



YOUTH COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday, April 13, 2016
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
439 South Union – Suite 102
Lawrence, MA 01843

Youth Committee MEMBERS PRESENT:

Howard Allen, Francisco Brea, Stacey Bruzzese, Irene Chalek, Kelly Conlin, Linda Piergeorge, Tom Raiche, Lisa Remington, Michael Strem, Ellen Weinhold, Cal Williams

MVWIB Youth Committee MEMBERS ABSENT:

Michael Bevilacqua, Superintendent John Lavoie, Beverly DeSalvo, Brad Howell, April Lyszkowsky, Donna Rivera, David Tagliaferri, Ed Warnshuis

MVWIB STAFF PRESENT:

Rafael Abislaiman, Cristy Gomez, Mary Kivell

OTHERS: Amy Ackroyd, Nelson Butten, Kelly Conlin, Kati Sweeney, Amy Weatherbee

I. Call to Order & Introductions

A quorum being present Cal Williams called the meeting to order at 11:40 a.m. and introductions were made around the table.

II. Approval of January 13, 2016 Minutes

Cal Williams called for a motion to approve the January 13, 2016 minutes.

Motion by Ellen Weinhold, seconded by Mike Strem, to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2016 meeting as submitted. Motion passed.

III. Guest Speaker – Nelson Butten, Director of LPS Community, Family, and Student Engagement Department

Mr. Nelson Butten, Director of the Lawrence Public Schools Community, Family and Student Engagement Departments gave an overview of services offered at the Family Resource Center located at 60 Island Street, Lawrence, MA. He began his remarks stating that he came to Lawrence twenty-two years ago. He finished high school and went to work for the Lawrence Youth Commission Charter School, Americorps and after

that he worked as a community organizer for Lawrence Community Works until the state takeover of the Lawrence Public Schools (LPS). At that time the Family Resource Center was created and he came on board as its Director.

Mr. Butten said that families come to the Center not only for enrollment for pre K-8 but also to get information on resources and services such as health, education, and ESOL. The Resource Center offers SPED, student transportation, hospital and homebound tutoring, services for homeless students and dropout prevention and other forms of student engagement. Families get answer to their questions on family life in the USA and are connected to potential opportunities.

Nelson also explained the Lawrence Working Families Initiative (LWFI) is an effort to link LPS families with resources that aid in obtaining employment and economic advancement. He said that they have seen over 700 families in three years and there are thirty organizations involved including Community Works and Groundworks Lawrence. The Center also offer coaching services through one on one conversations to help families set goals. They advocate for the homeless and help transition them to other services in the same building.

Nelson continued stating that they are trying to change the culture of Lawrence Public Schools by involving families with the aim of improving educational services. They check attendance and see what else may be needed for family support by connecting with the attendance officer. He said that they are just completing two years at 60 Island Street. They have a large space for meetings and workshops. There is parking and it's centrally located between the north and south parts of the city. The Center also makes space available for other non-profit agency workshops. They are open Monday through Friday from 8:30 am – 4:30 pm, Thursdays until 7:00 pm and the first Saturday of the month from 9:00 am – 1:00 pm.

Nelson further stated that Lawrence Public Schools have no enrollment cap and that there are currently 14,000+ students enrolled with many of them being new, transferring and transitioning youth. Lawrence Learns is a pipeline for Pre-K students with Community Action, Little Sprouts, Head Start and about ten other partners. They held a block party on August 9th from 5:00 – 7:30 pm and a first day orientation.

Cal asked about dropouts and Mr. Butten said that they work with the school counselors and engagement monitor to address those at risk of dropping out. They also go door knocking and identify gaps in credits. They are exploring working with Job Corps. Francisco Brea noted that the Center has no connection with charter schools and suggested that Center staff connect with the teachers union to help connect with families. He mentioned that the next meeting of the Central Labor Council will be held in Lawrence. Nelson said that the Oliver School is a union school run by the leadership team and parents. They are trying to increase parent engagement and professional development for staff and have done eight workshops for the school.

He said that there is a planning process for a district-wide family assessment. Mike Strem asked what the expectation is and Nelson said that they aim to identify anyone who can provide services to high school students to expose youth to STEM careers, internships and create opportunities for youth.

Rafael said that efforts are admirable and the dropout rate is decreasing but there is still a lot of work to do. For example, it is currently difficult for the Career Center to find graduating kids to enroll in job training programs. Nelson spoke about re-engagement with a re-engagement manager who works directly for the Superintendent. Youth have three school enrollment options – one with Lawrence High School, another with the High School Learning Center, and the third is the Phoenix Academy. One reason for the growing enrollment is that LPS actively retains students until age 22.

Nelson said that the problems are the same but the solution approach is changing. They are trying to address overcrowded schools and the number of families coming from Central America. Rafael said that improvements are being made but Lawrence schools are always working with a new, low-income groups of people because many leave the city when they move up the economic ladder.

Amy Weatherbee spoke about how important trauma informed training is for staff in dealing with new arrivals. Cal said that we must spend 70% of our youth funding on out of school youth and the Family Resource Center is a great organization looking at the root causes. Rafael asked how many students in flex programs are passing MCAS and Nelson said he didn't have that figure off the top of his head.

That concluded his presentation.

