



YOUTH COMMITTEE

MINUTES

Wednesday, June 13, 2018
Merrimack Valley Workforce Investment Board
255 Essex Street, 4th Floor
Lawrence, MA 01840

Youth Committee MEMBERS PRESENT:

Francisco Brea, April Lyskowsky, Tom Raiche, Lisa Remington, Linda Rohrer, Jackie Romero, David Tagliaferri, Cal Williams

MVWIB Youth Committee MEMBERS ABSENT:

Howard Allen, Elizabeth Bennett, Irene Chalke, Michael Bevilacqua, Brad Howell, Sonia Morales, Katherine Sweeney, Ed Warnshuis, Ellen Weinhold

MVWIB/DGA Staff Present:

Rafael Abislaiman, Cristy Gomez, Beverly Stopyra

Guest Present:

Jackie Romero, Abel Vargas

I. Call to Order & Introductions

Chairman Williams called the meeting to order at 11:50 a.m. Introductions were made around the table.

II. Approval of the April 11, 2018 Minutes

Chairman Cal Williams called for a motion to approve the minutes of the **April 11, 2018** meeting.

Motion by April Lyskowsky, seconded by Francisco Brea, to approve the minutes of the April 11, 2018 Youth Committee minutes as submitted.
Motion passed.

III. Guest Speaker: Abel Vargas, Director of Business & Economic Development, City of Lawrence

Abel gave a presentation on economic and business development in Lawrence. He is hoping to further increase the number of new businesses and business sites in the City. They could provide Lawrence and area youth with more job opportunities.

He spoke about "99 Degrees Custom" which is located in the Everett Mills. Presently they have 15 employees but they plan to have 350 jobs within the next three years. They do business with other companies such as New Balance and North Face.

Abel then spoke about new Lawrence textile manufacturing-related opportunities. MIT is involved in new synthetics manufacturing likely to involve Lawrence. He is not sure where production funding will come from but putting newly designed synthetics on-line will provide training opportunities for youth; the workforce of tomorrow.

He then spoke of 3D Core which is located in the Industrial Park in Lawrence. 3D Core currently has 30 jobs. He thinks they are fully staffed at the moment but they're expected to grow soon. Preferred Distributors, which is currently in Haverhill, is also developing a building in the Lawrence Industrial Park.

Other job opportunities can be found at a collection agency called Valentine & Kebartas LLC. The company's does collections for the MA Department of Higher Education; they collect school loans. Valentine & Kebartas is in a HUB zone. The City of Lawrence has HUB areas that receive preferential treatment for federal contracts. Salaries are based on a % of collections. Employees can earn as much as \$60-70K with just a HS diploma. Abel mentioned that if anyone has any questions to please feel free to contact him.

Linda Rohrer mentioned that 99 Degrees received a tax incentive package and that it's utilizing the Career Center for staff recruitment. They are always looking for experience and if we can train folks we can fill some of these jobs. Francisco Brea mentioned that Lawrence has a high population of Dominicans who have sewing machine experience. They have the skills but as Linda mentioned would need training.

Abel continued and stated that the Polartec site is making progress under its new owner. CI Works just signed a lease at the site. The site is a business incubator where several businesses can share the cost of various services with each other. CI Works is a business incubator that works with a lot of green type companies.

On the development side, the former Showcase Cinema site directly on Route 114 will become a Veterinary Hospital and will have 80 employees. Bulgers Animal Hospital will be moving there. It will be a full blown animal emergency hospital. Bulgers already has full service sites in Woburn, MA and Manchester, NH. Abel has already spoken to them about employing Lawrence and area youth. It will be a regional destination. A Starbucks will also be housed there.

The bigger side of the Showcase Cinema has also been sold. This lot will become Medical offices. Abel said that they do not know exactly what's going into the site but that MVWIB Chairman Juan Yopez and his brother bought it for medical offices. The Veterinary hospital on the other side will be fully operational by March 20, 2019. The

ShowCase is prime property which is right off Rt. 495. Rafael mentioned that this property is a big investment. Abel stated that it sold for 3 million.

Abel informed the group that three Lawrence mill buildings will soon all become primarily apartment rental properties. They are Riverwalk, Union Crossing, and the Pacific Mills. Avila is a Lawrence based company involved in the project and they employ Lawrence residents. The City is trying to get other Lawrence-based companies involved in these projects. Rafael mentioned that Lawrence is the fastest growing Gateway City in the State. These rental properties have easy access to the high way and the train station. April asked where they are getting the laborers for these construction jobs. Abel answered that they come from Lawrence and other areas.

Abel said that the some of these properties are asking for \$2,600-2,900 a month. It was asked how Lawrencians can afford this housing. Abel mentioned that a study had been performed. It found that new house constructions had only increased by 2% between 1980 – 2016. There's a lot of housing need at every economic level.

Overcrowding was discussed. There are two/three families all living in the same space so they can afford rent. Rafael asked why should Lawrence just be a City of the poor? Most cities have a mix of populations and incomes. Linda mentioned that people that came here from Puerto Rico are now going to Fitchburg and other towns/cities because they cannot afford the rent in Lawrence.

