



**CI Works
11 Chestnut Street
Amesbury, MA 01913**

QUARTERLY MEETING

**Minutes
Tuesday, April 24, 2018
7:30 AM**

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ann Marie Borgesi, Christian Brennan, Eileen Burns, Karen Conard, Ron Contrado, Supt. Maureen Lynch, Joselyn Marte, Supt. John Lavoie, Carol Riemer, Kathryn Sweeney, Ellen Weinhold, Bob Westcott, Cal Williams, Juan Yepez

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Edward Bartkiewicz, Joseph Bevilacqua, Francisco Brea, Michael Fiato, Evelyn Friedman, Lane Glenn, Andrew Herlihy, Jeff Linehan, Rosa Muñoz, Marianne Paley-Nadel, Fred Shaheen, Stanley Usovich, Abel Vargas

GUESTS PRESENT:

Secretary Rosalin Acosta, Mike Bevilacqua, Richard Egan, Linda Rohrer, Charles Pearce

STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Susan Almono, Matthias Bohler, Brian Norris, Corina Ruiz

1. Call to Order

A quorum being present, Juan Yepez called the meeting to order at 7:48 a.m.

2. Welcome & Introductions

Juan Yepez welcomed everyone.

3. Approval of Minutes of January 30, 2018

Acting Chairman Yepez asked for a motion on the minutes of the January 30, 2018 board meeting.

Motion by Cal Williams to approve the minutes of the January 30, 2018 meeting as submitted. Bob Wescott seconded the motion and motion passed unanimously.

4. Report of Chair

Juan said that due to Peter's retirement, he will give the Chair report.

Acting Chair Yopez said he is going to take this opportunity to speak about a topic that is only indirectly related to workforce development. The US Department of Labor recently released a RFP to help deal with our country's current opioid crisis and MVWIB hopes to apply for funding via a State proposal.

In preparation, our Executive Director met with the Lawrence Police Department leadership and the director on Lawrence General Hospital EMTs. Abel Vargas and Linda Rohrer helped with the meetings. Rafael shared some of the police and EMT observations with me and I'm now going to share them with you. I am also going to share some facts about the opioid crisis that I heard Governor Baker state last week. The Governor was the guest speaker at an event that I attended recognizing Mayor Rivera for his commitment to accessible, quality community health care for Massachusetts residents. I found his speech insightful on the opioid crisis and mention several parts of the Governor's speech.

Over-prescribing pain killers helped cause the problem. A 1996 Position Paper made pain one of the vital signs that health care needed to deal with immediately. That change helped cause over prescription. In 2014 over 240 million opioid prescriptions were written across the country. We also know that some drug companies cheer-led for the change and made a lot of money as a result of it. The opioid crisis is now a cross-cultural crisis that effects every socio-economic group and class.

The Governor mentioned that during his last campaign, after speaking at either a VFW dinner, restaurant, or town hall event he would have 15-20 people come up to him afterwards and tell him about the hell they have gone through with a loved one, friend, or coworker as a result of the addiction they were dealing with.

The opioid crisis is growing and affecting all economic classes and groups. It is not just an inner city problem though some people make it out to be one. Lawrence is the largest concentration of people in the Merrimack Valley and Lawrence police leadership are correctly providing police officers and others with info on how opioid addiction works. For example, one can't will oneself out of addiction and people don't choose to become addicts. A NH Teacher of the Year died of an overdose and a Triple-A umpire in-line to become a major league umpire earning about a half million dollars a year both became addicts.

The umpire states that being addicted is like wanting to breathe when ones' head is held under water.

People have different triggers to addiction. But all have awful withdrawal symptoms because opioid use shuts down our bodies' natural production of dopamine. Without dopamine we feel much more stress and pain. Methadone, also an opioid-type narcotic, is used to gradually transition addicts back into natural dopamine production.

Addicts often become homeless because their families reach the breaking point and the addict is kicked out, or because the addict first pays for the drug and can't keep up with rent or mortgage payments. An addict can pay \$800 to \$1000 per day to feed his or her habit. That and tremendous craving don't lend themselves to much caring about the law.