IV. Programs Update.

Cristy Gomez gave her program update. She said that the MVWIB and VWCC hosted Job Shadow Day for Haverhill High School students on March 30, 2016. Fifteen students participated and Community Action, Haverhill Court House, Little Sprouts, Magellan and Main Street Veterinary were some of the participating employers. One student shadowed Mayor Fiorentini and really enjoyed the experience.

The MVWIB issued an RFP for Out of School Youth on March 30th and hosted a bidder's conference on Thursday, April 7th with completed proposals due by Wednesday, April 27, 2016 – 2:00 pm.

Cristy said that we submitted a proposal to Commonwealth Corporation on March 31, 2016. We will be taking applications through April 29, 2016 for funding for 267 youth (175 – Lawrence; 66 – Haverhill; 26 – Methuen). Youth will be allowed to work up to 30 hours per week at \$10.00/hr. for about 6.5 weeks. She encouraged any employers to become worksites. Cristy also said that Commonwealth Corporation is accepting

applications in response to the RFP for the Bridging the Opportunities Gap (BOG) Initiative for youth committed to DYS. Proposals are due May 4, 2016 and VWCC staff will be writing the proposal.

Cristy then reported on upcoming events: YouthWorks Convening Meeting: Friday, April 15 at Tower Hill Botanic Garden in Boylston; GLTS Job/Career Fair: Wednesday, April 27, 2016 (2:00 – 5:00pm); HHS Teen Job & Resource Fair: Haverhill High School, Tuesday, April 26, 2016 (2:30 – 4:30pm); CA: The Annual Spring Statewide Conference, Friday, May 6, 2016 (9:00 am – 2:30 pm).

Also, there will be YouthWorks Staff Signal Success Workshops Training:

- Leveraging Soft Skill Gain for Employability through Training & Leadership – May 3rd
- Increasing Participants' Financial Literacy & Success with Online Applications – May 9th

Cristy also said that one of our Year Round Youth participants was hired as a full-time employee at New Balance.

Cal asked if the Mayor would be doing his summer initiative and Rafael said that this year we would also planning something similar in Haverhill and Methuen.

V. Partner's Information

Amy Weatherbee said that there would be a job fair with 24-25 companies at Lawrence High School on April 27th from 2:00 – 5:00 pm.

Lisa Remington handed out some flyers and reported that the MA Workforce Professional Association and DCS, as part of the Peer to Peer Series – Reinventing Youth Services under WIOA, would be holding an event at Devens Common Center on April 28th – 8:00 am – 3:30 pm. She said that Groundworks Lawrence will also be running an Environmental Technical Training Program in two cycles, 40 hours per week for five weeks at no cost.

Rafael also said that EPA training is available locally via the MVWIB and Groundworks. Lisa said that there is a free one-day Customer Service and Sales Certification available for Lawrence residents on Wednesday, April 20, 2016 from 8:30 am- 2:30 pm at LARE and to call to register. The Northeast Advanced Manufacturing Collaborative is having an Advanced Manufacturing Training for dislocated workers from May 23, 2016 – August 26, 2016 and High School graduating youth are invited to participate. Call Lisa Remington for further information 978-722-7005. Lisa also reported that the Career Ready 101 offered at the Career Center has seen a quick upgrade in users' skills as they can log on anywhere once they get a number and can self-learn anywhere there is internet.

Ellen Weinholt spoke about the Children's Champion Awards Ceremony. She said that Atty. Linda Harvey was recognized and a student from the Weatherbee School gave a wonderful presentation on support for victims of child abuse. Amy Weatherbee said that on August 27 at 6:00 pm LARE is having an event at El Taller on Essex Street with a presentation of a gallery of pictures of participants in Photo Boy. This group will also be mentoring the next group. She also spoke about a survey of unaccounted youth that would be conducted in the area in May and encouraged anyone who could help to do so and help insure an accurate count of homeless youth to determine funding.

VI. WIOA Update

Rafael Abislaiman said that the career center and wib site RFP was issued and responses submitted to a City of Lawrence review committee. Five of its six members are MVWIB members. The committee made their recommendation to the Mayor who is holding the recommendation as there may be a new municipal site option. Rafael also said that by law we need to RFP the Career Center in the next few months as we must designate the operator (which may or may not be the existing operator) by July, 2017.

Rafael said that low youth enrollment is a problem nationally and statewide. 70% of our youth funding is designated to out of school youth. We issued an RFP for OSY training and will accept youth without a HS diploma and a grade level as low as 5.9.

Cal Williams noted that when he attended the recent NAWB Conference in Washington, DC the feedback from employers is that job seekers don't have soft skills. They stressed how important it is that the soft skills be taught. Amy Weatherbee said that the Career 101 program has a soft skills suite and the Career Center is pushing that. She cited a company that is even paying for folks to take soft skills training at Great Bay Community College.

Irene Chalek said that NECC has an ESL Financial Literacy Class beginning in 8 weeks and they are looking for an instructor. The Bridge to College ESOL program has been refunded for two years and there will be a forum on April 25th on how to address the needs of professional immigrants.

VII. Other Business & VIII. Adjourn

There was no other business.

Having no further business Francisco Brea made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Howard Allen. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Mary Kivell
Recorder