There are also smaller developments for new housing. One project is 103 Units on the same site as Polartec. The former Tomberello site on Marston Street was recently sold and it may contain more housing, though that remains unclear. Improving the site will be a big job. The site is right off Rt. 495.

On other notes, Abel stated that the Buckley Garage is being painted and that the City is going to light up the Central Bridge and the Clock Tower.

David Tagliaferri asked about the old school on Summer Street and how nice a Venician-style building it is. Abel said that the City owns this property and the City struggles with that building. It needs work. David thinks it could become a nice community-meeting space. David asked Abel if he could put him down as a newsletter contact. Abel agreed.

IV. Program Update

Cristy informed the committee that we received the Mass Housing Grant that will allow us to place eight youth in subsidized employment. Youth must reside in any of the Lawrence Housing Courts. Eligible youth will be able to work 120 hours and get paid \$11.00/hour.

Cristy gave an update on the youth programs and presented the group with a handout. This year, the YouthWorks Summer Jobs program goal is to enrolled 229 youth from Haverhill, Lawrence, and Methuen. We received 374 applications from Lawrence, 86 from Haverhill, 50 from Methuen and 1 from Andover.

To help with the YouthWorks Summer program, the MVWIB hired two part time temporary staff - Jeffrey Pierce and Rosmery Marzan will provide support to the team. Program full time staff have been providing Signal Success workshops on Saturdays. 54 youth attended the first workshop session and 71 youth the second. This Saturday we expect 84 Youth at the Lawrence Library and 64 youth at the YMCA-Lawrence. The team will conclude recruitment of Lawrence and Methuen youth on the 23rd and then go to Haverhill to offer the same workshops to approximately 60 youth.

We are following CommCorp directives to enroll sufficient numbers of youth in the 20% category. Those youth are referred or helped by DYS, DCF, CRA. They are either court involved, on probation, in foster or former foster care, or homeless or from a homeless family. We must enroll at least 46 youth in the 20% category. For every one youth below the 46 number, \$2K goes back to CommCorp. So far 39 20% youth have attended workshops last week and 20 are expected to attend workshops this Saturday. We have invited ten from Haverhill. We will probably over enroll in the 20% category. Most of the youth from the 20% category have been doing very well; they want to work.

The youth will receive \$11.00/hour stipend for the two days of workshops. We will only job place youth who have completed 15 hours of Signal Success work readiness workshops. To achieve our goal, we will place at least 229 youth into subsidized employment. VWCC Business Services Representatives have been working hard in recruiting employers. We will do a job match for Lawrence and Methuen youth on June 22 and for Haverhill youth on June 29.

Connecting Activities staff are wrapping up and entering the data to capture all the accomplishments for this quarter. We enrolled 20 Haverhill High School students in the YouthWorks Year Round Program. 15 have successfully completed Connecting Activities Signal Success workshops. The program was scheduled to end on May 31, 2018 but CommCorp approved a two weeks extension. This will enable students who were missing less than 6.5 hours to complete all 80 hours of a CompTIA A+ class.

Cristy said that the MVWIB is recruiting teachers for Amp It Up. So far six teachers have agreed to participate. Dr. Christine Shaw from Merrimack College will facilitate an orientation workshop. We have a DESE Teacher Externship program for three teachers from the Methuen public schools. The teachers can get up to \$7K in stipends for a fifty hour externship. MVWIB is responsible for recruiting the teachers and employers. Our involvement ends in June 30th and then another organization will take over.

The WIB is currently applying for FY'19 Connecting Activities and YouthWorks Year Round funding. Cristy will work with Susan on the RFP next week. Rafael then spoke about another grant he is applying for that will help formerly jailed or probated reentering youth learn, get jobs, and stay away from gangs and other barriers to employment.

V. Partner's Information

DMH has just completed a procurement for restructured services. There will be a change in clinical services that will enhance services for both adults and youths. Behavior health consortium partners will provide more mental health services. Vin Fen will be the lead Agency for this activity starting July 1st.

David said that the Lawrence Police Department has a program called HUB where they meet each week to plan services for anyone who has been arrested for drugs or who has overdosed. April mentioned that the Lawrence/Methuen coalition being discussed is mimicking the City of Chelsea's efforts in their anti-drug coalition. We are the second community in the US using this model to fight against the opiate epidemic in the State.

Linda spoke about a major rebranding at the State level. All Career Centers in the Commonwealth will have MassHire in their name. This is taking effect in the next 9-12 months. The launch date here locally is in October. Linda mentioned that they may have a little ceremony when the roll out happens. All of DCS/VWCC/WIB will be MassHire Merrimack Valley. VWCC is soon to do business as MassHire. Rafael added that the MVWIB will be MassHire MV Board.

Lisa mentioned that there is a job fair at Northern Essex next Tuesday from 10:00 to 1:00.

VI. WIOA Update

No WIOA update.

VII. Other Business

No other business.

VIII. Adjourn

Having no further business Chairman made a motion to adjourn, all in favor. Motion passed and the meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly Stopyra

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Recorder