The average addict is 35 to 45 years old but the LPD has seen some as young as 17. Babies are sometimes given heroin or fentanyl to quiet them down or so that they'll sleep. One 88-year-old man recently OD'd. For most addicts, the options are often recovery or death.

But heroin keeps addicted people normal. They can act just like you or me while on it. Without it, they become raging maniacs obsessed with getting a fix. If an addict is reported as dying from an overdose, you sometimes will find other addicts go to the area where the death occurred in hopes of finding the high octane drug. Dealers diabolically cut heroin with both fentanyl and methamphetamine so that addicts are awake longer to use more drugs. Cocaine and opioid combinations are called speed balls and they are especially dangerous.

As we know, Narcan is sometimes used to prevent addicts from dying of an overdose. But Narcan can increase drug use because addicts think they have a safety net and because Narcan's effect is so immediate that addicts want to shoot up soon after they receive it and lose their high – which in some lights is them losing their ability to act normally and feel like a human being.

Some addicts are 'Narcan-ed' more than once a day. It can be administered either as a nasal spray or intravenously. If the addict's heart isn't pumping it won't work so sometimes paddles or drugs are used to re-start the heart and then Narcan is administered.

When Narcan is used, the methamphetamine or cocaine often mixed with an opioid stays so that addicts are then very stressed and hyper. Under Narcan they're only on meth or cocaine and in great stress and pain without our naturally produced dopamine. Some of them consequently become very aggressive, raging, and unmanageable.

An OD is often the jumping off point for health care services. Either an unconscious OD incident or visible opioid use can initiate treatment but ODs are usually required to ensure some public action. But even then it may not happen. Hospitals immediately release addicts if they refuse treatment. Unlike suicide attempts or heart attacks, hospitals cannot mandate that narcan recipients be admitted. It is a Hippa infraction to do so. Immediate family notification and action is required because otherwise many addicts lose interest in changing. Some addicts just walk away from hospitals and clinics.

Juan stated that 68-70% of MA addicts use MassHealth. Mass Health only pays for one month of treatment; they are kicked out of treatment after 30 days. Most people know that at least 4 months of treatment are needed to wean people off opioids. There are also paperwork delays and some hospitals will not accept MassHealth.

An entity called the Police Assistance Recovery Initiative or PARI helps get people into clinic beds. To do so is an art not a science. Sometimes PARI works with the courts to table warrants for 6-7 months if a person is in treatment. The warrant becomes effective if a convict leaves treatment. These acts provide for an arrest and then a court order to go to treatment. There is also some treatment in jails.

Three attempts at recovery is the average number of attempts (celebrities spend \$10k per week at their private recovery facilities). The Governor said that at an early age we learn that failure is part of success. No one gets anywhere without a few bumps along the way. When an addict get into

treatment, treatment may not work the first time but that failure can be just one step on the road to success.

There's currently a line out the door at the Lawrence Psyche Center methadone clinic. Communities are justifiably hesitant to permit them in their neighborhoods because addicts sometimes take 3 to 4 years of counseling and methadone treatment to wean themselves off of opioids. A person in treatment needs less narcotic to get high and dealers are often near those clinics. But the dose that they took when actively addicted can kill them if they've been in treatment for a while.

There's currently a huge shortage of EMTs and paramedics. EMTs must be further trained to become paramedics. NECC has relevant training in both fields. NH Technological Institute in Concord, NH and ProCenter in Cambridge, MA also provide the training. Holy Family Hospital also provides relevant psyche services. MVWIB's proposal will likely focus on training EMTs, paramedics, outreach and mental health workers.

The Commonwealth is committed to reducing the opioid crisis and has done a great job. After the elections, the Governor put together a Prevention, Education, Treatment, and Recovery initiative. He increased spending on recovery services by 60% and added 1100 treatment beds. While news on the opioid crisis is still bad, for first time in a decade, instead of having double-digit increases in deaths, overdoses and prescriptions, in 2017, the Commonwealth had a 10% decrease in deaths, leveled out in overdoses, and had a 30% drop in legal opioid prescriptions.

