



**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING
MINUTES**

**Tuesday, January 22, 2015
7:30 a.m.
Merrimack Valley Federal Credit Union
500 Merrimack Street
Lawrence, MA 01843**

Members Present: Peter Matthews, Chair, Anne Ormond, Bob Westcott, Juan Yopez

Members Absent: Cal Williams

Staff Present: Rafael Abislaiman, Mary Kivell

I.) Call to Order

A quorum of committee members being present, Board Chairman Peter Matthews called the meeting to order at 7:40 a.m.

II.) Approval of Minutes of November 4, 2014 Meeting Minutes

Peter Matthews called for a motion on the minutes of the November 4, 2014 minutes.

Motion by Ann Ormond, seconded by Bob Westcott, to approve the minutes of the November 4, 2014 Executive Committee meeting minutes as submitted. Motion passed.

III.) Progress

Peter Matthews said that we need to see what we should do to increase our responsiveness to employers. What do we want to do and how do we want to do it? He asked how members see his role as chair. How can he help the WIB discover what kind of people employers may need in two or four years? It would also be great to be able to inform people on UI what employers want and what jobs are available out there. He mentioned the Cuyahoga Career Center model in Cleveland, Ohio and its focus on employers.

Peter questioned how we see our role and the chair's role and how we can achieve continuous board improvement. Peter wondered if he and Rafael should go and personally see larger or smaller employers and if there are good and effective ways to do this.

Anne Ormond wondered who has the best handle on contacting employers. Rafael said that there is no easy answer. The WIB occasionally conducts employer polls and is currently meeting and working with manufacturers, though most of our trainees go into healthcare. We are currently focusing on manufacturing and meeting monthly with employers in that sector. But different manufacturing companies have different priorities and there are over 200 different sectors in manufacturing. Many of them want immediate results when they speak with us. If they make contact with us, they want to carry something away from the meeting.

Sometimes employers respond to immediate need and are driven by the contracts they have in hand. Rafael also cited the rate example of Magellan Company, which has a ½ billion dollar contract with Rolls Royce for airplane engines. Most companies paste various and changing contracts together to continue their operations. Rafael stated that at a recent meeting we presented a ladder on manufacturing career paths created by Susan Almono and the manufacturers said that they didn't have one and want to create one to use in house. We currently have a training program feeding their lower rung.

Anne asked if we talk on a regular basis with George Moriarty at NECC. Rafael said we usually communicate once a week. George and NECC are part of the manufacturing initiative. Rafael continued stating that Career Center Business Service Representatives (BSR) are set up on a geographic basis rather than by sector. Some argue that the sector approach is better and more responsive to employer needs. Anne raised the issue of an employer survey conducted by ValleyWorks Veterans Representatives.

Rafael said that US DOL statutes now oblige Vet Reps to focus on veterans with problems. The VWCC Vet Reps recently issued an employer survey without authorization from Chili. The results were then published, again without his authorization. These misunderstandings are part of an ongoing problem related to who supervises state staff located at career centers. Vets staff are State employees supervised from Boston and not locally by career center directors. Ann stated that these issues need to be figured out because they interfere with responsiveness to employers. She said these types of conflicts need to stop. Rafael said that there is sometimes an unwillingness to innovate and improve.

Juan Yopez said that with 200 different sectors in manufacturing how do we decide who we focus on. Rafael said that the decision is often made by what the Feds and State wants and where the money is going. But we can also decide regionally. Mike Munday from Arwood had a leading State role in creating interest for our CNC training program. Mike has employees who are aging out of the workforce. Manufacturers have missed a generation of employees because they were discouraged from going into it. Now we are trying to get young people back into it. We should also do more with regional food companies. But they often pay very low entry-level salaries. Health care pays more.

Most of our WIB training dollars go to entry level positions with 60-70% going to Health Care. Mostly for CNA positions that pay \$12-\$18 per hour. Entry level food service pays \$10-13. He said that the area's average hourly wage is \$17.

Anne Ormond said that without a master list to define need and what we need to do it is like trying to hit a moving target. She asked about the community colleges and what they are doing. Rafael said that WIBs are generally ahead of community colleges in workforce development. Colleges have two goals: academic preparation and workforce training, and there is often an in-house conflict between those two goals. NECC is pushing ahead and their workforce training numbers are growing still small. It has alliances with area technical high schools for manufacturing but they still provide fewer than 40 trainees per year. Things may change in health related credentialing because of their big new center.

Bob Westcott asked whether, when someone is looking for a position in manufacturing, they think of the career center as the place to find one. Rafael said that the internet has so many job postings at sites like Monster and Craig's List that most probably go to them first. We see most often see people who need help with basic networking, resumes and job search.

Juan suggested providing information on our website where employers login and view potential candidates. Juan spoke of contacting the Career Center when he needed one or two hires for \$11 – \$12 per hour unloading trucks. Rafael said that the career center could post his openings on the State's internet job listing and specify things like how many pounds workers would need to lift. Juan asked whether there is a way for employers to log in and check if there are potential candidates. Rafael said that both the state system can help employers get those type of prospective employee details but that it's old and clunky.

Bob said that the perception is that the client is the customer when the employer is the customer. Anne mentioned that Chili may be retiring and that may be an opportunity to come in with a new, fresh set of eyes and a marketing plan. Rafael said that Chili may have decided not to retire. He said that Chili can oversee the state staff but not currently supervise them. The relationship is similar to the one WIBs have with Career Centers. It causes problems.

