a minimum wage of \$13.50 when other places like McDonald's, and Dunkin are paying higher wages and even signing bonuses. Another challenge is that many of these youth are attending summer school. Therefore, we have not been able to enroll as many youths and will be seeking a waiver to maintain staffing and support the costs we are incurring.

- d. **255 Essex Street Lease Expires January 2022:** Brian said the Workforce Board is leasing the entire 255 Essex Street from the City of Lawrence and subleasing the first three floors to the Career Center. That lease expires at the end of January 2022. We are trying to get ahead of this. NECC indicated staying in this location in their RFP, but we are not sure what will happen. With the NECC having a hybrid work schedule, they may not need as much space. The space on the fourth floor is not an ideal space for the Workforce Board. This is a heads up. We will start a conversation with the City and at the same time look for commercial space available.

Corina added that the youth department is growing. A new youth counselor was hired and a staff person from the Career Center will be transitioning to the Board. The current space is not big enough to accommodate new staff. With the additional funding expected in Connecting Activities and YouthWorks, more youth will be served, and we'd like to have a welcoming area for them where they may be able to complete applications and receive a variety of services from the youth staff.

Ann Marie suggested doing a survey amongst staff to get their input on the current space and what they would like to see improved.

V. Career Center Report

Linda Rohrer presented an update for career center.

The Career Technical Initiative (CTI) Training Programs round one ended in May and June. Participants are being job placed. The programs were:

- GLTS – Biotech Lab Technician, Plumbing, Carpentry, HVAC
- Whittier – Advanced Manufacturing, Welding

CTI Round three programs have been funded for both schools and will start in September. We will need to fill 70 slots. The programs will be:

- GLTS – Automotive, Plumbing, Welding
- Whittier – Advanced Manufacturing, Welding, Automotive Technology

The Virtual Manufacturing Training Program is funded through NAMC until December 31, 2021. We need to enroll 15 people to study advanced manufacturing using the Tooling-U online curriculum. Students will be prepared for:

- immediate employment within the industry using OJT model
- participation in a NAMC-funded training programs
- continued Tooling-U training to achieve the credential - Certified Manufacturing Associate (CMfgA)
- continued Tooling-U training customized by an employer

The Healthcare Hub is funded by Commonwealth Corporation and it's a regional partnership between Northshore, Greater Lowell, and Merrimack Valley. We need to enroll 15 individuals into certified nurse assistant or medical assistant training. The intention of the program is to help these participants, once they are employed, to continue a healthcare career path to nursing or other higher level healthcare positions.

There are specific grants to serve workers laid off from Southwick, Philips, and 3M Touch Systems. We received funds from the state to serve workers from Southwick (Trade certified) – funding goes back to November 2020. We are still waiting for USDOL approval of the National Dislocated Worker Grant which will fully fund services for all 3 companies.

We continue to have job fairs to recruit work for Amazon in Haverhill and its subcontractors. We are supporting Makelt Haverhill's Job Fair scheduled for July 29th. We will be participating in a weeklong job fair happening across the state the week of August 16th. This is part of "Let's Get to Work" push.

We will be returning to in-person services at the Career Centers. Staff returned to working in the office on July 12th on a staggered schedule. Half of the staff come into the office on Mondays and Tuesdays, all work remotely on Wednesdays, and half that worked remotely on Mondays and Tuesdays come into the office on Thursdays and Fridays. Customers will be served on-site by appointment as soon as we have security guards hired and trained. September is the target date for walk-in customers to be served on-site at our centers. This will be challenging for us since there will not be staff from the MA Department of Unemployment Assistance on-site to help with unemployment benefit issues.

We are maintaining measures to make staff feel that we are doing all we can to keep everyone safe by:

- Deep cleaning of all 4 floors was done at the end of June
- Masks are required to be worn by all entering the career centers (staff, customers, visitors, vendors)
- Social distancing and limited capacity for some rooms is being maintained

Linda said that annually, the MA Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development sponsors a MassHire Awards competition to recognize and reward exceptional innovations in workforce service delivery in support of the MassHire Mission and Vision. This year, we nominated staff in the categories of Respect, Reliability, Ingenuity, and the overall category of Living MassHire. Our Living MassHire nomination (Eric Nelson, Business Services Representative) was selected as a finalist. If he wins, our center will be awarded \$15,000. The Awards Ceremony and Celebration is this Thursday, July 22nd at 10 AM.

Updates on staffing are:

- 2 new hires starting on July 26th
 - Marta Maldonado - Recruiter for Manufacturing IST
 - Christine DeRosa – Employment Counselor for Virtual Manufacturing Training Program
- Continuing to recruit for Business Services Representative and Employment Counselors
- Upcoming staff retirements

VI. Other Business

Brian said we are grappling with the return-to-work plan. The WB is working on a return plan and welcomes any feedback. Ann Marie shared that GLFHC is allowing certain functions to work remotely but setting clear expectations that will be reviewed on a regular basis. Carol said Magellan has finance and program staff working remotely and engineers and shop fully back in person because of the nature of their work.

Andrew mentioned the Governor’s Future of Work report and perhaps this is something the committee can look at to make suggestions.

Andrew mentioned Haverhill has funding childcare slots to get people back to work and the Haverhill Transit Alliance to provide Uber transportation from point to point so residents can go to job interviews, medical appointments, and other purposes.

Brian said there is not performance review or merit increase for staff. He would like to work on a policy and welcomes any feedback, or anyone willing to share their process.

Brian invited everyone to the MassHire Awards on July 22nd at 10am. Anyone interested, we will share the link.

VIII. Adjourn (vote required)

Having no further business, Chairwomen Borgesi called for a motion to adjourn.

Motion by Carol Riemer, seconded by Andrew Herlihy to adjourn the meeting. The meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Corina Ruiz

Recorder