As stated at the outset, the opioid crisis is now a cross cultural crisis that effects every socio-economic group and class. People with families and good jobs can become victims of addiction. But for some, hopelessness and a lack of opportunity may cause them to look for money as dealers or solace as users. Job training may help prevent some of them avoid becoming victims or part of the crisis. But clearly the problem is something bigger than just economics. It is perhaps better solved by faith or other higher aspirations and goals, or by basic biological treatments that correct body chemistries so that addicts can again think and act moderately without horrific cravings.

Sister Eileen thanked Juan for addressing this issue that affects so many.

Rafael Abislaiman introduced the guest speaker, Secretary Rosalin Acosta.

5. Guest Speaker: Secretary Rosalin Acosta, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

Secretary Acosta said she lived in Amesbury for 26 years. She said there's great history in the building they are in and she loves being in it.

Secretary Acosta commented on how opioids affect work and work places. She said that Massachusetts saw an increase in fentanyl related deaths several years ago.

Secretary Acosta then presented a series of slides from the Department of Unemployment Assistance, Economic Research, which can be found by clicking the following link:

<https://public.tableau.com/profile/maeconomicresearch/#!/> .

Secretary Acosta spoke about the unemployment rate and how employers cannot find employees. She said the Massachusetts labor force is the most numerous that it's ever been and although there are a lot of people employed, there are areas like in Lawrence, where the unemployment rate is 7.4%. She said we need to work harder to improve everyone's chances for employment.

Secretary Acosta talked about the regional planning phase and how Rafael and his team were in charge of working with other regions. Data was given to the regions and all the groups presented blueprints. It was interesting to see the commonalities and differences. Some of the commonalities were healthcare, IT and manufacturing.

The Governor's budget includes \$18 million for K-12 programs focusing on preparing youth for work. The administration has a lot of involvement and interest in technical schools and we hope to see the legislature passing increased funding for them. There's a new line item to design apprenticeship curriculums with industry and union input. Right now, most workers in the trades are white male and we want to diversify that industry. Employers have given feedback on how apprenticeship paperwork can be streamlined.

Secretary Acosta talked about the branding process with great enthusiasm. Prior to becoming Secretary, she had no idea we had 30 career centers and 16 WIB's across the state. What makes it harder is that each career center has a different name. Their new name will prominently include MassHire and by December 2018, it will be in full effect. The employers liked the name the most and the workforce side liked it the least. She thanked Linda, Rafael and Susan for all the support through this process. As the years go by, we need to look at how to deliver career center resources in the 21st century using more technology.

There are Workforce Training Funds available and we want to make sure employers are aware of this. These funds are managed by Commonwealth Corporation and its money comes from employers who invest every month to this fund. Employers can train their workforce in pretty much anything, including ESL.

The Learn the Earn Initiative addresses the cliff effect in public benefits. Many of the employers we've talked to say that they have part time employees and if they try to increase their hours or give them a raise, they refuse it because their benefits will decrease. We want to address this and the Governor has put reforms in the budget for DTA. Through this initiative we are looking at benefits such as SNAP, child care, and housing. The MVWIB received a grant and will be training Head Start parents in precision machining. We look forward to seeing the results of the MVWIB program.

Secretary Acosta said there are 1,200 Puerto Rico evacuees throughout the state. The Merrimack Valley has seen 80 customers but Hampden County has seen the vast majority because of the number of Puerto Ricans who live in Springfield and Holyoke. Massachusetts has a U.S. DOL grant to serve the impacted. FEMA will start cutting down emergency services like hotel payments soon.

In closing, Secretary Acosta said her passion lies in diversity. The demographics in Massachusetts is not changing. We have to be more diligent in writing job descriptions and redesign them to bring more people along. We don't want to exclude someone who may be a suitable candidate because of the way the job description is written. This is a collaborative effort that involves employers.