Rafael said that there are a few competitive career centers without those problems but most are non-competitive like ValleyWorks. Only Hampden, Brockton, Metro North, and Boston have competitive centers and they have fewer State-Regional issues. The difference between the categories occurred when state employees realized that funding for them was going to be cut. Years ago, unionized state employees at Career Centers complained, advocated and their lobbying efforts succeeded. The Pacheco Bill mandated that regions include state staff.

According to Rafael, the gold standard for a competitive career center is in Hampden. He conversely cited Boston which, due to a funding shortfall, recently decided to eliminate a career center staffed by state employees. The state employee union got to the Mayor or Governor who ordered that the state staff be incorporated into the other centers. A new center was created that eliminated cost savings.

Peter said that he fears cutting through the red tape to do the right thing and then discovering that we'd inadvertently violated some law. That would set-back rather than improve the MVWIB. We want to get more people back to work and not find out after the fact that we have unknowingly done something wrong.

Rafael said that there are two things that may ease those fears. First, is that the rate of change is glacial and second, that we try to be as open and transparent as possible. An example is how Mayor Rivera wanted information on NECC available to newly unemployed career center clients but that the state said that exclusive information on NECC is illegal so we stopped before we did too much. That decision is currently under review and no final one has been made. But whatever headway we make will be slow. WIOA may help because it seems to explicitly encourage it. Rafael also noted that during his five years here there have been no disallowed costs.

Juan wondered if before spending money on training we line a person up with a job. If, for example, LGH says they can hire five people we then find, train and place five people at LGH. That would be better than training people without knowing if they will get a job at the end.

Rafael said that WIA customers are assessed for marketability and if not marketable they are put into training. WIOA seems to be doing away with the marketability standard and that may create more flexibility and allow us to do more of what Juan suggests. But many UI recipients are desperate and in jeopardy of losing their homes when they finally come looking for help. Many others are difficult to persuade to work if they have the means to wait until UI expires. We try to train people in group programs and create employer agreements that commit employers to guaranteeing jobs at the end of training, but we know that market forces can derail whatever agreements we make. Our ITA referrals are based on Labor Market Information generally indicating job availability but jobs are not guaranteed for ITA trainees.

Anne asked how we get through this quagmire. The goal is to get people to work and keep moving forward. Bob said that our mission is to question and help improve things and less about knowing bureaucratic requirement. We need to help innovate and improve things. Rafael agreed and said that even in the current byzantine system boards can help with innovation and continuous improvement. Anne cited an example of asking members of her Chamber to send her job posting information so that she can relay them to the WIB.

Rafael said that, apart from WIA programming, we've had successful EPA and other non- WIA initiatives. We've contracted with GroundWorks Lawrence and paid them and ValleyWorks for each actual job placement. Rafael said that there is a social service mindset that we need to change through incentives. Bob asked if WIOA will make it worse and Rafael said that the federal guidelines were supposed to come out in January but that has been moved to March and may be pushed out more. We'll see when they come out.

Peter said that the number one thing to get the ball rolling is getting employers aware of the MVWIB, have them tell us what they need, and then get people to them. He suggested earmarking several companies in our region and having lunch or coffee with the Chair and Rafael telling them what we can do.

Rafael said that he feels that the best use of the WIB Chair is to meet with companies that have lots of employees. The vast majority of companies we serve have fewer than 50-100 employees and are not looking to hire large numbers. Peter said that if we know someone is hiring then he's willing to go to them. Bob said to make immediate change we need to look where the turnover is high. Rafael said that we've had past success with Raytheon, though

they have a rigorous screening process that includes a CORI, financial background checks and drug screening. Peter said that Jim Carnevale is on the Chamber and he could approach him. Rafael said that would be good.

Peter then spoke about the Quarterly Board meeting agenda for next Tuesday. He informed members that he may have jury duty and in that event Juan Yopez as co-chair would cover for him. He suggested doing introductions around the table as there are a lot of new board members and summarizing past meetings and objectives. We can mention the Cleveland model as being employer based. Rafael said that is a good choice but folks should know that Cleveland spends \$10k per trainee. They look for quality and not quantity. They also put candidates through rigorous academic and attitudinal screenings that may screen out many area unemployed.

There was a discussion on whether the amount of money spent on training correlates to the number of people looking for services. Rafael said that low income people have more needs and that dislocated workers often have more transferrable skills but that we have fewer problems spending our dislocated worker training money than we do spending our adult category money. Peter said that he doesn't understand why some folks refuse to take a lower paying job and work their way up. He opined that it is limited a short term view. Anne said that we need to do a good job meeting demands and put the dollars where there is the greatest need. Rafael said that the higher the UI, the more money we have to get those people employed. In this region we probably have a bigger than normal grey economy that is not tracked by UI.

Anne said that on Tuesday she would mention to board members they can help with the transition from WIA to WIOA. There was discussion on the college graduation rate and college expense being the largest expense for families. She spoke about her commitment to preparing a board orientation and it was agreed that the entire board will be invited to participate in the training.

Sending meeting materials electronically was also discussed. Bob will be presenting a Treasurer's Report at subsequent meetings and has reviewed the bylaws and made some suggestions. Peter said that the bylaws would be referred to the Planning Committee and Executive Committee for review and then brought to the board with a recommendation for the April meeting.

VI.) Adjournment

Having no further business Juan Yopez made a motion to adjourn seconded by Anne Ormond. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Kivell

Mary Kivell
Recorder