Chris Brennan asked who is involved in the apprenticeship group and how often they meet. Secretary Acosta said they meet every 6-8 weeks. Chris said that he has put out 14 new apprenticeships and 9 of them have been filled by women or people of color. Secretary Acosta thanked Chris for that and added that the AFLCIO has 19% women membership. She's told them that we need to increase it to 50%.

John Lavoie said that one of the key components for apprenticeships is having open shops. Greater Lawrence Technical School students have more work skills than many college students. John said he appreciates the Governor's insights and support. The Secretary added that through Workforce Skills Capital grants, over \$50 million has been given out to vocational schools and colleges to provide them with the capital they need to train kids to real life jobs. There is a great sense of urgency on this issue at the State.

There are 74,000 kids that graduate from high school each year. Secretary Acosta would like every one of those kids to have a career plan. She is working with Secretary Peyser to achieve it and to promote work that's related to technology. Massachusetts has to leverage technology to stay at the cutting edge of education and the economy. Even if youth don't get a one-on-one help from guidance, which many of them don't, we need to at least help them plan for when they graduate and better familiarize them with tools related to technology.

The Secretary stated that Governor Baker recently established a new Commission on Digital Innovation and Lifelong Learning. It's a group of education and business leaders charged with developing recommendations to expand online learning opportunities for Mass residents who seek skills for jobs in high-demand fields.

Secretary Acosta concluded by saying that there's a lot of exciting work to be done and that she really likes what she's doing.

Rafael noted the apprenticeship efforts by Brian Norris and Carol Reimer, HR Director of Magellan, where more than 12 apprenticeships are in the works.

Juan thanked the Secretary for taking time out of her schedule and for the collaborative efforts.

6. Reports of Committee Chairs

- *Planning Committee*

Chairman Yopez said the Planning Committee was busy these past three months. We've overseen both WIB Regionalization and Career Center certification processes as well as the creation of a new MVWIB monitoring policy for our career center. We continue to work with the State to develop career center employer contact monitoring procedures.

As you can see by the Performance Report, the Career Center is at or above plan in most categories but for job seeker referrals to employers and job placements. They are both lower than planned. The underperformance is in part due to changes in the definition of what constitutes an employer referral.

We now need to ensure that a customer makes contact with an employer. Before just the referral to do so was enough.

Job placements are down because this is a transition year and we're working out improved procedures but also because fewer people seem to be looking for work now that unemployment continues to be down at historical lows. In addition, the career center has not filled 11 positions lost through cuts or attrition since July 1, 2016. Fewer people on staff means lower costs and, often, fewer people served.

Career center staffing has also been redesigned to match the one stop career center proposal that was approved for funding by the MVWIB and our CEO Mayor Rivera. The new director's Industry Sector Team concept is in keeping with that proposal. The new Career Center Director, Linda Rohrer, got plenty of subsequent staff input during the team development process. Five teams of staff are now working to meet customer flow at different points of entry, using new or updated assessment tools, and more systematic skills development, leading to help landing good jobs

Expenditure numbers are a bit lower than expected because it wasn't until September that VWCC began enrolling customers due to delayed Federal funding notices. WIOA youth plan numbers went down because WIOA now requires that 20% of training funds go towards work experience. We thus have a bit less money for classroom training.

NECC and the Career Center Director are also spending carefully because FY19 Federal allocation numbers are again uncertain. WIOA funds can be spent over two years so we'll carry over some of this year's money into next year.

But we should note that under Governor Baker's and Labor Secretary Rosalin Acosta's leadership, although Federal allocations have gone down, Massachusetts workforce development allocations have gone up substantially. Both the Governor's and the House's budgets include several million additional dollars for our system. We now wait to see what the Massachusetts Senate will do.

After a 20% WIOA formula funding cut, MVWIB has done ok financially because of the non-formula funds we've successfully applied for. We've received three new grants and two long awaited National Emergency or Dislocated Worker ones. One of the new grants is called Learn to Earn. There were thirty applicants in the State and we were one of the five awardees. This activity is funded by Massachusetts Workforce Competitiveness Trust Funds (WCTF).

Our second new grant is from the Massachusetts Commonwealth Corporation to train former inmates in construction work. There MVWIB and the Career Center work with guys who recently came out of jail. The first cohort that just graduated had six participants and five are working. The sixth will soon be employed, possibly by board member Ron Contrado of Homisco who's made him an offer. One of the participants was hired by SPS New England at \$50 per hour.

Our third new grant is new US EPA funding with which we'll continue truck driver training in cooperation with the Longshoreman Union's Training site in Tewksbury.

There's also been an increased in the number of Workshops at our Haverhill Career Center. They've been increased from 2 to 4 per month and we'll soon be offering 6 per month. The Haverhill workshops have been well attended.

I'm also happy to report that there have been few additional career center closures due to storms or closures elsewhere on the NECC closures. As you heard at January's meeting, due to the current reading of Massachusetts union contracts, NECC staff do not have to report to work if the college closes. The new career center director is dealing with the issue with skeleton teams. But since most of ValleyWorks bilingual capacity is held by NECC staff and most of our walk-in customers are limited English speaking, potential problems have not gone away. Some of the low numbers in the performance summary may be due to this situation.

Potential problems with Summer YouthWorks career center staffing have also been resolved. Four ValleyWorks Career Center staff have agreed to work on flex schedules to cover after-school youth orientation and Saturday CommCorp mandated foundational skills training.

Other good news is that both our and the Lawrence Public School Department elevators at 255 and 237 Essex Street are now repaired and that no security problems occurred from customers going through each other's sites to the upper or lower floors.

Overall the numbers of clients seen at our new Lawrence site has increased. The Mayor was correct in saying that the move would increase access.

Now that Jeff Reilly, Lawrence Public School's Receiver and Superintendent is the new Massachusetts Education Commissioner, we are looking for ways to work with him and Lawrence Public Schools. The MVWIB applied for a Federal Department of Labor grant about 5-6 years ago to have a career center in the high school but the feds didn't fund it. We here at MVWIB know that the best thing we can do to help youth is to convince them to stay in and graduate from school.

Too many kids drop-out from high school, it's still about 30-40% of them and we are looking for ways to drive those number much lower. We congratulate Haverhill for having drop out numbers lower than some suburban schools.

In closing, let me state that career center services to Puerto Ricans hurt by this past seasons hurricanes, and work with former Polartec employees both continue. These efforts are being covered by two separate USDOL National Emergency Grants. Raytheon is hiring about 120 new employees and our customers may get good jobs there. But Raytheon takes about one year to hire someone because of their clearance and security checks.

The US Postal Service is also hiring and they've reached out to the career center for recruitment help.

- ***Youth Committee***

Chairman Williams said this past quarter, Connecting Activities (CA) youth program staff continued to implement School to Career activities at area schools. They supported and collaborated with Lawrence High and their students to provide job shadow day experiences to 63 juniors.

Students visited 23 regional companies in the Healthcare, Business & Non-profit Administrations, Communications, Education, Environmental, Manufacturing, and Science & Technology fields. The career exploration activity provided students exposure to careers of possible interest to them. Students got firsthand knowledge of job opportunities, career education requirements, and general information on what particular jobs entail. Many of the students expressed interest in pursuing internships during their senior year of high school.

Two of the quarter's highlights were an information meeting we had with the local delegation (State Representative and Senators) and a STEM@Work - Connecting Students to STEM Roundtable event with Secretary Peyser and Commissioner Riley.

Over fifty Merrimack Valley private sector employers, people from the Governor's STEM Advisory Council, Merrimack College, Northern Essex, Middlesex, and North Shore Community College professors, high school educators, and MVWIB staff came together to talk about STEM@Work. The theme of the meeting was 'Growing our STEM Talent Pipeline from the Employers' Perspective'. The conversation focused on the creation of STEM Internships opportunities for area High School students. MVWIB and its partner's staff recruited employer participants quickly in only about ten days.

We are thankful that area private for- and non-profit employers continue to use their time and resources to attend meetings that we invite them to and, more importantly, to provide Merrimack Valley students with opportunities that connect classroom knowledge to the world of work.

We held a local delegation meeting at the MVWIB. Four State Representatives, Diana DiZoglio, Juana Matias, Frank Moran, and Andres Vega and one Senate staff member from Senator L'Italien's office, Maria de la Cruz, participated as well as several City and private sector employers. We explained how much of the Commonwealth money they allocate to us goes to familiarizing low-income youth with various jobs, many of which are STEM-related. Connecting Activities dual approach of promoting both work and advanced education was highlighted.

VWCC staff have been working hard at getting the students of Lawrence High School ready for their 3rd annual Job Fair to be held at the Lawrence High School Campus on April 26, 2018. The ValleyWorks Business Services team has recruited over 20 employers for this event.

Next month, there will be new opportunities to help Merrimack Valley Youth. The 2018 Summer YouthWorks program will allow us to place 229 Youth into subsidized employment - with 148 for Lawrence, 58 for Haverhill, and 23 for Methuen. We are always looking to help employers who hire other youth with their own money.

This year, youth will be allowed to work up to 30 hours per week at \$11.00 per hour for about 6 weeks. Youth will also receive systematic instruction in core soft skills while engaging in meaningful future planning.

If your company or organization is planning to hire youth this summer, the MVWIB may be able to pay all or part of the wages of a group of your prospective youth employees. We may be able to help defray the salary costs of youth if they meet eligibility under YouthWorks. If interested, please submit

a completed employer application. For more information, please contact Cristy Gomez at ccgomez@mwwib.org.

- ***Nominating Committee***

Because Nominating Committee Chair Karen Conard had to leave early, Rafael welcomed newest member, Anne Marie Borgesi, Senior VP/Chief Administrative & HR Officer at Greater Lawrence Family Health Center.

- ***Finance Report***

Bob Wescott said that political leaders have the tendency to increase taxes and that this is the worse time to do so. When cost of living is high and taxes are increased, it makes it harder for those who are working.

Chairman Wescott said that the level of spending hasn't been impacted with the move and that the budget is in pretty good shape. A large portion of the funds was spent servicing Polartec customers, for which the MVWIB has charged but is still waiting to be reimbursed. Rafael added that we received some Polartec NEG funding but hope that more comes in.

7. Election of MVWIB Chair

Rafael said that Peter Matthews resigned in January 2018 and Juan Yopez has been acting chair since then. It is past practice for the Planning Chair to become the Board Chair when vacant.

Motion by John Lavoie to elect Juan Yopez as the MVWIB Chair, seconded by Chris Brennan. Motion passed unanimously.

8. Report of Executive Director

Rafael said we've been very busy meeting the federal requirement for regionalization. Discussions on the issue lasted a full year and involved several Board members. These included Chairman Yopez, President Glen, Sister Eileen and Karen Conard. We are now working on the branding initiative that Secretary Acosta mentioned. He added that the MVWIB is now officially responsible to monitor the ValleyWorks career center. Before now, we shared that responsibility with the Department of Career Services.

Rafael said this is second to last meeting; he will be retiring July 31, 2018.

The MVWIB will be applying for a U.S. Dept. of Labor ex-offender grant with SISU. There is also an opioid grant to provide training to EMT and the police department that the MVWIB hopes to participate in with DCS.

Sister Eileen asked what is the Board's responsibility and plan for transition. Rafael said the Planning Committee needs a new Chair now that Juan is the Board Chair. He will be submitting his resignation letter to Mayor Rivera in June. The WIB ED hiring process is at Mayor Rivera's discretion.

9. Other Business

No other business.

10. **Adjournment**

Having no further business Chris Brennan made a motion to adjourn and Joselyn Marte seconded the motion. Motion passed and meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Corina Ruiz

Recorder